

EXPERIENCING THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF DESEGREGATION:  
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOL GRADUATES FROM 1995-1998

by

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## ABSTRACT

AMY LOUISE HAWN NELSON. Experiencing the double-edged sword of desegregation: Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Graduates from 1995-1998. (Under the direction of DR. ROSLYN A. MICKELSON)

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the long-term effects of desegregated schooling within a firmly established K-12<sup>th</sup> grade desegregated school system. Long-term outcomes include: educational and occupational attainment, comfort with diverse individuals, positive attitudes towards race relations, sense of civic engagement, and increased interaction with other racial groups (such as living and working in diverse environments). Previous studies have examined the long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling for graduates who attended desegregated *high* schools, yet these students attended segregated schools from K-9<sup>th</sup> grade. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were desegregated from roughly 1975-2002, when its mandatory court order was lifted. This study examines experiences of graduates from 1995-1998, a cohort of students who attended desegregated schools from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. This dissertation conducted a comparative case study analysis of a racially desegregated school, racially identifiable White school, and racially identifiable Black school. In 1997, Independence High School was racially desegregated at the school level, with the school demographics mirroring the greater Charlotte community. In contrast, Garinger High School was racially segregated Black, while North Mecklenburg High School was racially segregated White.

This dissertation focuses on graduates of three schools and seeks to answer the following general question: How do graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School from 1995-1998 describe and make

sense of their schooling experiences, particularly in regards to interracial contact, racial identity development and diverse understandings of greater society? From this overarching question stem several subsidiary questions:

- 1) Were there differences in long-term outcomes of graduates between the three schools?
- 2) Were graduates aware that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were under a court-ordered desegregation plan during their years of schooling? Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school?
- 3) Did the racial composition and organizational structure of schools affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development?
- 4) Did experiences with desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults?

This study utilizes critical theory as a general theoretical lens and focuses specifically on racial identity development theory to better understand the experiences of graduates. Qualitative and quantitative data are used to present a holistic view of the three schools. An overall context of the schooling experience is described using an existing quantitative dataset collected in 1997, and yearbook analysis provides information regarding opportunities for interracial contact in each school. A revised version of the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (Civil Rights Project, 2001) was distributed to research participants to determine the long-term outcomes of individual high school experiences. From these surveys, a representative sample of twelve graduates per school, for a total of 36, were selected for in-depth interviews. Results indicate that individuals did experience desegregation in dramatically different ways based on the racial composition of their school, with the racially desegregated school and the racially isolated Black school having more positive outcomes than the racially isolated White school. Graduates of all schools were unclear regarding the definition of desegregation and the majority of graduates did not know they attended schools under a court-mandated

desegregation plan. Results indicate that desegregation efforts in Charlotte, NC had countless intended and unintended consequences and as such were perceived in dramatically different ways by graduates. Collectively, desegregation provided a positive experience with long-lasting positive outcomes for graduates.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
DEFINITION OF DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD	xv
PERSONAL FOREWORD	xvi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Why study graduates of desegregated schools?	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	8
Theoretical Framework	9
Definition of Terms	11
Summary	14
Significance of Study	16
CHAPTER 2: THE GREATER CONTEXT OF CHARLOTTE, NC	18
Desegregation as Educational Reform	19
Desegregation and Educational Rights in the Courts	21
Desegregation Efforts in Charlotte, NC	29
Leading to Swann	31
The Reluctant Support of Swann	34
Desegregation's Counter Story	37
Desegregation as a "Success"?	40
Desegregation Nationally	42
Educational Adequacy as a Strategy for Educational Equity	46

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	49
Desegregation versus Integration	50
Methodological Concerns	51
Using Race versus Socioeconomic Status	52
Tracking	55
Quality of Research	60
Historical Groundwork	64
Theoretical Bases for Research on Race and Educational Outcomes	66
Effects of Race on Educational Outcomes	69
Segregated / Desegregated Schools and Racial Identity	80
Racial Identity Development	84
Cultural Flexibility	91
Trends Toward Resegregation	93
Summary	103
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS	104
Case Study Approach	105
Archival Survey Data to Provide Context of Schools in 1997	106
Yearbook Analysis	107
Diversity Assessment Questionnaire	109
Intensive Interviews	110
Site Selection and Sampling Processes	111
Sampling	113
Facebook Research	113



Data Collection	118
Data Analysis	120
Archival Dataset Analysis	120
Diversity Assessment Questionnaire Analysis	121
Yearbook Analysis	121
Analysis of Interviews	121
Validity and Reliability	124
Ethical Concerns	126
Subjectivity Statement	127
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS	129
The Schools	130
The Class of 1997	133
1996-1997 Yearbook Analysis	134
1997 Archival Dataset	141
Findings from the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire	158
Findings from In-Depth Interviews	174
We were under a court-mandate?	175
Busing	177
Diversity as Black & White in CMS	178
Dealing with Differences	180
Elementary School versus Middle School	182
Schooling Strategies: Maneuvers, Magnets, Private Schools, and Homeschooling	185
School Reputations versus School Realities	187

Interracial Contact	193
Tracking	194
Academic Preparation	198
Racial Identity Development	200
Sensitivities to the Complexities of Race & Class	208
Diverse Schools	211
The Double-Edged Sword of Desegregated Schools	215
The False Dichotomy of “Excellence” versus “Equity”	217
Diverse Schools in the Future?	219
Answering Research Questions	223
Summary	228
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS	230
Desegregated Schooling	233
The Study	244
Critical Theory as Theoretical Framework	245
Research Questions	248
Design	249
Results	251
School Sites in 1997	252
Teacher Quality	254
External Support	254
Diversity Assessment Questionnaire Results	254
Answers to Research Sub Questions	255

Long-term Outcomes	255
Knowledge of Desegregation Mandate	256
Interracial Contact and Racial Identity Development	257
Sensitivities to the Complexities of Race and Class	258
Findings from In-Depth Interviews	259
Discussion: The Double-edged Sword of Schooling Experiences	262
Racial Composition	262
It Was Worth It	268
Policy Implications	270
Limitations	271
Future Research Questions Raised By Study	271
Significance of Study	272
Conclusions	273
REFERENCES	275
APPENDIX A: Copy of High School Survey (Mickelson, 1997)	298
APPENDIX B: Diversity Assessment Questionnaire	302
APPENDIX C: Revised Diversity Assessment Questionnaire	309
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol	316
APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Form	318
APPENDIX F: IRB Approval	320

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1: Dorothy Counts enters Harding High School, September 4 <sup>th</sup> , 1957	30
FIGURE 3.1: School expense per pupil, academic performance, and poverty status of CMS elementary schools, 2006-2007	96
FIGURE 3.2: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, magnet status, and economically disadvantaged student percentage, 2009-2010	98
FIGURE 4.1: General Path to Survey Link	117
FIGURE 5.1: School sites and percentage of Blacks in Mecklenburg County	132
FIGURE 5.2: Mode of transportation for Garinger graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	162
FIGURE 5.3: Mode of transportation for Independence graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	163
FIGURE 5.4: Mode of transportation for North Mecklenburg graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	164
FIGURE 5.5: Length of bus ride for Garinger graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	166
FIGURE 5.6: Length of bus ride for Independence graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	167
FIGURE 5.7: Length of bus ride for North Mecklenburg graduates from K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade	168
FIGURE 5.8: How much tension existed in your school between students of different racial or ethnic groups?	169
FIGURE 5.9: How do you believe your school experiences affect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups?	170
FIGURE 5.10: After high school, how prepared did you feel to work in a job setting where people are of a different racial or ethnic background than you are?	171
FIGURE 5.11: How comfortable are you with a work supervisor who is of a different racial or ethnic background than you?	171

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1: Overview of important state and federal court cases related to school desegregation	28-29
TABLE 3.1: Number and percent of citations by decade in five PICS social science amicus briefs	61
TABLE 3.2: Outcomes of school desegregation	76
TABLE 3.3: Outcomes of K-12 school racial segregation of Black and Hispanic students	79
TABLE 3.4: Overview of Nigrescence Theory, developed by Cross (1971, 1991, 1995, 2001)	87
TABLE 3.5: Overview of White racial identity development theory, developed by Helms (1986, 1993)	89
TABLE 3.6: School level racial and SES characteristics of elementary schools in 2002 and 2007	102
TABLE 4.1: Research questions and data sources	105
TABLE 4.2: Categorization of schools based on <i>Swann</i> ruling	112
TABLE 4.3: Demographic information of interviewees for each site	118
TABLE 5.1: Racial composition of three high schools in 1996-1997	134
TABLE 5.2: General yearbook information	136
TABLE 5.3: Degree of interracial contact based on yearbook analysis	140
TABLE 5.4: General academic information	143
TABLE 5.5: General school information, fundraising and teacher quality indicators	144
TABLE 5.6: General school information, student mobility	145
TABLE 5.7: Percentage of students in academic tracks	146
TABLE 5.8: High school, % African-American in English and Related Classes 1996-97	149

TABLE 5.9: High school, % African-American in Math “Core” 1996-97	150
TABLE 5.10: Highest educational attainment for mother by school site	151
TABLE 5.11: Who student has lived with for majority of life	152
TABLE 5.12: Indicators of parental involvement	153
TABLE 5.13: Indicators of academic resources at home	154
TABLE 5.14: Indicator of cultural capital	154
TABLE 5.15: How much effort do you put into your schoolwork?	155
TABLE 5.16: Hours worked in a paid job	155
TABLE 5.17: How far do you want to go in school? Aspirations	157
TABLE 5.18: How far do you intend to go in school? Expectations	157
TABLE 5.19: Schooling experiences and interests for graduates of Garinger, Independence and North Mecklenburg	173
TABLE 5.20: Simplified long-term outcomes from in-depth interviews	224
TABLE 5.21: Knowledge regarding <i>Brown</i> (1954) & <i>Swann</i> (1971)	225
TABLE 5.22: General perceptions regarding desegregated schools	226

## DEFINITION OF DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

***double-edged sword***: n.

1. Something that has or can have both favorable and unfavorable consequences.
2. A benefit that is also a liability, or that carries some significant but non-obvious cost or risk.

*Merriam-Webster, 2010*

## Personal Foreword

Like many native-born White southerners I have an ancestral history that includes slaveholding. Based on a family tree completed by my grandfather twenty years ago, we have sufficient evidence that family members on my mother's side fought on opposite sides of the Civil War. These distant relatives of mine split their family along ideological lines, with a father fighting for the Confederacy and a son fighting for the Union cause. In more recent family history, my great-grandfather was most likely a Klan member, while on the other side of the family, my grandfather was a well-known minister who preached racial equality. When she was a child, my mother has clear memories of a cross being burned on their front yard because a Black minister was invited to stay at their home when no hotels would rent him a room. I see the duality of my history as important, and the process of acknowledging all sides of my cultural and historical legacy encourages me. While many people would be ashamed of this legacy, I see this as a gift. If the great granddaughter of a Ku Klux Klan member can be an educator who fights for social justice in schools, then I think the issues we have as a nation can be solved. Undoubtedly, these issues are daunting, but approachable.

My personal identity was formed through a series of unique situations that created a steady stream of cognitive dissonance between what I should have experienced as a White, upper middle-class female with educated parents, and what I actually experienced. When I was four years old my mother worked in the family business and I spent many hours in daycare. I often sang with my daycare teacher during lessons, and one day she approached my mother about having me sing in her choir. My mother did not realize that she was the leader of a Black Gospel Children's Choir (one of the largest in Charlotte)



and I would be the only White member. Soon after, I began staying with my new choir director on the weekends. My parents often traveled for work and this was a win/win for all members involved. My parents knew I was being well taken care of and my caretaker was able to earn extra money while I got to play with all the children in the neighborhood and sing all day Sunday. We have pictures from this brief time in my life and they are quite amusing. I was the stereotypical White girl who could either sing or clap and move in unison with the rest of the choir. I could not do both. During large performances, I was often the main child soloist and it was always easy to identify my extended family in the audience.

The experience of living as a semi-adopted member of an African-American family for several weekends over the course of a year did not seem weird at the time, but now I realize the significance this experience had in shaping my worldviews. I was given insight into a Black family at such a young age that I was not able to make critical judgments or evaluate. It was just the way it was. They loved me, took care of me, and taught me to do something I love, though this came to an end when I was six. My grandmother came to a performance at the Baptist Church where we performed, heard me sing, and declared that I was ruining my voice. I was then shuffled to audition for the Charlotte Children's Choir at Queens College. This choir was the polar opposite of my previous experience, placing me in a peer group that contained some of the most privileged children in the city. Yet, even this stark contrast allowed me to develop what I like to think of as my ability to be comfortable in any situation. Some might call this being bi-cultural (LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H., Gerton, J., 1993) or culturally flexible (Carter, 1995, 2010).

This comfort in situations in which I am the “other” has continued throughout my life. I was the only White member of the NAACP at South Mecklenburg High School, I was the token female on the Varsity Wrestling Team for two years, I was the token female on the Maintenance Crew at NC State University, I lived in Venezuela for a year by myself and surrounded myself with locals rather than expatriates, and the majority of my career has been spent in schools that are predominantly non-White and non-Middle class.

Undoubtedly my sister has also had a dramatic influence on my life and the path I have taken as a student and in my career. My sister is older and has always been troubled. She has embodied every societal ill imaginable over the course of her life—mental illness, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, drug addiction, bulimia, homelessness, having multiple children while using drugs, prostitution, losing custody of her children, a criminal record, as well as stealing and lying to strangers, friends, and family alike. My family has assisted her, her children, and several of her long-term male companions over the years to live in a world with no education, no credit, no transportation, and a criminal record that often prevents legal employment. I have lived through and witnessed extreme versions of many of the experiences that often accompany poverty and racism, even though my sister is White, the fathers of her children are Black and her children are biracial. These are life experiences that most White, middle-class people never experience. This has allowed me to have a personal and often unique perspective on issues regarding race, class, and poverty.

While my family and personal experiences have clearly shaped my personal belief system regarding race, justice, and educational equity, I have also been deeply affected

by my schooling experiences. I entered Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in 1984 and graduated in 1997 from South Mecklenburg High School. I was a product of court-mandated desegregation as imposed by the *Swann v. Board of Education* decision in 1971; however, I never knew of this court case or fully understood its precursor, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), until after college. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I never understood the significance of the fact that the classes and schools I attended were generally racially balanced between 60% white and 40% black from kindergarten to twelfth grade. I was unaware that children around the United States were not bused to schools out of their immediate neighborhoods. I did not know that large, diverse county systems were the exception rather than the norm in the majority of the US. I never understood that the racially and socio-economically diverse world through which I moved throughout my years of schooling had been carefully constructed through decades of grassroots movements and court battles. This realization did not come to me until I entered the classroom as a teacher.

In 2001, as a Teach For America corps member, I attended a summer institute in Bronx, New York with over 600 lateral entry teachers from all over the United States. I was one of a handful of Southerners, and at that time I was not aware that my region of birth and childhood educational experiences were so important from an educational viewpoint. I was asked many questions about busing, and it was only through subsequent discussions that I realized my education had been so unique.

This unique aspect of my upbringing became particularly relevant when I began teaching in the South Bronx, and all the students were either African-American or Hispanic. I was one of few teachers who had actually attended schools that were not

racially isolated White middle-class institutions. My ability to navigate issues of race and class with ease was commented upon by peers and instructors alike. Upon reflection, I realized that I had been learning and working with people from different backgrounds than myself since before kindergarten. My life experiences and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools not only provided me with the academic background to teach, but also with the social and emotional skills to learn from and interact with others from different backgrounds. However, this skill set I've been practicing and developing since kindergarten was one that many of my Teach For America peers, with their homogeneous White middle-class school backgrounds and schooling experiences, did not have. In teaching, this skill set would prove to be a critical advantage.

Today, after working in elementary schools for 9 years, 4 years spent in schools with student populations that are 90%+ African-American, and 5 of these years in diverse classrooms, I see the value of diverse schools even more clearly. In our global economy and diverse community, learning to relate to and get along with different groups of people is a critical skill. Even though the desegregation mandate, which was firmly in place throughout my elementary and secondary years, provided *me* with these skills, did this mandate affect other students in a similar way? Did other graduates have similar experiences to mine? Did Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools provide other graduates from 1995-1998 with the skills needed to be successful in our diverse society? Though many schools in CMS were desegregated at the building level, placing students on academic tracks (that often correlated along race and class lines) was commonplace. Did students from different backgrounds interact and learn from one another? Did the school structures

in place in CMS schools place students on disparate life trajectories? Do graduates see their experiences as playing a positive role in the adults they have become?

While this study will certainly not answer all of these questions, it is a starting point. This study is also an attempt to provide insight into a reform that has been discounted as a viable tool in the fight for educational equity. As a student who experienced desegregated schooling firsthand and as a teacher who has taught in diverse and segregated classrooms, I believe in the power of and the need for diverse schooling. However, I also recognize the limitations of this reform and often reflect on the intended and unintended consequences of Charlotte's desegregation plan that was in effect from 1972–2002, as well as the consequences of the declaration of unitary status in 1999.

It is my hope that this research begins to illuminate the seemingly disparate schooling experiences of CMS graduates from 1995-1998, and the role that desegregation efforts had on their educational experiences. Did graduates of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools from 1995-1998 experience a double-edged sword? Did desegregation efforts, as implemented by CMS from 1984-1998, have both positive and negative aspects? It is my intention to begin to answer these questions in the following chapters.

Amy Hawn Nelson  
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## CHAPTER 1: Why Study Graduates of Desegregated Schools?

“A political movement is the necessary answer,” he began. “We cannot look to the courts to do it in the present age. We cannot look to the two political parties, the Republicans and Democrats, to do it. We need to reach out to a broader sector of the nation to initiate a struggle.” He urged me to reflect on one too frequently forgotten sector of the population: those hundreds of thousands of successful black adults who can witness to the consequences of desegregated schooling from their own experience as students. “We now have far more educated black adults who have participated in desegregated schooling and who don’t want to go back. We also have a lot more white adults who have experienced school integration and have seen it work successfully.” Most of these people are not “doing anything politically today,” he said, “but we should challenge them to act...”

- Jonathan Kozol interviewing Gary Orfield, *Shame of the Nation*, 2005, p. 221-222

In the above conversation with Gary Orfield, head of the Civil Rights Project and renowned scholar on the topic of desegregated schooling, journalist Jonathan Kozol posed a question regarding how educators can resist racially segregated, or “apartheid,” schooling in America. Orfield’s answer was clear—use the graduates of desegregated schools as a voice to demand change for future generations of school children.

Nationwide, there are more than a million graduates of desegregated schooling. Collectively, this population has not been politically active in educational reform, and has done little to advocate for diverse schools, even for their own children. Orfield suggests mobilizing these graduates to instigate a social movement to demand educational equity. However, little research has been conducted to determine if graduates are aware they attended desegregated schools. Furthermore, educational researchers have not determined whether graduates view their schooling experiences as positive and/or “worth it.”

Charlotte, North Carolina provides a unique opportunity to determine the feasibility of such a social movement. Thousands of graduates of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) existed under a school desegregation mandate from kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup>

grade. Yet, are graduates of CMS aware that they attended desegregated schools? Are graduates familiar with *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* (1971), the court case that mandated desegregated schools in Charlotte from the mid 70s to the late 90s? To draw upon Orfield's comments, did graduates "experience school integration" and did they see it "work successfully"? If not, what did they experience instead? Before educational reformers could possibly mobilize graduates of desegregated schools, researchers must first determine if graduates knew they attended desegregated schools and if they had a positive experience. This study attempts to do just this.

#### Statement of the Problem

Charlotte fought a decades-long battle to achieve desegregated schooling following the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* (1971) decision. To compensate for the widespread segregated housing patterns in the county, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) utilized a court-ordered desegregation plan from 1971-2002, which paired students from racially distinct neighborhoods, and as a result most of these children attended school together from kindergarten through 12th grade (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006). Following a series of court cases challenging race-based student assignments to schools, CMS was declared unitary in 1999, and the district instituted a neighborhood schools-based choice plan in 2002 (Mickelson, 2005). This plan, called the Family Choice Plan, guaranteed students a seat in their neighborhood school. They could opt to enter another school in their residential zone or in a magnet school if a seat was available. The neighborhood schools-based student assignment plan essentially created a

system of neighborhood schools. Given the racial and SES segregation of most neighborhoods, the Plan was organized in ways that ensured that schools became more racially isolated each year (Godwin, R.K., Leland, S., Baxter, A., Southworth, S., 2006; Mickelson, 2005). For example, in the 2001-2002 school year, the year before the choice plan was implemented, there were 7 hypersegregated (90%+ students were non-White) CMS Elementary Schools compared to 33 in 2006-2007 (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2008).

In light of the resegregation of CMS and many of our nation's schools (Orfield, 2009), should we accept desegregation's demise (Bell, 2007)? Or should we push toward the dream espoused by the visionary mandates of Brown? First, we must ask—do children benefit from desegregated schools? The preponderance of evidence suggests that integrated schools benefit all students (553 Social Scientists, 2006; Kurlaender & Yun, 2001, 2005; Linn & Welner, 2007; Mickelson, 2003, 2009; Mickelson & Bottia, 2010a, 2010b; Southworth, 2008; Wells, Holme, Revilla, Atanda, Korantemaa, 2009). Yet, it is important to note that the term *integrated* is not synonymous with *desegregated* (Linn & Welner, 2007). Desegregated schools “involve racial mixing at the school level,” whereas “integrated schools are structured so that contact has some meaningful chance to lead to improved outcomes” (Linn & Weiner, 2007, p. 9). Thus, desegregation must be understood as a first step towards the goal of integration.

High schools in CMS were desegregated, but arguably never integrated. In this way, diverse schools, schools that are not hypersegregated with one race/ethnicity, can be viewed as a continuum, with desegregated schools at one end and integrated schools at another. Legally, desegregation was only achieved in one high school in CMS in 1997,



Independence High School. All other high schools were racially diverse, and while generally viewed as desegregated by the public, many schools, including Garinger and North Mecklenburg High School, did not meet the court's definition as determined in *Swann* (1971).

With this distinction in mind, this study will investigate how the graduates of three Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools describe and make sense of their *desegregated* schooling experiences. I examine if graduates knew they attended schools under a court-ordered desegregation plan and their perception of their school as segregated or desegregated. Furthermore, I examine how graduates view their experiences and whether their schooling experiences lead them to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as an adult.

There has been relatively little research focusing on the perceptions of students who are graduates of desegregated schools. Wells and her colleagues (2004a; 2004b; 2009) conducted over 500 interviews with class of 1980 graduates from six high schools selected from all regions of the country. The participants attended desegregated schools only in high school and were considered pioneers in the process. Wells et al. (2009) found that desegregated schools fundamentally improved the overall quality of the students' lives and led them to value racial diversity. While the schools Wells et al. studied were desegregated, the racial mixing was generally on "White" terms, meaning that White students were seldom bused to distant neighborhoods and were rarely inconvenienced throughout the process of desegregation. In addition, schools within their study often propagated the myth of color-blindness, treating race as something that did not matter and had no impact on the lives of people of color (Wells et al., 2004a, 2009).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, graduates of these desegregated schools were prepared to exist and thrive in a diverse world; however, their adult world continued to be highly segregated (Wells et al., 2004a, 2009).

Members of the class of 1980 are very different from students who graduated from desegregated schools in more recent years. The class of 1980 came of age during the turbulent 1970s, a decade in which educational reform efforts dramatically changed the educational landscape of our nation (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In the mid 1970s, many school districts desegregated, either voluntarily or by court-ordered mandate, including Charlotte, NC. The students in the six communities studied by Wells et al. attended segregated schools in elementary and middle school and then transitioned into schools which were desegregated in the mid- to late 1970s in high school. Thus, graduates of 1980 were some of the first graduates of desegregated high schools; however, these graduates attended schools that were generally racially isolated K-8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Understandably, students who attended desegregated schools for the first time during their high school years could have a very different perspective on their schooling experiences than those who attended desegregated schools throughout all years of their schooling, like the participants in this study. Students of the class of 1980 viewed themselves as pioneers in desegregation. In contrast, students who graduated from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in the late 1990s did not view themselves in this way.

Thus far, I have been unable to locate any research on those graduates who attended desegregated schools throughout all years of their formal K-12 education once a system of desegregation was generally established. By generally established, I mean a student placement plan that was generally accepted rather than seen as politically volatile,

and which incurred limited public protest associated with the act of schooling. Smith (2004) provides a thorough account of the political undercurrents in Charlotte present from the mid 80s to the mid 90s. While there was clearly some unrest and passionate opposition to the desegregation plan, the most controversial tool of the plan, busing, continued to be supported by the majority of the School Board and City Council during these years (Smith, 2004), and from the mid 80s to the mid 90s desegregation efforts were widely supported in Charlotte (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006).

The graduates of CMS from 1995-1998 also offer unique perspectives because they are some of the few students in the US who were part of a school system that was under mandatory or voluntary desegregation orders for the entire time they were in school (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Matney, 1992; Orfield, 2001). Thus, they offer potential for new insights into the processes and consequences of desegregated schooling.

I intend to use the voices of the students from the classes of 1995-1998 from three CMS high schools with varying racial demographics, to explore the long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling. This population represents approximately 3000 students, many of whom entered kindergarten in 1984—the year in which CMS was acknowledged nationally for its efforts in working towards educational equality (Cole et al., 1984)—and graduated thirteen years later. During that time period, students throughout CMS generally experienced a racially balanced school composition of approximately 60% White and 40% Black. At this point in time, CMS continued to follow the *Swann* (1971) directive of treating White, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students as non-Black (and grouped with White students). An important factor in choosing to study the classes of 1995-1998 is the likelihood of encountering graduates, like myself, who were unaware

they were educated in a school system under court-mandate. Perhaps, a lack of identification with a political act will likely mark a difference between the perspectives and long-term effects from graduates of the late 1990s versus those of the politically charged 1970s and early 1980s. As a consequence, this unstudied population has potential to illuminate issues of implementation for desegregation plans and provide insight into the long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling.

The intended participants of this study are graduates of Independence High School<sup>1</sup>, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School. These three sites were chosen due to the racial composition of the schools in 1997, the target year for this study. Although the general goal of the court-mandated desegregation system was a racial balance that mirrored the community— approximately 40% non-White and 60% White—most schools varied significantly from this ideal. In fact, some schools were racially identifiably White while others were racially identifiably Black based on the formula that CMS employed at the time:  $\pm 15\%$  of the district's black population. In 1997 in CMS, 40% of students were Black. Thus, schools that were less than 25% Black were racially isolated White and those that were greater than 55% Black were racially isolated Black.

For the purpose of discussion, all three schools in this study are considered diverse because the schools were not hypersegregated with one race/ethnic group. In

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<sup>1</sup> In 1997, Independence had a popular countywide International Baccalaureate (IB) magnet program and North Mecklenburg had a smaller IB program. IB emphasizes international study, public service, and current events and the curriculum emphases could be considered a confounding factor in determining views of schooling experiences. However, the results of the study indicate that the views of IB students and non-IB students were similar, and therefore perceptions of desegregated schooling experiences were not dramatically influenced by the IB curriculum nor the IB service requirement.

1997, Independence High School had the most racial diversity of any high school within CMS with 35% of students being Black, and was the only high school considered desegregated based on the *Swann* (1971) mandate. Garinger High School was the most racially segregated, being 63% Black, while North Mecklenburg was the most segregated White school with only 22% of students being Black (Mickelson, 1997). While this difference in racial composition seems inconsequential, particularly between Independence (35%) and North Mecklenburg (22%), such distinctions in racial composition can bring about significant differences in the social, psychological, and academic climate of a school (Brown-Jeffy, 2006; 2009). By choosing schools that are racially isolated Black, racially balanced, and racially isolated White, I was able to investigate if school racial composition affected the schooling experiences, perceptions, and life outcomes of graduates.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the long-term effects of desegregated schooling when students exist within an established desegregated school system throughout their educational career. Long-term outcomes include: educational and occupational attainment, comfort with diverse individuals, positive attitudes towards race relations, sense of civic engagement, and increased interaction with other racial groups (such as living and working in diverse environments). To guide the collection of data in my study, I seek to answer the following general question: How do graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School from 1995-1998 describe and make sense of their schooling experiences, particularly in

regards to interracial contact, racial identity development and diverse understandings of greater society? From this overarching question stem several subsidiary questions:

- a) Were there differences in long-term outcomes for graduates between the three schools?
- b) Were graduates aware that schools in CMS were under a court-ordered desegregation plan during their years of schooling? Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school?
- c) Did the racial composition and organizational structure of schools affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development?
- d) Did experiences in desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults?

My hope is that responses to these questions will provide new understanding concerning desegregated schooling. These insights will enable educators and policy makers to critically evaluate the long-term intended and unintended consequences of school level racial concentration in a district with an established, generally accepted desegregation plan. Armed with the knowledge of the not-too-distant past, I advocate using the voices of those who experienced desegregation firsthand to provide feedback to policy makers and researchers regarding the effectiveness and limitations of the policy of desegregation.

#### Theoretical Framework

This study investigates the experiences of graduates of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools using the lens of critical theory, principally emphasizing the concepts of social reproduction, human agency, and cultural capital. Critical theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theories, which only sought to understand or explain societal forces (Anyon, 2009). Critical theory is concerned with “deconstructing hidden assumptions that govern society—especially those about the legitimacy of power relationships” (DeMarrais &

LeCompte, 1999, p. 27). The theoretical basis of critical theory has borrowed from other sociological traditions, including conflict theory as well as interpretivism's emphasis on human interaction to construct meaning.

Neo-Marxian critical theorists assert, "Schools are sites where power struggles between dominant and subordinate groups takes place" (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999, p. 31). Critical theory posits that schools play a major role in reproducing current patterns of social stratification. Schools have been identified as instruments of social reproduction in which students are prepared to occupy the same social classes as their parents (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; MacLeod, 1995; Willis, 1977). Students of color, in particular, are disproportionately represented among those of lower socioeconomic status from one generation to the next (Sirin, 2005). By valuing and rewarding the knowledge, habits, and culture of the dominant group and by devaluing and penalizing those of other groups, schools use cultural capital to maintain current systems of social stratification (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Delpit, 1995; DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Ferguson, 2000; hooks, 2003; Lareau, 2003). The cultural capital of individuals affect their levels of success in interacting with various institutions, such as K-12 schools, universities, and places of employment. Racially segregated schooling usually means socioeconomic and cultural isolation, effectively hindering the sharing of and access to important resources, networks, and forms of knowledge that are critical to educational and occupational success (Delpit, 1995; Kozol, 2005).

Despite the undeniable influence of oppressive social structures, critical theorists view human agency as the major catalyst for change (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Giroux, 1988). Human agency refers to an individual's ability to enact change at a

personal level. At the school level, where teachers and students interact with one another daily, all social actors involved take away important understanding and meanings from those encounters. Forms of knowledge, skills, and possessions that are valued and rewarded send strong messages about the superiority or inferiority of a culture, which are then internalized by students of all races (Delpit, 1995; Fine, 2000; hooks, 2003; Kozol, 2005; Tatum, 1997). Drawing on these concepts and theories, this analysis will explore the nature and impact of the meanings drawn from the schooling experiences of students who had the opportunity to participate in desegregated schooling throughout the majority of their K-12 education.

#### Definition of Terms

As an educator, I am committed to accessibility in research and intellectual endeavors. While transparency is a goal, I am cognizant that terms in any specialized field can remain elusive. For this reason, I operationalize the terms I use and provide definitions of terms to aid in the understanding of a complex interdisciplinary topic, as well as to support the interpretive process of this work.

**African-American:** A person born in the United States who is of African descent. Used interchangeably with the term “Black.”

**Apartheid Schooling:** Referring to the South African formalized system of racial segregation. Informally, a term referring to a school that is 99%+ one racial/ethnic group. Popularized by Kozol (2006) in reference to segregated schooling in the United States.

**Black:** A person born in the United States who is of African descent. Intentionally capitalized. Used interchangeably with the term “African-American.”

**Court-Ordered School Desegregation:** “Refers to the desegregation efforts that school districts undertake because they have been ordered to do so by the courts. Courts have the authority to order desegregation where there has been a history of prior racial segregation or discrimination that the U.S. Constitution or other laws and statutes require school districts to redress” (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Le, 2008, p.5).



**De Facto Segregation:** Segregation by practice (de facto means “concerning the fact” in Latin). Racial segregation that occurs due to economic and social conditions, such as residential patterns, versus being law. (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Lee, 2008).

**De Jure Segregation:** Segregation by law (de jure means “following the decree” in Latin) (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Lee, 2008).

**Desegregation:** Racial mixing at the school level; can be court-mandated. Desegregation is viewed as the first step towards integration (Linn & Welner, 2007).

**Desegregation Plan:** A plan developed to address mandates of Court-Ordered School Desegregation. The *Swann* decision determined that federal courts have “broad authority to order desegregation remedies upon finding a constitutional violation, and that busing to achieve desegregated schools is permissible” (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Lee, 2008, p.9). In this way, busing is merely one tool that can be utilized as part of a desegregation plan.

**Equity-Minded Reform:** Refers to those reforms aimed at benefiting African-Americans, Latinos, the poor, and others who hold less powerful positions in schools and communities (Oakes, Welner, Yonezawa, & Allen, 1998).

**Hypersegregated:** Schools with more than 90% enrollment of a specific race/ethnic group (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Le, 2008).

**Integration:** The bringing together of people from different racial and ethnic groups into an organization, without restrictions and with equal association. Integrated schools involve meaningful contact that leads to improved outcomes (Linn & Welner, 2007). Integration is not synonymous with desegregation, and therefore cannot be used interchangeably.

**Race:** Generally seen as a social construction that varies with politics across time, “A concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so-called ‘phenotypes’), selection of these particular human features for purposes for racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.55).

**Racially Balanced:** Where every school has a similar percentage of various ethnic and racial groups of students, based on the district demographics. Generally measured in terms of non-White students. (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005).

**Racial Segregation:** “Unevenness in patterns of enrollment or the extent to which these patterns are racially unbalanced” (Clotfelter et al., 2005). First generation segregation refers to segregation at the school level. Second generation segregation refers to segregation at the classroom level (Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989). Segregation is a function of the school’s demographics relative to the districts overall population. Varying formulas may be used to determine segregation levels. The standards used by the CMS

Board of Education while it operated under the *Swann* orders utilize “a  $\pm$  15 percent standard bandwidth around the district’s percentage of Black students” (Mickelson, 2005). It is important to note that the demographics of CMS have dramatically changed since 1997. Presently, CMS is 4.1% American Indian / Multiracial, 4.9% Asian, 15.9% Hispanic, 33.5% White, and 41.2% African-American (CMS, 2010). This means that the standards utilized under *Swann* would no longer be appropriate.

**Racially Isolated:** In the general literature, this term often refers to a school or organization that is comprised of more than 90% of one racial/ethnic group, particularly when existing within a diverse community. Varying formulas may be used to determine segregation levels. In CMS in 1997, 40% of students were Black. Using the formula CMS employed at the time,  $\pm$  15% of the district’s black population, schools that were less than 25% Black were racially isolated White and those that were greater than 55% Black were racially isolated Black.

**Residential Segregation:** Racial segregation exists due to patterns of housing. Segregated neighborhoods often create segregated schools due to the basic feature of most student assignment policies – schools draw students from the immediate geographic region (Frankenberg, 2005). Housing patterns exist for a myriad of reasons, including but not limited to: racially restrictive housing practices, personal preference, proximity to work and community organizations, and disparate income levels between Whites and non-Whites (De Leeuw, M., Whyte, M., Ho, D., 2008).

**Resegregation:** Resegregation is the process by which schools become racially imbalanced and/or return to prior levels of segregation after being desegregated (Orfield, 2005).

**Students of Color:** Term referring to individuals who are not White. Can include Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American and multiracial individuals. This term is used specifically to refer to students without setting up White as a standard category.

**Tracking:** The sorting and grouping of students in academic tracks. Deemed problematic due to students of color being disproportionately represented in less rigorous tracks, regardless of ability, therefore negatively impacting their educational trajectory (Oakes, 2005).

**Unitary School System:** A school system in which the school district has eliminated the old racially segregated dual school system to the extent practical. *Green v. New Kent County* (1968) identified seven factors to determine if a school district has achieved unitary status, including: extracurricular activities, transportation, administrative staff assignment, relative quality of education, faculty assignment, facilities and resources, and student assignment. (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Orfield & Lee, 2007)

**White:** A person born in the United States who is of European descent. Intentionally capitalized.

## Summary

Fifty-six years following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and over a year after the election of the first multiracial president, America looks very different in 2010 than it did in 1954. The sociology and politics of modern American life, including education, have shifted enormously, and some modern commentators have gone so far as to assert that we could be entering a post-racial society (*The Rise of the Obamacons*, 2008; Schoor, 2008). However, the majority of citizens, academics, and pundits alike still acknowledge inequities in our society based on race, class, and gender.

While the achievement gap between middle class and poor, and between White students and students of color has been eradicated in individual schools scattered throughout the Nation, the continuing general trend is for students of color to receive a substandard education. Countless reforms have been enacted, and policies such as voluntary integration plans and court-mandated desegregation plans strove for and have arguably achieved some degree of equity and excellence in some schools for a brief time (Petrovich & Wells, 2005). However, as implemented in Charlotte, NC, from 1984-1998, the years in which respondents for this study were in school, did the court-ordered desegregation plan benefit graduates? Did such policies benefit students in providing equitable and rigorous opportunities to all students academically and socially? Or, did graduates experience both positive and negative aspects of what has been viewed by some as an unpopular “social experiment” (Gaillard, 2006)?

As mentioned previously, the original conception of this study draws from the work of Wells, Holmes, Atanda, & Revilla (2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005, 2009) in their

study of the class of 1980. In *Tackling Racial Segregation One Policy at a Time: Why School Desegregation Only Went So Far* (2005), they state,

Somewhere between the educational outcome data and the politics of desegregation lies the complicated, and no doubt sometimes contradictory, story of the effect of this public policy in people's lives. Missing from the research literature and the public discourse are the personal perspectives on school desegregation across different local contexts. Ideally such perspectives would help to answer whether the efforts to desegregate the public schools were worthwhile. (p.2142)

Desegregation is an equity-minded reform that has countless intended and unintended consequences, and in this study, is being compared metaphorically to a double-edged sword. A double-edged sword is colloquially referred to as a paradox, something that is both helpful and harmful, a benefit that is also a liability that carries some significant but non-obvious cost or risk (Merriam-Webster, 2010). The term originates from the two edges of a blade. The dull side can be used as a tool for practical purposes, such as prying the top off something, while the sharp edge is used to cause harm, sometimes unintentionally. The use of a double-edged sword as a metaphor for desegregation is provocative and somewhat counter to the annals of research on the topic. However, the few studies that directly talk to the graduates of desegregated schools tell of complicated and somewhat contradictory stories of their experiences. As such, existing studies lend credence to the idea that desegregation reform can be framed as a double-edged sword, a tool that, when used, has countless intended and unintended consequences. Holistically, were the efforts from 1984-1998 (the years in which

participants in this study attended school) to desegregate schools in Charlotte, NC worthwhile, even though such efforts presumably had both negative and positive repercussions? I look to the personal perspectives of graduates to begin to answer this question.

### Significance of Study

Through the use of a comparative case study utilizing multiple data sources, I hope to develop a better understanding of how graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg from 1995-1998 describe and make sense of their schooling experiences. Most importantly, from the eyes of the graduates, was it worth it? The content of this research is deeply personal and involves a population that is difficult to access; however, the importance of better understanding the perceptions of graduates of desegregated schools is critical to guide future educational reform. While the work of Wells et al. (2009) have provided some insight into the graduates of students who attended desegregated schools in high school, educational researchers do not yet have insight into the perspectives of those graduates who attended desegregated schools from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This study also offers insight into the perspectives of graduates who were in the same school system but attended separate schools, each with varying racial compositions.

The importance of using case study methodology with an emphasis on qualitative data was recently highlighted by a group of leading researchers on the topic of diverse schools. In 2007, the American Sociological Association held a series of meetings regarding the future of research regarding the impact of race and socioeconomic status on educational outcomes. The attendees agreed on several areas of focus for future research:

1) Past and current research on this topic focuses on academic achievement more so than other important aspects of schooling (including intergenerational perpetuation of racial stereotypes, educational and occupational attainment, living and working in integrated environments, etc.), and this should be remedied; 2) Qualitative and multiple-method research designs are needed; and 3) Examination of individual student experiences of those students that are neither White or Black is critical, particularly due to the changing demographics of our nation (Mickelson, 2010). The design and topic of this study address all three areas of focus as laid out by members of the ASA.

The results of this study further our understanding of long-term outcomes of diverse schooling, thus providing valuable information to educators and policy makers who are focused on finding reforms that have the greatest impact on short-term and long-term outcomes of schooling, while pursuing the dual goals of equity and excellence. To ensure that educational policy supports the diverse needs of all students, policy makers must see the potential of all reforms, from desegregation efforts to educational adequacy litigation, as viable options to pursue diverse schools as an equity-minded reform that benefits individuals and communities.

## CHAPTER 2: The Greater Context of Charlotte, NC

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

- Chief Justice Earl Warren, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954

In our national discourse, education has been portrayed as the “great equalizer” of society, a meritocratic institution where hard work and perseverance are rewarded by a successful and productive life for any hardworking student (Tatum, 1992). Yet, the 56 years following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling have illustrated to members of society that positive educational outcomes for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or SES, remains an elusive goal. Although many educational reforms have been proposed through legislative action and lawsuits, few have been implemented successfully for all students.

Wells & Crain (1997) provide an apt metaphor regarding the perceived effectiveness of civil rights legislation and court battles, stating “Under such policies Blacks were suddenly unshackled and then expected to compete in a contest in which Whites had a 200-year head start—a contest for which Whites had written the rules and constructed the meaning of ‘merit’” (p.2). Whether this head start is due to the historical legacy of racism in our country and/or pervasive inequitable structures in schools, the

opportunity to receive an excellent education, regardless of race and socioeconomic status, is a promise that has yet to be fulfilled.

In this chapter, I introduce desegregation as an educational reform that is difficult to evaluate. Second, I discuss the role of the courts, both state and federal, as a driving force behind desegregation efforts until the 1990s, when the courts began to constrict options available to school districts pursuing diverse schools. This section includes an overview of court cases that are precursors to *Swann* (1971). Third, I chronicle desegregation efforts in Charlotte, NC. Fourth, I provide a general overview of desegregation's counter story, the often untold experiences of Blacks under desegregation plans. Next, I assess the overall "success" of desegregation in Charlotte. Lastly, I offer a brief overview of desegregation efforts nationally, finishing with a discussion of adequacy lawsuits as a promising reform strategy for the future.

### Desegregation as Educational Reform

Indoor plumbing, heat, and blackboards were once seen as innovations that would revolutionize schooling (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Now, from a modern perspective, these innovations are seen as basic necessities. Yet, arguably, schools have not changed dramatically in the years since heat and separate bathrooms for girls and boys became commonplace. Schools are familiar institutions, and due to personal experience with schools, everyone believes he/she is an education expert. In the public eye, high school is an American institution characterized by similar experiences that are most commonly romanticized in public media. Yet, the reality is that high schools in America differ



dramatically, and there is no generalized common experience. Although education reform is often a political rallying cry, there is a clear hesitancy toward reform that deviates from the vision of a “real school” (Metz, 1990), for congruence with this “cultural template has helped maintain the legitimacy of the institution in the minds of the public” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.9). When schools attempt to depart from this consensual model, conflict arises. When reforms attempt to address basic institutional changes or the “eradication of deep social injustices,” the suitable period of evaluation may be a generation or more (Tyack & Cuban, p.7). For this reason, educational reform, particularly reform that conflicts with deeply ingrained belief systems regarding race and class, is difficult to implement and evaluate.

In *Landing on a Wrong Note: The Price We Pay for Brown*, Ladson-Billings (2004) calls for a greater historical awareness regarding race and school reform. She states,

Slavery existed legally in North America for almost 250 years. An apartheid-like social segregation was legally sanctioned for another hundred years. The United States as a nation is but 228 years old and existed as a slave nation longer than it has existed as a free one. The norms, customs, mores, and folkways that surround our racial ecology are not easily cast aside. Our attempt to deal with racial problems through our schools is an incomplete strategy. (p.10)

Ladson-Billings draws attention to a critical point in reflecting on desegregation as an educational reform. She argues, that the desegregation of schools has been utilized, generally unsuccessfully, as a way to tackle the race issue in America. Such a unilateral approach to a multifaceted problem is problematic and can explain why desegregation

policies “only went so far” (Wells et al., 2005, p. 2141). Schools mirror society.

Changing schools without changing other institutions has subverted educational reforms and reduced their effectiveness; as one example, the efforts toward the integration of schools have been less successful when other public institutions remain segregated.

While many reform efforts have become somewhat politically unpopular, we can view controversial reforms enacted in the 1960s and 70s as fairly successful, including: bilingual education, special education, women’s sports, and minority scholarships. Such reforms are now commonplace and provide “access and success for people previously excluded from the education system” (Petrovich & Wells, 2005, p.6). However, it is important to note that a few dedicated educators did not create these reforms, but rather they grew from social movements that spanned decades and enlisted thousands of people from across the nation fighting for equal rights in all areas of society. Such grassroots social movements drove the legislative, executive, and judicial actions that eventually made such reforms law (Lau, 2004). And decisions such as *Brown* (1954) created essential space in the public realm for “new kinds of discursive and critical moves that marginalized communities might make” (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 9). Communities throughout the nation, including Charlotte, saw *Brown* (1954) as a call to action, although this action was to be slow and arduous (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Kluger, 2004).

#### Desegregation and Educational Rights in the Courts

As shown in Table 2.1, the battle for school desegregation began as early as 1848 in Boston, MA, when lawyers argued that segregated schools were harmful to children (Kluger, 2004). Over 40 years later, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld the constitutionality of ‘separate but equal’ accommodations for individuals of different

cases, a court case that was originally decided for railway cars but became the legal basis for the separation of races in public spaces. One challenge to the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine was successful in 1936, when a Black man was granted admission to Maryland Law School in *Murray v. Pearson* (1936) (Kluger, 2004). While these challenges to racial equality were scattered or seemingly isolated for many years, the collective consciousness of America was moving toward a tipping point.

Many view Jackie Robinson’s integration of baseball in 1947 as a milestone, or President Truman’s order for the desegregation of the armed forces in 1948 as an important step towards legally sanctioned racial equality (Ancheta, 2006). Regardless of the impetus, the fight for civil rights was well in motion by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the Civil Rights Movement, the courts were used as a springboard for change, with many campaigns being led by the legal defense fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1950, two court cases were decided that again challenged the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine. *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1950) declared that a student could not be separated from his classmates (a student was forced to sit in areas marked “Reserved for Colored” during classes and meals), while *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) deemed a separate facility built for Black students as unequal. Four years later, the *Brown I* (1954) decision overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) with the discouraging *Brown II* decision coming the following year in 1955. Largely due to the efforts of the NAACP’s legal defense fund and lawyers

such as Thurgood Marshall<sup>2</sup>, in 1955, following *Brown II* (1955), schools were ordered to desegregate with “all deliberate speed.”

*Brown I* (1954) proclaimed that segregated schools are inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional. The principles of *Brown I* (1954) diffused into all aspects of public life and supported the developing Civil Rights Movement. Supporters of the earlier decision were displeased with the *Brown II* (1955) decision. The language “all deliberate speed” was seen by critics as too ambiguous to ensure reasonable haste in compliance with the court's decision. Southern states and school districts interpreted *Brown II* (1955) as legal justification for resisting, delaying, and avoiding school desegregation for years—in many cases for a decade or more—using such tactics as closing down school systems and using state money to finance "private" (segregated) schools (Kluger, 2004). The most common tactic was "token" integration, as utilized in Charlotte, where a few carefully selected Black children were admitted to White schools, but the vast majority remained in underfunded, unequal Black schools. Undoubtedly, *Brown II* hindered the implementation of *Brown I*, and it is generally credited with undermining the spirit of the original decision (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

In 1965, the NAACP filed on behalf of Darius Swann and nine other families suing Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools for inadequate desegregation efforts, with Julius Chambers arguing the case (Gaillard, 2006). The judge ruled in favor of Charlotte-Mecklenburg based on a lack of precedent for forcing integration beyond token efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> One of the most well known members of the NAACP at this time was Thurgood Marshall, the lawyer representing the plaintiff in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) who later became the nation's first African-American Supreme Court Justice (1967-1991).

However, just three years later, in *Green v. New Kent County* (1968), the Supreme Court determined that school choice plans were not sufficient, and school systems had to eliminate desegregation “root and branch” (Kluger, 2004). *Green* (1968) became the impetus for the NAACP and Chambers to refile *Swann* and ultimately win the case (Douglas, 1995). The *Swann* (1971) decision declared that school systems were to use desegregation plans and busing, if necessary, to integrate schools (Gaillard, 2006).

Efforts to desegregate the schools nationally did not peak until the late 1960s and early 1970s, and “the only period in which there was active positive support by both the courts and the executive branch of the government was the four years following the enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act” (Orfield, 2001, p. 2). During this period, federal education officials, the Department of Justice, and the high courts all maintained strong and reasonably consistent pressure for achieving actual desegregation. Efforts to “implement the desegregation mandate of *Brown* were inextricably intertwined with a broader social insurgency from below” (Lau, 2004, p.2). During these years, desegregation policy was transformed from a very gradual anti-discrimination policy to one of rapid and full integration.

*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973) was considered the first step backwards in the use of the courts to compel school reform (Kluger, 2004). This case determined that using property taxes to fund schools is not a violation of the Equal Protection Clause in the U.S. Constitution. This effectively decided that the right to an education is not part of the U.S. Constitution and instead it is under the realm of state governance since education is generally identified as a state-level function of government. This case is important in understanding the role of state-based adequacy

lawsuits in modern school reform efforts because it largely shifted the fight for educational adequacy from the federal courts to the state courts (Rebell, 2005). If *San Antonio* (1973) was the first step back, *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) seemed to be the second. *Milliken* (1974) determined that a district court cannot mandate an inter-district busing plan unless the districts involved were legally responsible for the segregation across districts (Kluger, 2004). The significance of *Milliken* (1974) is that it ended mandatory metropolitan area school assignments, the case is important in light of current reform efforts that focus on *voluntary* inter-district busing plans.

The next case that would have a dramatic impact on the status of desegregation in Charlotte was *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell* (1991), in which the court decided that a school system can be released from a desegregation mandate if “good-faith” efforts have been attempted for a substantial period of time (Kluger, 2004). This case set the groundwork for districts to be declared unitary, and therefore not under the direction of a court’s desegregation mandate. *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) took this even further, saying that a school system could be released from court supervision, even if “vestiges of segregation” remain (Kluger, 2004). Similarly, in *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995) the court ruled that districts are not required to address racial disparities in schools that result from ‘de facto’ segregation (Kluger, 2004).

Soon after, in 1997, *Swann* (1971) was challenged by William Capacchione, who claimed his child was denied entrance to a magnet school based on her race. This suit became *Belk & Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1999). In 1999, Judge Potter ruled that CMS was unitary, and issued an injunction against the use of race in student assignment and the allocation of "educational opportunities," and

mandated that a new student assignment plan be in place for the 2000-2001 school year (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b). In November 2000, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that CMS was not unitary in some areas such as facilities, student assignment, student achievement and transportation and the case returned to the lower court for reconsideration. Areas such as faculty, staff, and extracurricular activities and student discipline were considered unitary (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b). Less than two months later, in January 2001, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed to an "en banc" or full panel hearing. In September 2001, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the earlier court ruling that CMS had achieved "unitary status." Soon after, the Board of Education voted not to appeal the ruling (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b). In April 2002, the United States Supreme Court announced that they would not hear the petitions filed by the plaintiffs in the *Capacchione* case (petitions filed to have the school district pay for lawyer's fees). This decision let stand the Fourth Circuit Court's decision in 2001 affirming the 1999 decision that the district had achieved unitary status. Consequently, a new student assignment plan, not based on race, began in 2002-2003 (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b).

In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* (2007), the most recent Supreme Court decision addressing desegregation efforts, the Court declared that "diversity is a compelling interest," yet schools are limited in their ability to adopt measures that take race into account to achieve this goal.

Table 2.1 presents an overview of important court cases dealing with school desegregation, beginning with the progression of cases that led to *Brown*, those cases that guided the implementation of *Brown*, and those more modern cases that have led to the

gradual reversal of *Brown* (1954). While the court challenges related to the racial composition of schools have been an enduring force in the history of educational policy, presently the role of the courts at the federal and state level in driving educational reform is unknown. The most promising course of action seems to revolve around educational adequacy cases at the state level, and this topic will be discussed at the end of this chapter.



Table 2.1  
*Overview of Important State and Federal Court Cases Related to School Desegregation*

Court Case	Date	Overview
<i>Benjamin F. Roberts v. City of Boston</i>	1848	Abolitionist Charles Sumner argued case for 5-year old Sarah Roberts to go to a White school. Argument that segregation was harmful to <i>all</i> children. Court maintained current segregation practices. Cited as precedent by state courts and the Supreme Court (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> , 163 U.S. 537	1896	Primary legal referent the <i>Brown</i> reversed. Upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation in public accommodations. Generally understood as the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine (Ladson-Billings, 2005).
<i>Murray v. Pearson</i> 169 Md. 478	1936	Murray, seeking admission to Maryland Law School, was denied due to race. Court order admission (Kluger, 2004).
<i>McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents</i> 339 U.S. 637	1950	Court struck down regulation that forced Black student admitted into Univ. of Oklahoma to sit behind a railing marked “Reserved for Colored” during classes and meals (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Sweatt v. Painter</i> 339 U.S. 629	1950	Sweatt was refused admission to the Law School of the University of Texas on the grounds that the Texas State Constitution prohibited integrated education. State built law school specifically for Blacks. Court reversed decision saying that separate facility was not equal (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Brown v. Board of Education I</i> , 347 U.S. 483	1954	Overtured <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> . Determined that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional under the 14 <sup>th</sup> Amendment Equal Protection Clause (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Brown v. Board of Education II</i> , 349 U.S. 294	1955	Supreme Court declares that district courts can proceed with “all deliberate speed” in eliminating school segregation (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools</i> , 402 U.S. 1	1965	Judge J. Braxton Craven ruled in favor of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, because there was no requirement in the Constitution to act purposely to increase racial mixing (Douglas, 1995).
<i>Green v. County School Board of New Kent County</i> , 391 U.S. 430	1968	Court declares that local districts must eliminate traces of prior racial discrimination through whatever means necessary, school choice plans are not sufficient (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education</i> , 402 U.S. 1	1971	Determined that courts have broad authority in designing desegregation plans, and using busing is permissible (Kluger, 2004).
<i>San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez</i> , 411 U.S. 1	1973	School financing based on local property taxes is an unconstitutional violation of the Equal Protection Clause. Interpreted to mean that the right to an education is not part of U.S. Constitution (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Milliken v. Bradley</i> , 418 U.S. 717	1974	Determined that a district court cannot mandate an inter-district busing plan unless the district involved was liable for the segregation across districts (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell</i> , 498 U.S. 237	1991	A school system can be released from desegregation mandate if school system has complied, in good faith, and such efforts have been maintained for a reasonable period and traces of segregation have been practically eliminated (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Freeman v. Pitts</i> , 503 U.S. 467	1992	A school system can be released from court supervision if good faith efforts have been attempted for a substantial period of time, even if vestiges of segregation remain (Kluger, 2004).

<i>Missouri v. Jenkins</i> , 515 U.S. 70	1995	Ruled that districts are not required to address racial disparities in education that are the result of <i>de facto</i> (segregation that is not due to the law) segregation (Kluger, 2004).
<i>Belk &amp; Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education</i> Nos. 99-2389, 99-2391	1999	CMS declared "unitary" and therefore free of the desegregation mandate in place after <i>Swann</i> . In April 2002, the Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b).
<i>Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1</i> , 551 U.S. 701	2007	Court declares that "diversity is a compelling interest," yet schools are limited in their ability to adopt measures that take race into account to achieve this goal. Use of individual student's race prohibited in most cases (Orfield & Lee, 2007).

### Desegregation Efforts in Charlotte, NC

Following *Brown I* (1954), token desegregation efforts in Charlotte, NC, were thrust into the spotlight in 1957 when graphic pictures of Dorothy Counts were transmitted by wire services throughout the world, including the front cover of *The New York Times*, see Figure 2.1. The pictures depict a tall African-American 15-year-old walking in the all-white Harding High School while being taunted and spit upon by a White mob. During the same school year, three other African-American students were admitted into Charlotte schools without serious incident. Gus Sanders became the first African-American to graduate from Central High School two years later. However, such measures were merely symbolic, and schools in Charlotte continued to be segregated for almost two decades following the 1954 court decision.

Figure 2.1

Dorothy Counts enters Harding High School, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1957



Source: Martin, 1957

The political, social, legal and economic context of the desegregation of Charlotte's schools is a narrative that spans more than a century and continues today. The role of the *Brown* decision and the subsequent development of Charlotte's national reputation as a progressive Southern City has been widely chronicled and discussed (see Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Smith, 2004). And to understand the narrative surrounding Charlotte it is essential to view *Brown* "not as the result of America as a good and altruistic nation but rather the result of the decision's particular historical and political context" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p.3). In Charlotte, the context of desegregation was more influenced by political and economic considerations than philanthropic goals, with the struggle for quality education often being commandeered by the White power elite to advance economic interests (see Smith, 2004, for a thorough account). Smith states, "From an educational perspective, school desegregation may not have fulfilled its

many promises, but politically and economically it was a huge success (2004, p.4). School desegregation was implemented as an educational reform; however, Smith contends that the academic achievement of student's of color did not dramatically improve under the desegregation mandate. However, due to nationally known desegregation efforts, the city of Charlotte was viewed as racially harmonious and progressive and this led to tremendous economic growth.

Much of this success can be explained by what has been termed the theory of interest-convergence developed by Bell (1980). Bell states, "The interest of [b]lacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of [w]hites" (1980, p.523). He goes further saying that the *Brown* decision was not solely about the immorality of racial inequality, but is also appealed to "those whites in policymaking positions able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow abandonment of segregation" (p.524). Due to the varied interests served by desegregation, particularly those of the business elite, Charlotte has long been viewed as a city that made desegregation work (Orfield, 1981; Cole, Grijalva, Jablinske, Jacobs, & Jones, 1984). The following section will outline the developments that led to this perception of Charlotte as a city with desegregated schools.

### *Leading to Swann*

Following the token desegregation efforts of the late 1950s, CMS faced pressure to desegregate from the national and local level (Gaillard, 2006). In the 1962-1963 school year CMS began assigning children to two schools based on geography rather than race. By 1965, the year *Swann* was first filed, fifty schools were using geography as a basis for enrollment, yet only 3 percent of the more than 20,000 Black children were assigned to a

majority White school (Desegregation: School board sees some changes, 1965). From a modern lens, such actions do not seem noteworthy, but North Carolina was ahead of the curve compared to other Southern states, and, as such, was viewed as somewhat progressive (Douglas, 1995).

Meanwhile, local Black leaders were preparing for a local challenge to school segregation. Darius Swann was recruited as the lead plaintiff when his son was denied a place in the desegregated school closest to their home (Douglas, 1995). The Swann family had previously lived in integrated communities in India as missionaries for the Presbyterian Church and argued that their son was accustomed to an integrated schooling environment. In 1965, Judge J. Braxton Craven ruled *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* in favor of Charlotte-Mecklenburg because there was no precedent to imply that districts had to act purposely to increase racial mixing (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*). The case was one of several simultaneous attempts to litigate for racial equality in Charlotte, including one case that pushed for the integration of the Shrine Bowl, a popular football game between area White high schools. The Shrine Bowl litigation most likely precipitated the bombing of four prominent Black leaders in Charlotte, including the office of Julius Chambers, the lead attorney of *Swann* (Douglas, 1995). Regarding this series of events, Douglas (1995, p.123) states, “Charlotte would survive the November bombings with its progressive image largely intact, but the incident energized the black community to take more forceful steps to challenge various aspects of racial discrimination in the city.”

By the end of the 1960s, Charlotte continued to be one of the most residentially segregated American cities (Hanchett, 1998), but a higher percentage of its students

attended desegregated schools than other large Southern cities (Orfield, 2004). In this way Charlotte was considered progressive when compared to other Southern cities, however local civil rights activists continued to press on for racial equality in Charlotte. In 1968, the Supreme Court ruled on what became an important case nationally, particularly for Charlotte (Smith, 2004). The court held that New Kent County's freedom of choice plan did not constitute adequate compliance with the mandate of *Brown II* (1955) and that school systems who previously had dual systems of education had an “affirmative duty to take whatever steps it could to convert to a unitary system in which racial discrimination would be eliminated root and branch” (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 1968). The Supreme Court-mandated that the school board must formulate new plans and steps towards realistically converting to a desegregated system. The decision “unleashed a flurry of desegregation suits and in time dramatically affected nearly every urban school system in the United States” (Douglas, 1995, p.129), including Charlotte. This 1968 Supreme Court decision became the basis for reopening *Swann*.

In the late 60s, New Kent County, Virginia, had two schools with thirteen hundred students, making desegregation a fairly straightforward task (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 1968). In contrast, Charlotte was one of the largest districts in the South due to city/county consolidation in 1960, making desegregation of the 535 square mile county extremely difficult without extensive movement of students. Yet, just months after the *Green* (1968) decision, lawyers from the NAACP asked that the *Swann* case be reopened with the understanding that busing was the only way possible to desegregate a city with such extreme residential segregation (Gaillard, 2006).

*The Reluctant Support of Swann*

In April of 1969, Judge James McMillian ruled that the school board's previous obligation of merely refraining "from active legal racial discrimination" had been replaced with an "affirmative duty" to eliminate "the lasting effects of...historical apartheid" and ordered the school board to develop a pupil assignment plan that would need to be in place by the fall of 1970 (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971). The controversial decision was widely resisted, and William Poe, the Chair of the School Board, became the key figure in the legal resistance (Gaillard, 2006). However, a pupil assignment plan was instituted in 1970, and at this point Charlotte had "become a focal point in the national debate over busing" (Douglas, 1995, p. 162). The case went to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals then on to the Supreme Court, where the Justices addressed five major issues. First, were racial quotas required as a remedy for past segregation? The justices ruled that such targets were not required but could be used as a starting point. Second, were one-race schools forbidden? The court ruled that they were not. Third, could schools be clustered, paired, or could attendance boundaries be construed to offset residential segregation? The courts declared that this was acceptable and somewhat expected. Lastly, could a judge order the busing of students from one noncontiguous zone to another? The Justices said that such "remedial techniques" were permitted (Gaillard, 2006; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971). While the decision was somewhat unexpected, many community members, including William Poe, accepted the court's judgment as the "law of the land", and the steam went out of much of the opposition (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Smith, 2004).

From 1971 – 2001, the community of Charlotte-Mecklenburg grappled with the mandate of *Swann* (1971) to provide equal access to education for all children in a city and county that had almost complete neighborhood racial segregation. Due to existing segregated housing patterns, CMS ultimately accepted a desegregation plan that included an elaborate combination of paired schools and busing, which often placed the burden on Black students. The greatest burden was placed on young Black students due to the general policy of bussing students to White neighborhoods in grades K-3 and Black neighborhoods in grades 4-6. Black students were bused between 10-13 years of their schooling, whereas white students were bused an average of 2-3 years (Douglas, 1995). The result was racial balance among students in every school—approximately 40% Black and 60% white and other students (Mickelson, 2005).

This plan proved to be successful and was hailed as a national model for large desegregated school systems (Orfield, 1981; Cole et al., 1984). The plan was a success for a number of reasons. First, in 1960, the city and county consolidated the four existing school systems (Black and White systems of the county and the city) into one system. The *Swann* (1971) decision mandated desegregation by any remedy deemed necessary, and this consolidation eliminated the option for those who opposed the legislation to move right outside city limits and create a White suburban enclave, as had occurred in other cities throughout the United States (Orfield, 1981). Second, full inclusion of community members, business and civic leaders, and parents in the development of the desegregation plan ensured that many sections of the city shared in efforts to desegregate (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Matney, 1992; Smith, 2004).



Although there was expected dissension within the community, the majority of citizens chose to support the plan and there was widespread community consensus regarding the need for busing in order to fully desegregate. In fact, in 1975, only 9% of students attended private schools, and this number remained relatively stable in the years following (Matney, 1992). Many districts throughout the Nation operating under court-mandated desegregation plans experienced dramatic withdrawals of White, middle class students from school systems due to widespread perceptions that desegregated schools would be inferior schools. However, throughout the development of the desegregation plan, Charlotte community members actively sought out “compromises” that would prevent this from happening, including: developing academic tracks and advanced classes that essentially protected White educational privilege (Mickelson, 2004), reassigning White teachers and administrators while being more likely to displace or let go of African-American administrators and teachers, locating the majority of K-3 schools in White neighborhoods, placing the greater burden of busing on African-American and poor populations, and continuing vocal support from city and county elected officials and business leaders (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006; Smith, 2004; Wells et al., 2009). The stemming of “White flight” worked, and for many years, Charlotte was one of a few large American cities to have a majority white school system (Douglas, 1995), although this has changed in the past decade. In 2002, CMS became a majority non-White district, not because of “White flight” but because of significant Black and Latino population growth (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010c).

The measures taken by the community of Charlotte-Mecklenburg to successfully overcome segregated schools became a source of great civic pride. A poignant example

of this came in 1984 with a visit from President Reagan. In the midst of a speech to a cheering crowd of Charlotteans, he made a comment denouncing the busing system as a “social experiment that nobody wants” and was stunned when the crowd responded with silence (Smith, 2004; Gaillard, 2006).

CMS became a beacon of hope to many searching for a city that had a growing economy, affordable housing, warm weather, and harmonious and progressive racial relations. This population growth spurred positive economic growth, particularly within the banking industry (Smith, 2004). In 1984, Charlotte was featured in a National Education Association Report as a city that was “making desegregation work” (Cole et al, 1984, p. 24). However, this legacy has not continued. Although Charlotte did make great strides forward in regards to the *Brown v. Board of Education* mandate, since 2002, and the declaration of unitary status and the Board’s adoption of a neighborhood schools based assignment plan, CMS has rapidly resegregated (Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, 2008).

#### Desegregation’s Counter Story

It is important to note that many in the African-American community, particularly teachers, were divided over the wisdom of desegregation (Dilworth, 1989), and their hesitancy proved legitimate. In the eleven years following *Brown*, more than 30,000 Black teachers in the Southeast lost their jobs (Foster, 1997). During the implementation of *Swann*, seven all-black schools were closed and many Black teachers and administrators found themselves demoted or unemployed (Davis, 1995). In considering the enduring legacy of *Swann*, it is important to recognize the inequity and unfair burden placed on Blacks in Charlotte’s desegregation plan and to resist the viewing of this time

period through rose-colored lenses. Even now, many in the Black community question the burden desegregation placed on African-American students in Charlotte and throughout the nation (Gaillard, 2006; Walker, 1996a, 1996b).

The widely known and acclaimed history and much of the scholarly research on integration lacks the perspective of those most affected by the desegregation of our school system —African-Americans. Walker (1996a, 1996b) has written at length regarding the inaccurate national memory regarding the inferior education Blacks received prior to *Brown*. Yes, segregated schooling did ensure inadequate buildings, materials, and transportation —but there exists evidence of superior “affective traits, institutional policies, and community support” which enabled Black students to thrive in rigorous, supportive environments that allowed all students to excel (Walker, 1996a, p.3; Dingus, 2006). Furthermore, there exists a “debilitating myth” in the research surrounding desegregation that African-Americans fought hard for desegregation because they agreed with “larger society’s view that without access to [w]hite culture, [w]hite teachers, [w]hite schools, and [w]hite leadership, [b]lack people could never adequately educate their children” (Foster, 1997, p.ix). *Brown*, of course, was instead based on all students gaining access to economic benefits and resources previously provided only to White children. This myth is part of what Watkins (1996) refers to as our “collective amnesia” that has “decontextualized and separated much of the current dialogue from any historical antecedents” (Shujaa, 1996, p.5). This collective amnesia not only influences thought concerning the quality of Black schools, but also the role of African-American families in the education of their students. In his seminal work *The Education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935*, Anderson (1988) clearly shows that African-American parents

have always been instrumental in the schooling of their children. Black parents are not to be seen as “passive participants,” but rather active “agitators” toward furthering their children’s education goals (Walker, 1996, p.9).

This seeming disregard for Black communities in educational literature reflects an inherent racist belief that schools in predominantly Black communities had nothing to offer students of any race. Caldas et al. (2007) states, “it is a mistake to see mostly African American schools as bereft of social capital, even when they are in communities that have relatively little financial capital” (p.199). African American communities “generate social capital of their own from community networks” and desegregation may “unintentionally disrupt those networks” (Caldas et al., 2007, p.219).

The inclusive history of desegregation in America should acknowledge and begin to rectify the perpetuation of this misinformation, as well as recognize the systematic loss of cultural capital in African-American communities due to desegregation efforts. Entire neighborhoods suffered a declining sense of security, community, cohesiveness, cultural nourishment, and collective responsibility by the closing of the center of their communities—their schools. School systems were desegregated on White terms, and some view the result as a form of “cultural genocide” for African-Americans (Shujaa, 1996, p.120). Often desegregation separated children from their communities, history, traditions, and culture (Shujaa, 1996). This disruption of community connectedness is why some critics say that forced integration, particularly through busing, was doomed. “For social integration, by definition, presumes the coming together of equals, an impossibility when a handful of poor [b]lack children are bused long miles from their homes to a [w]hite, middle-class school where they are subjected to color-blind policies

that all too often managed to replicate the racial harm the *Brown* decision so deplored” (Bell, 2005, p.221).

While these views are not generally shared by mainstream academia, they are necessary nevertheless, for they serve as a valuable counter story to provide a fuller picture of desegregation and integration reform efforts throughout the United States. By recognizing the intrinsic value of all perceptions, particularly those of African American educators, researchers, and graduates of desegregated schools, we can begin to understand the complicated outcomes of diverse schools, and determine if desegregation efforts have been successful, particularly for those in the Black community.

#### Desegregation as Success?

In many ways, posing the above question lends credence to the idea that the question is valid. However, such a question cannot be answered with a simple response, and as this study demonstrates, the experiences of desegregation were deeply personal and often rife with intended and unintended consequences. The schooling outcomes of a district, particularly framed around the often politically volatile topic of desegregation, are too confounded and complicated to be fully addressed. However, existing frameworks are helpful in thinking about the success of desegregation as an equity-minded school reform.

Tyack & Cuban (1995, p.57-58) provide five features of successfully implemented educational reforms:

1. Exist as structural add-ons (did not disturb standard operations)
2. Non-controversial
3. Involve influential constituencies

4. Required by law and easily monitored

5. Implemented by insiders rather than outsiders

In looking to this list, the challenge in successfully implementing a desegregation policy becomes clear. The change in pupil assignment patterns needed to desegregate schools unquestionably disrupted standard operating procedures. Students were bused out of their communities to schools no one in their family had attended previously, which provoked considerable controversy. Due to the racism prevalent in all communities in America, desegregation was an inflammatory topic for the majority of parents of school-age students, particularly in the South. Often in the fight for desegregation, influential constituencies became involved in the battle for desegregation, and many times fought on opposing sides. Historians credit the partial success of Charlotte's desegregation efforts to the involvement of local ministers, rabbis, politicians, and business leaders (Douglas, 1995; Gaillard, 2006). However, the majority of communities nationwide did not have this broad base of support. Charlotte, even with a broad base of support, still needed the thrust of the Supreme Court to desegregate schools. In many communities including Charlotte, desegregation only began to be implemented when such policies became law, but these policies were not easily monitored and the process of implementation was rife with mistakes and missteps. Many community members took this as proof that desegregation could not work.

The last feature on Tyack & Cuban's list notes that the implementation of a reform is often more successful if led by insiders rather than outsiders. The desegregation mandate for Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools came from a local judge and a local lawyer and, as mentioned earlier, drew support from local religious and business leaders. As a

community, Charlotte undoubtedly had insider support for desegregation policies (Maniloff, 1979). However, many communities throughout the United States were not as fortunate. Tyack & Cuban's list illuminates a variety of factors that led to the perceived success of desegregation in Charlotte versus other cities. However, as in other parts of the nation, CMS's 30 years of success in desegregating its schools was not permanent. Presently, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are more segregated than when the desegregation plan was implemented in 1972 (Bhargava, Frankenberg, Lee, 2008). This circumstance raises the issue of whether there are lasting benefits from CMS's experiences of desegregation for individuals and the community.

#### Desegregation Nationally

While widespread desegregation efforts took place following the *Brown* decision in 1954, and continued until the late 1980s, this movement has since ended. This decline began in 1968 with the election of Nixon. He appointed four new members of the Supreme Court, and the new court did not "pursue desegregation with same vigor as the Warren court" (Graham, 2005, p.146). The largest setback nationally came in 1974 with the *Milliken v. Bradley* decision. This case determined that lower courts could not order inter-district (between district) desegregation plans that encompass urban and suburban districts if the suburban district (or the state) was not liable for the segregation across district boundaries (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Le, 2008). However, voluntary interdistrict plans can be utilized. This ruling essentially meant that suburbs could be safe havens for those individuals who did not want to participate in desegregated schooling. This court case also ensured segregation in many urban school districts where the population is primarily non-White, and without the participation of suburban schools,

there is no possibility of achieving any level of racial balance. It is important to note that several voluntary interdistrict plans have been used with much success for decades, with one of the most popular being the METCO program in Boston (Eaton, 2001).

In the past twenty years federal courts have declared many school districts unitary—including Charlotte—thereby releasing these districts from desegregation mandates (Civil Rights Project, 2004). With the “termination of over 500 school desegregation decrees (e.g., the end of busing plans in Denver, Minneapolis, Cleveland, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Indianapolis, and Wilmington, DE) the U.S. has entered what can be termed a post desegregation era” (Brown, 1999). During the latter part of the 1990s there was an increase in Black segregated schools in all but two states, those states being Michigan and New Jersey, which were highly segregated previously and showed no change (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). At the same time, “the proportion of [b]lack students in majority [w]hite schools has decreased by 13 percent, to a level lower than any year since 1968” (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 59).

Yet not all communities have resigned themselves to segregated schools. Communities throughout the United States have enacted voluntary desegregation policies following unitary declaration. Wake County, NC, has long been considered a model for diverse schools nationwide. From 2002 until the 2009 school board elections, when a majority of Republicans were elected on a neighborhood schools platform, Wake County’s assignment plan utilized a formula where no more than 40% of a school’s total enrollment can be eligible for free or reduced lunch and no more than 25% of enrollment can include students performing below grade level on state tests (Grant, 2009). Other somewhat successful desegregation policies are in place in cities throughout the nation,



including: Boston, MA (Eaton, 1996); Cambridge, MA; Capistrano Unified School District, CA; St. Louis Public Schools, MI; Rock Hill, SC; and Lynn, MA (see [www.naacplfd.org](http://www.naacplfd.org) for additional information).

In 2007, the Supreme Court issued rulings in two related cases concerning voluntary desegregation policies in Louisville, KY, and Seattle, WA, collectively known as the *Seattle & Louisville* (2007) case or *People Involved in Community Schools* (PICS). Both school systems used voluntary race-based policies to promote desegregated schools. The policies differed from traditional residence-based plans, like the plan used in Charlotte, and instead relied on racial formulas and student choice among district schools. The Seattle policy used race as one of four “tie-breakers” if school enrollment differed by more than 15% of the racial composition of the school district (Linn & Welner, 2007). The Louisville plan was more complicated, and used race as a way to maintain predetermined student enrollment diversity and regulate assignment policies for schools K-12. This voluntary plan was enacted by the local school board to maintain desegregated schools after court-mandated desegregation ended in 2000. The policies of both districts were challenged by parents who alleged that the “race-conscious elements of the school assignment policies resulted in their children being denied their first choice of school” (Linn & Welner, 2007). These policies were found to not be sufficiently narrowly tailored to avoid being in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th amendment of the US Constitution (Linn & Welner, 2007). This decision “significantly narrowed options to create and maintain racially diverse enrollments and stabilize districts by making all schools more equal” (Wells & Frankenberg, 2007, p.180).

The courts' decision was split along ideological grounds, with four justices ruling in favor of the petitioners, four in favor of the respondent. One, Justice Kennedy, who ultimately agreed with the petitioners on the question of narrow tailoring, yet declined to support much of Chief Justice Robert's 41-page opinion (Barnes, 2007; Bryan, 2007). Ultimately, Justice Kennedy's controlling opinion is the most illuminating in where the court stands in regard to race-based policies to desegregated schools (Armor, 2010; Orfield, 2009; Ryan, 2007). Kennedy concluded that our nation has a compelling interest in educational diversity and avoiding racial isolation, and this should be a high priority. Such interests can be pursued by careful efforts, including: adoption of general school policies such as new school construction, drawing of attendance zones, allocation of resources, and the recruitment of staff (Ryan, 2007). Yet this specific case has told America more about our nation and its highest court than it has told us about race-based educational policies. Wilkinson (2007) states,

This battle brought no peace or even truce, and indeed left only the impression that the Court's own decisions and the use of race in education remain in tension and that the profound differences that persist within the Court and throughout the country on these questions will be argued just as heatedly another day (p.158).

Undoubtedly, "another day" will come, yet the fight for a quality education for all children continues. While the Supreme Court has identified diversity "as a compelling interest," courts have provided little guidance to districts in how to maintain diverse schools within residentially segregated cities. For now, seeking educational equity through federal courts has reached a plateau, and instead, reformers are looking to state constitutions, which often include educational provisions, to drive educational reform.

Now many reformers' equity strategy now focuses on adequacy from the state courts rather than desegregation from federal courts.

#### Educational Adequacy as a Strategy for Educational Equity

The use of the justice system to attain educational equity, particularly in regards to the racial composition of schools, has been questioned as a viable tool in this struggle.

Ryan (2007, p.132) states:

Modern education reform efforts might still share the goal of equalizing educational opportunities for minority students, which the Court in *Brown* embraced. But integration is not generally the means of choice to achieve that goal, nor is the Supreme Court the key arena. Advocates and reformers have turned their attention elsewhere, and today battles are waged in legislatures and in state courts over school funding, school choice, standards and testing, and access to preschool.

Looking to the judicial history of court cases associated with desegregation efforts, the lack of support from the federal courts is apparent. While federal lawsuits are not seen as a promising endeavor in terms of fighting for educational equity and excellence, state level lawsuits have been identified as an important frontier for educational reform (Ryan, 2007). Three years after the Supreme Court's most recent decision regarding school equity, *People Involved in Community Schools* (2007), court cases continue on all judicial levels. Nationally, lawsuits challenging state methods of funding public schools have been brought in 45 of the 50 states (Rebell, 2007). States are facing litigation as advocates for school equity and adequacy continue to fight for equity through adequacy lawsuits rooted on state constitutions. This is true for Charlotte, NC, following the declaration of unitary status and the reversal of *Swann* in 1999.

The adequacy case in North Carolina is referred to as the *Leandro* case. *Leandro v. State* started in Hoke County, NC, in 1994 and has since involved counties and school districts all over the state, both rural and urban. Adequacy lawsuits “evolved from a prior legal innovation, the equity lawsuit, in which plaintiffs charged that wealth-related disparities in per-pupil spending among districts violated students’ rights to equal protection” under the state’s constitution (West & Peterson, 2007, p.4). The Supreme Court of the United States (including Nixon’s four appointed justices) determined in *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* (1973) that fiscal inequity among school districts is not unconstitutional from a federal constitutional perspective, and consequently funding for education does not require the highest level of judicial scrutiny (West & Peterson, 2007). However, education *is* a fundamental right under many State constitutions. Therefore, the legal pursuit of education adequacy deals with the constitutional right at a state level of children to receive an adequate education. Particular activists have focused on adequacy court cases as the replacement for desegregation as education reform’s greatest promise in the fight for educational equality (Wells et al., 2004).

The *Leandro* case is based on provisions in the North Carolina Constitution that guarantee the right “to the privilege of education” and that it is “the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right” (McColl, 2004, p.1). The case went to the NC Supreme court in 1997, and the court determined that while the state constitution does not require equal funding of school districts, the State must provide the opportunity for a sound, basic education (McColl, 2004). The NC Supreme Court remanded the case to the court in Wake County, and a lengthy trial was held from 2000-2002. Judge Manning explicitly defined the standard of a “sound, basic education” based on input and output measures.

Furthermore, Judge Manning broadened the scope of the trial to schools all over North Carolina due to the widespread dismal academic performance of students. In addition to the measures of adequate education, he directed schools to have Pre-K programs for all “at-risk” students and clearly stated that the state “is responsible for correcting constitutional violations” (McColl, 2004, p.4). Currently, five CMS parents are suing CMS under *Leandro* because they say segregated schools in Charlotte violate their rights to a sound, basic education (Manning, 2005). Thus, CMS is currently both a plaintiff in *Leandro* and a defendant in the sub suit.

The long-term implications of *Leandro* and the right to an adequate education for children in North Carolina are not known. However, with the recent Supreme Court decisions along with the continued resegregation of American’s schools, North Carolina, among many other states, is focusing on potential areas of change. Therefore, the fight for equity through adequacy legislation at the state level continues.

## CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

...theoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools., What he needs is Education. What he must remember is that there is not magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and no teaching of truth concerning black folk is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries... is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts: it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. But other things seldom are equal, and in that case, Sympathy, Knowledge, and the truth, outweigh all that the mixed school can offer.

- W.E.B. DuBois, 1935, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 24

These words, written twenty years before the landmark court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, and seventy-five years from today, succinctly summarize the modern debate over desegregation efforts in schools today. Do all students benefit from schools mixed on the basis of race? Social scientists generally agree—*integrated* schools benefit all students (553 Social Scientists, 2006; Kurlaender & Yun, 2001, 2005; Linn & Welner, 2007; Mickelson, 2003, 2009; Mickelson & Bottia, 2010a, 2010b; Southworth, 2008; Wells, Holme, Revilla, Atanda, Korantemaa, 2009). A significant body of research supports this conclusion, stated concisely in the *Amici Curiae* (friend of the court) brief signed by 553 social scientists: “Racially integrated schools prepare students to be effective citizens in our pluralistic society... They promote cross-racial understanding, reduce prejudice, improve critical thinking skills and academic achievement, and enhance life opportunities for students of all races” (553 Social Scientists, 2006, p. 2). Yet, as noted in the introduction, it is essential to distinguish between the terms *integration* and *desegregation*.

*Desegregation versus Integration*

Desegregation is, at best, a precursor for integration. Pettigrew, Useem, Normand, and Smith (1973) distinguished between “merely desegregated” schools and “genuinely integrated” schools. They asserted that “[d]esegregation is achieved by simply ending segregation and bringing [b]lacks and [w]hites together,” while integration refers to the “quality of interracial interaction” (p. 92-93). Henderson, von Euler and Schneider (1981) defined desegregation as “the ending of segregation,” and integration as “cross-racial acceptance, equal access to high status academic and social positions in schools . . . and inclusion of elements of minority as well as majority subcultures in curriculum and activities” (p. 70). Talbert-Johnson (2000) concurred, asserting that desegregation should be regarded as a “process that goes beyond merely creating racially mixed schools to creating environments that produce both academic and social gains for students” (p. 9-10).

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were often desegregated, meaning that students of different races attended school together, often being in the same classrooms, athletic teams, and extracurricular activities (Fleming et al., 1984); however, schools in CMS, particularly at the secondary level, were not integrated (Mickelson, 2001, 2005). An essential aspect of integration are diverse classrooms (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008), and throughout all years of the county-wide desegregation plan, CMS had widespread segregation at the classroom level, often referred to as second-generation segregation (Meier et al., 1989). Such widespread classroom-level segregation (Mickelson, 2005) prevented CMS from being integrated.

Integration is a lofty goal that few schools or organizations achieve, however. Integration rarely occurs naturally, and it is most often achieved through purposeful plans or policies implemented by a district that recognizes the educational benefits of integration and the harm associated with racially isolated learning environments (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008).

It is important to note that CMS was not part of a voluntary desegregation plan but rather existed under a court-ordered mandate, that, while purposeful, was not voluntary. The effectiveness of this mandate has been widely debated in the public discourse, although research indicates that the plan was successful while in place.

To frame the debate as it relates to graduates of CMS from 1995-1998, I will first present information about methodological concerns regarding desegregation, the use of race and class in measuring desegregation, the widespread practice of tracking, and outcomes of segregated and desegregated schools. Then, the relationship between desegregated schools and adolescents' personal identity development will be discussed, with an emphasis on cultural flexibility and the theory of racial identity development. Lastly, I will present data regarding general trends toward resegregation, in Charlotte and elsewhere in the nation.

### Methodological Concerns

The literature regarding desegregation is rich and spans numerous disciplines, including education, public policy, social psychology, sociology, economics, history, Africana studies and many others. Researchers and laypersons alike, particularly those who were educated in school districts with court-mandated desegregation policies and those with school-age children, have contentious and passionate opinions regarding this



topic. There is general disagreement concerning overall outcomes for students attending desegregated schools. Conflicting research and substantial methodological considerations abound.

Neither *Brown I* (1954) nor *Brown II* (1955) clearly defined what a successfully desegregated school looked like (Crain & Mahard, 1978; Eaton & Orfield, 1996); thus, schools existing under the label of “desegregated” vary widely. This, in turn, creates a vast disparity regarding the definitions of racial composition in schools (Linn & Welner, 2007; Eitle & Eitle, 2003). Looking to research on the effects of desegregated schools is often akin to analyzing apples and oranges, for each study defines racial composition in different terms. Thus, a study analyzing achievement scores in what can be considered an integrated school is starkly different from those in a desegregated school (like those found in CMS) — yet the distinction between the two is rarely made. This lack of clarity on definitions of desegregation is just one reason results from studies differ in their conclusions. Further compounding this issue is the use of socioeconomic status as a proxy for race when discussing desegregation.

#### *Using Race versus Socioeconomic Status*

When schools are discussed and identified as racially segregated non-White, they are most often segregated along other lines as well, including socioeconomic status and increasingly English Language Learner status. Racial segregation is inextricably linked to segregation by poverty (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008; Orfield & Lee, 2007). Many districts and schools, including CMS, collect information on race and SES, but often choose to dispense information regarding outcomes by SES rather than race. Presently, the district views equity as an issue of SES, not race (Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Schools Equity Report, 2009). Therefore all reports regarding equity released by the district are described within terms of free/reduced lunch status (labeled “economically disadvantaged”) rather than in terms of race, as was customary until the current superintendent, and under *Swann* (1971). Failing to focus on racial segregation is problematic for many reasons, the primary reason being that while race and SES are inextricably connected, they are not interchangeable either in practice (not all minorities are poor and not all poor people are minorities) or in theory.

In general terms, SES describes an individual’s or a family’s social position based on the adult family members’ educational attainment, occupational attainment, and income, which provide access to or control over some combination of valued resources such as wealth, power, and social status (Grusky, 2008; Mueller & Parcel, 1981). Individual students’ SES contributes to their school’s SES. School SES is typically measured by the percentage of students at a school who are eligible for reduced-price or free lunch programs, considered to be a crude indicator of student’s SES. Students from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals (Sirin, 2005). A family’s SES is an important factor for academic achievement (Lareau, 2003; Sirin, 2005).

Black children are more than three times as likely as White children to be born into poverty and to be poor, and are four times as likely to live in extreme poverty (Children’s Defense Fund, 2008). Between 2000 and 2007, the number of poor Latino children increased by 960,000 (to 4.5 million) and the number of poor Black children increased by 323,000 (to 3.9 million) (Children’s Defense Fund, 2008). These patterns of

racially correlated poverty status combined with neighborhood school assignment plans result in a tremendous overlap between concentrations of students of color and high-poverty schools. More than three-quarters of schools where 90-100% of students are Black and Latino are also schools with high-poverty concentration (Orfield & Lee, 2006, p.31).

Many factors have been suggested to explain the underperforming of students of color, but the research indicates three main factors: students of color are more likely to live in low-income households or in single parent families; their parents are likely to be less educated; and poor students often attend low-performing schools that are segregated by race and SES (Orfield & Lee, 2007). All of these factors are components of SES and inextricably linked, yet part of the race and academic achievement dynamic.

If race and SES were interchangeable social forces, when analyzing academic achievement, SES, and race, researchers would expect results to be the same when race and SES are controlled. But, this is not the case. In a meta-analysis of over ten years of research looking at studies on SES, race, and academic achievement with a sample of over 100,000 students, Sirin (2005) found that SES was a stronger predictor of academic achievement for White students than for minority students. Sirin also determined that “minority status acts as a moderating factor” due to the “significant association between the percentage of minority students in a sample and the magnitude of the correlation between SES and academic achievement,” meaning that the more minority students in a sample, the weaker the association between SES and achievement (Sirin, 2005, p.441).

The finding that family background variables such as parental education, income, and occupation are less predictive of achievement for students of color should be of concern not only for reasons of research methodology, but also for public policy

implications (Sirin, 2005), for policy decisions are being made in districts, including CMS, that utilizes SES as a proxy for race. As discussed, race and SES are connected, yet not interchangeable, and for this reason it is important that schools and districts continue to collect and discuss data on both demographics, while they resist the current trend to look at educational inequity as an issue of class versus race. This issue is particularly important when collecting school level data on tracking.

### *Tracking*

The resegregation of schools at the classroom level also contributes to methodological issues. First-generation segregation refers to the racial composition of school buildings, whereas second-generation segregation “involves the racially correlated allocation of educational opportunities within schools typically accomplished by tracking” (Mickelson, 2001, p.216, originally cited from Meier et al., 1989). Mickelson (2001) provides a thorough analysis of this phenomenon in CMS at the high school level. She found that although CMS was a model of desegregation nationally, the district had racially isolated classrooms in those seemingly desegregated schools. Students were resegregated in middle and high schools through tracking in core academic classes. Even when controlled for similar ability, effort, background, and other factors, Blacks were consistently placed on a less demanding academic track.

In the decades since *Brown*, countless schools under court-ordered mandates and voluntary desegregation plans have been found to institute school-level segregation practices, often referred to as tracking (Oakes, 2005). Tracking refers to the sorting and grouping of students for instruction and is a long-standing organizational practice in US schools. Ability grouping can be overt (Rubin, 2006), such as in Charlotte where entry

into advanced classes in middle school is based on EOG scores in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, or covert, such as subtle suggestions from the counselor. Researchers have shown that students are often aware of ability grouping, even when it is done in a covert manner (Oakes, 2005).

Such school level policies have such deleterious effects that courts have targeted the policy as *de facto* segregation (Welner, 1999). In *Hobson v. Henson* (1967), the court ruled that the use of a tracking system to place children in educational programs based on the results of IQ tests was discriminatory and unconstitutional.

Proponents of homogeneous grouping practices argue that such grouping policies provide optimal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their academic level, and they provide better teaching opportunities because teachers are able to teach students with similar skill levels (Gamoran, A., Nystrand, M., Berends, M., & LePore, P.C., 1995). Yet, tracking has been critiqued for generally providing inadequate and inequitable education to students placed in low-level tracks or courses, separating students in desegregated schools along race and class lines, perpetuating unequal access to a college-bound curriculum (Rubin, 2008), demoralizing and de-motivating students (Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992), reproducing inequality by allowing “individuals to accept their own socioeconomic positions as inevitable and natural” (Rubin, 2006, p.650), as well as exacerbating issues of teacher quality, with lower tracks receiving lower quality teachers (Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H., & Vigdor, J., 2005). Because poor students and students of color are “consistently overrepresented in low-track classes, the effects of tracking greatly concern educators who are interested in closing the achievement gap” (Burris & Welner, 2005, p.595). One study found that a highly proficient student from a low socio-economic background has only a 50-50 chance of

being placed in a class that is considered a high track (Vanfossen, B., Jones, J., & Spade, J., 1987). However, Gamoran & Mare (1989) found that background and school readiness, rather than ethnicity, were the source of racial differences in track assignment. They argue that track placement can be explained by family background and academic preparation. Yet, a significant body of research supports the assertion that social class and school readiness alone cannot explain racial stratification of outcomes in schools (Lucas & Berends, 2002, 2007; Muller, Riegle-Crumb, Schiller, Wilkinson, & Frank, 2010). Lucas & Berends (2007, p.182) found that race matters it comes to track placement, stating “We find that cognitively and socioeconomically comparable Blacks in diverse schools are more likely to be in lower tracks than are Whites.”

Poor students and students of color are more likely to end up in lower level tracks for several possible reasons (Muller et al., 2010). Students may choose lower level classes because of oppositional culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004), peer influence (Hallinan, 1982), or due to prejudiced beliefs and discriminatory practices of personnel (Welner, 1999). In addition, students may suffer from ‘stereotype threat’ and fear not performing well in an advanced track, such as AP or IB (Steele & Aronson, 1998). Placement of students in specific academic tracks can also be due to student choice (e.g., student wants to be in class with best friend), school policy (e.g., ESL students are generally placed in remedial English), organizational structures (e.g., only so many AP classes offered), or teacher/counselor expectations (e.g., counselor guides a student whose parents do not speak standard English to the regular track or a teacher encourages a student with an exceptional older sibling to the advanced track, thinking that he/she is similar). Clearly, the processes and underlying factors regarding tracking

are complex. However, educators undoubtedly know that achievement follows from opportunities, and tracking limits the opportunities offered to disadvantaged groups of students (Muller et al., 2010; Oakes, 2005; Oakes, Gamoran, & Page, 1992; Rubin, 2006; 2008; Wells & Serna, 1996; Welner, 1999).

Comprehensive detracking reform efforts have been successful in some schools (Burris & Welner, 2005); however, tracking continues to be prevalent in schools throughout the United States. Effective detracking involves changes at multiple levels, including institutional practices, school policies, classroom practices, and beliefs of students, teachers, and parents regarding ability and merit (Rubin, 2008). Fine, Anand, Hancock, Jordan & Sherman (1998) produced *Off Track: Classroom Privilege for All*, a documentary chronicling a yearlong detracking effort in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class in Montclair, NJ. Among many views expressed by students and teachers was the belief that high-track students suffer from a lack of diverse perspectives when they are tracked because classes are homogeneous in race and class. This documentary is particularly interesting in light of this study because the policies in Montclair appear similar to the policies of CMS during this same time, the years in which respondents of this study were in high school. In addition, statements made by students in the video are consistent with statements made by respondents in this study during in-depth interviews.

Furthermore, tracking focuses attention on the unintended effects of equity reforms. In many schools, tracking came about as a collective response from teachers and parents to desegregation efforts (Talbert-Johnson, 2000), and thus it provides insight into how “equity-gear school reforms can become part of the larger discourses and structures that maintain inequality among communities and groups of people” (Rubin,

2008). Ethnographic researchers have described the role of parents (Wells & Sterna, 1996) and teachers (Welner, 1999) in maintaining the inequitable system of tracking in diverse schools.

Tracking is particularly important to the discussion of educational outcomes of Charlotte-Mecklenburg graduates because academic tracks were utilized district-wide as a response to fears that desegregated schools would be less rigorous, thereby keeping White families in CMS (Douglas, 1995). This policy has become general district policy to supposedly address the needs of diverse academic abilities and was firmly in place during the years the graduates in this study were in school. Clearly, the dual issues of defining racial composition and second-generation segregation complicate the empirical research regarding desegregated schooling.

### *Quality of Research*

Educational research is often decisive in determining public policy, and as such, valid and reliable educational research is critical. Social science literature on schooling outcomes remains an important part of the legal argument surrounding desegregation efforts. A review of the literature reveals a glaring disparity between the quality of research conducted in the 1970s and 80s versus more current research. Often, research is presented to the courts through *amicus curiae* briefs, or friend of the court briefs. Mickelson (2008) presents a thought-provoking analysis of the research utilized in five key social science *amicus curiae* briefs from the *PICS* (2007) decision, the most recent Supreme Court case regarding school desegregation efforts. The briefs filed on behalf of the petitioners utilized dated research primarily from the 1970s and 80s to support their claim that evidence from social science does not support desegregation and efforts for



diverse schools as a compelling interest. In contrast, briefs filed on behalf of the respondents utilized research primarily from the 1990s and after to substantiate the claim that diversity is a compelling interest and racial isolation can be detrimental to the education of all students, see Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

*Number and Percent of Citations by Decade in Five PARENTS INVOLVED Social Science Amicus Briefs*

<b>Amicus Brief on Behalf of</b>	<b>1970s or earlier</b>	<b>1980s</b>	<b>1990s</b>	<b>2000s</b>
<i>Petitioners</i>				
Murphy, Rossell, & Walberg				
N of Citations = 20	40 %	15 %	30 %	15 %
Armor, Thernstrom, & Thernstrom				
N of Citations = 29	24 %	28 %	24 %	24 %
<i>Respondents</i>				
American Psychological Association				
N of Citations = 57	4 %	16 %	33 %	47 %
American Educational Research Assoc.				
N of Citations = 54	4 %	17 %	13 %	66 %
553 Social Scientists				
N of Citations = 213	9 %	14 %	18 %	59 %

Source: Mickelson, 2008, p. 1197

While this distinction between pre-1990 and post-1990 research may seem insignificant, dramatic improvements have been made in conducting social science research in the past two decades. First, data has become more readily available due to electronic data archival capabilities of school districts as well as the mandates of *No Child Left Behind* (2001) that require data collection on all students. Educational outcomes can now be compared using national, state, and district-wide datasets that include entire populations rather than samples. Information regarding the individual

characteristics of classroom teachers, students, and general information about the school is now readily accessible. Much of the early research on desegregation examined experimental or quasi-experimental efforts in a single district while later research uses national representative samples or entire state populations. The later surveys are able to statistically control for a host of student, family, community, and school factors that are related to school outcomes. In this way, recent research can isolate the effects of school racial and SES composition on outcomes.

Second, researchers are more likely to use an array of indicators for complex variables. For example, current research is more likely to use a variety of indicators in determining a student's socioeconomic status (SES), including mother's education and family income, though free/reduced lunch status continues to be the norm in determining SES for school-based research. Early research used father's income and/or occupation, while researchers now recognize this to be a poor indicator of a student's SES (Sirin, 2005).

Third, advanced statistical modeling provides researchers with the tools to extricate the contributions of individual, classroom, and school-level characteristics to overall educational outcomes (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Students, classrooms, schools, and communities are nested within districts and recent statistical tools are able to model this nesting (e.g. hierarchical linear modeling or HLM).

Fourth, early research evaluated desegregation plans soon after they were implemented, and as a result often found no effect. Furthermore, the "existing structure of income distribution and residential segregation make it very difficult to find simple ways of disentangling race and poverty in American schools"; however, examining how these

outcomes vary by race of the student and the racial composition of the school remains important, since there is consensus that racial segregation is closely related to residential segregation (Kurlaender & Yun, 2005, p.55). Such characteristics can be identified and utilized within the statistical model to provide a more comprehensive—and more accurate—analysis. Thus, research from 1990 to the present is frequently superior to research conducted prior to this time (Linn & Welner, 2007; Mickelson, 2008), and the majority of the research used in this literature review will be from this time period.

While research focusing upon desegregation is difficult to design methodologically, there are also challenges in formulating viable research questions. Since the inception of desegregated schooling, educators and social scientists have been fascinated with the research question, “All else being equal, will the mixing of the races alone result in higher [b]lack achievement?” (Crain & Mahard, 1978, p.49). While this is a common line of inquiry, such a question cannot be answered because desegregation is never an ‘all else being equal’ situation. The majority of early studies regarding school desegregation have been simple “input-output” studies that examine the relationship between “the racial composition of a school (the input) and student achievement as measured by test scores (the output)” (Wells et al., 2004c, p.67; see also Crain & Mahard, 1978, 1983). However, research regarding the long-term impact of desegregation is becoming more common, for, “school desegregation is not merely about improved educational achievement as measured by test scores and college graduation rates; it is also about rethinking historical relationships between racial groups” (Kurlaender & Yun, 2007, p.222). For these reasons, when conceptualized, desegregation research needs to be cognizant of the interrelated relationships between schools and the larger societal context.

It is also necessary to demonstrate this awareness in the development of questions and research methodology regarding intended and unintended consequences of schooling. With this in mind, the next section will provide an overview of the theories, academic outcomes, and non-academic outcomes often presented in research on educational outcomes for schools based on racial composition.

### Historical Groundwork

In 1944, Myrdal described the “American dilemma” as the conflict between the American creed and the subordinate position of Blacks in American society. His report was thorough in its description of the bleak situation regarding race in America, particularly the juxtaposition of race and democracy. However, his report was hopeful, and he believed that the United States was on the verge of a political movement to grant equal rights to Blacks and align the activities of daily life with the general precepts of the Creed for all members of American society (Myrdal, 1944). As predicted, these political efforts have occurred as part of the Civil Rights Movement, beginning with *Brown* in 1954, and peaking with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Orfield, 1988). The following year in 1966, James Coleman produced the report on *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (commonly referred to as the “Coleman Report”), a congressionally mandated report that has had far reaching impact on educational policies since its release.

According to the report, “Attributes of other students account for far more variation in the achievement of minority-group children than do any attributes of school facilities and slightly more than do attributes of staff” (Coleman et al., 1966, p.322). This statement led reformers to think more about the SES and racial composition of students

and staff than school facilities. However, the fundamental finding of the report was “that a student’s family background is far more important than school social composition and school resources for understanding student outcomes” (Borman & Dowling, 2010, p.1200). Simply stated, the Coleman Report found that in terms of academic achievement, family characteristics trump school characteristics. This finding still “retains much of its currency” and shapes public policy at all levels of government (Borman & Dowling, 2010, p. 1201). In regards to desegregation, the implication of the Coleman report was that the achievement of students of low SES would improve because they would attend schools with high-SES students (Wells et al., 2004c). Thus, the *Brown* decision and the Coleman Report “both advocated for school desegregation, one did so by pointing out how important schools are to students’ life chance and the other did so by pointing out the importance of outside-of-school forces, especially family background” (Wells et al., 2004c).

However, the Coleman Report was actually incorrect with respect to the conclusions made regarding the influence of family on educational achievement. Utilizing contemporary statistical modeling, statisticians have found inaccuracies with the report’s fundamental finding, that the home environment is more predictive of academic achievement than the school. Borman & Dowling (2010, p.1240) state, “rather than the all-too-familiar summary of the Coleman report’s findings that ‘schools don’t matter,’ their analysis suggests that both within-school interactions among students and educators, and racial segregation across schools deny African-American children equality of educational opportunity.” Therefore, the data from the Coleman report is consistent with the recommendations of the court in *Brown*. Borman & Dowling (2010) state, the “past

misinterpretations by policy makers and researchers that emphasized racial integration over the importance of the student body's educational backgrounds and aspirations are actually very well founded by our contemporary analyses" (p. 1240). The Borman & Dowling reanalysis of Coleman's data with appropriate statistical tools illustrates the problems with older research and the value of newer studies for addressing the question of desegregation effects.

While the modern reanalysis is provocative, the original conclusions of the Coleman report are deeply ingrained in the often faulty perceptions of individuals in understanding schooling outcomes. Borman & Dowling (2010) have raised doubts about the widely held belief that family effect trumps school effects; however, this inaccuracy will most likely continue to effect educational research and policy for years to come.

#### Theoretical Bases for Research on Race and Educational Outcomes

A wealth of research exists attempting to answer the question, "Does the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic mix of a school or classroom make a difference for the educational processes that take place in them?" (Mickelson, 2010). In recent decades, such research has moved from what has been termed the "harm vs. benefit" thesis (Schofield, 1995) to more nuanced perspectives of the intricacies involved in diverse schooling. This body of research often relies on several influential theories, including contact theory, perpetuation theory, and network theory. This next section will provide a brief introduction to these theories and the role each have played in modern research regarding schooling outcomes.

Clotfelter (2004, p. 3) focuses on interracial contact because it is "a necessary intermediary for virtually all potential effects of desegregation." He states, "Quite apart

from its implications for the distribution of school resources, interracial contact may bring about outcomes of considerable social value...academic achievement, job market success, and racial tolerance” (2004, p.5). Gordon Allport’s contact theory (1954) asserts that contact is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the reduction of racial prejudice. As set forth by Allport (1954), the four conditions for reducing prejudice are: (1) equal status of all group members; (2) cooperative interdependence among group members; (3) normative support of positive relations and of equal status; and (4) interactions that disconfirm stereotypes and encourage understandings of other group members as individuals. An important aspect of contact theory is the idea that such contact benefits all groups. Myrdal succinctly stated, “Whether they know it or not, [w]hite people are dwarfing their minds to a certain extent by avoiding contacts with colored people” (1944, p.660). Yet, while contact theoretically benefits all groups, how does contact begin? Braddock explains, “One of the most important and compelling aspects of racial segregation in America is the tendency for it – intentionally or unintentionally – to become self-perpetuating” (1980, p. 179). Pettigrew & Tropp’s review and synthesis of 515 studies of interracial contact demonstrate that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice (2006).

Arising from contact theory, perpetuation theory assumes greater interracial contact will gradually lead to a decline in segregation (Braddock, 1980). McPartland & Braddock (1981), state that segregation tends to “repeat itself across the stages of the life cycle and across institutions when individuals have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life” (p.49). While Braddock’s perpetuation theory does not “preclude the existence of real structural constraints to racial integration, his focus is



on how individual agents adjust their behavior to accommodate, and thus perpetuate, these constraints, and how exposure to integrated settings can change this behavior” (Wells & Crain, 1994). Braddock et al. (1994) contend that experiences in desegregated settings can disrupt the perpetuation of segregation in four ways: (1) improved skills in navigating cross-racial social interactions, (2) access to social networks, (3) reduction in selecting segregated settings in the future, and (4) higher educational and occupational aspirations (p.274). Like contact theory, perpetuation theory is seen as having positive benefits for all racial and ethnic groups. As individuals come into contact with others from different racial/ethnic groups, they presumably learn something about themselves as well as others (Stearns, 2010; Wells et al., 2009). In learning about others Granovetter (1983) theorized that people gain access to valuable information as well as connections with others that he described as “weak ties,” ties that serve as informal connections between people. Such weak ties serve as a vehicle for transmission of social capital between groups of people, in this case, students in schools.

Network theory is the “more structural argument that segregation is perpetuated across generations because African-Americans and Latinos lack access to informal networks that provide information about, and entrance to, desegregated institutions and employment” (Wells & Crain, 1994). Many social scientists have noted that the greatest barrier to economic mobility is the degree to which the poor are isolated from the opportunities and networks of those that hold power and privilege in middle-class society (Wilson, 1987). Network theory is related to perpetuation theory in that without exposure to desegregated environments, individuals are not able to benefit from information distributed in opposing racially segregated environments.

Granovetter (1983) links network theory, perpetuation theory, and contact theory in the discussing the importance of “weak ties.” He states that desegregated environments are important because interracial contact promotes relationships, particularly less formal interpersonal networks that allow the diffusion of influence, information, and employment and educational opportunities to be dispersed across racial lines (Granovetter, 1983). Theoretically, such information promotes access to desegregated environments, which in turn interrupts the cycle of racial segregation and improves life outcomes. It is important to note that perpetuation theory “leaves open the possibility that the effects of segregation are due to: 1) individual choice constrained by social psychological effects and interpersonal skills, 2) structural constraints governed by network ties, or 3) a combination of factors” (Stearns, 2010). While these three theories are often utilized in framing the goals of desegregation, they are merely frameworks to guide research and discussion.

#### Effects of Race on Educational Outcomes

Despite the prolific attention paid to the effects of desegregation, with hundreds of studies and counting, “we can point to few definitive conclusions” (Eitle & Eitle, 2003, p.589). As discussed previously, much of the research regarding education outcomes looks to research on academic achievement as a primary outcome (Linn & Welner, 2007). Yet a comprehensive and thorough review of the literature clearly reveals that desegregated schooling does not have a single effect. “Research which asks about ‘the’ effect of desegregation is not only irrelevant for policy, it is also theoretically unsound” (Crain & Mahard, 1978, p.7). Looking at diverse schooling through the lens of student achievement implies that desegregation is a policy issue to be settled by a

straightforward “cost-benefit analysis” (Armor, 1995), yet this approach is problematic. Desegregation cannot be conceived of as a variable in an environment where all else is equal. Research in this area often shows conflicting results (Armor, 1995), and this is not only due to methodological weaknesses of early research, as previously discussed, but rather because it is also difficult to compare desegregation in different schools and communities because diverse schooling does not have one single effect (Linn & Welner, 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, Wells et al., 2009).

The research on desegregated schools is often framed as a “harm vs. benefit” debate (Schofield, 1995), and the research generally presents positive findings, meaning that students benefit from desegregation policies. However, some researchers assert that desegregation efforts had little to no effect and in improving educational outcomes for students of color, the intended benefactors, while desegregation efforts inflict heavy burdens on the children and communities it is intended to benefit (Armor, 1995, 2002; Armor, Russell, Walberg, 2002; Cook, 1984; Dilworth, 1989; Morris & Morris, 2002; Shujaa, 1996).

Schofield (1995) provides a comprehensive review of research studies that showed no effect on academic achievement for Black students in desegregated schools. St. John (1975) presents evidence that younger children benefit more from desegregation than older children. In reviewing 36 studies, St. John (1975) concludes, “The achievement of [b]lack children is rarely harmed thereby, but they provide no strong or clear evidence that such desegregation boosts their achievement... a report of no significance is more common than a report of significant gain” (p.31). Arguably, if only

looking at these studies in isolation, desegregation efforts show little to no effect and therefore are not worth the resources needed to implement such plans.

Other researchers contend that other effects are more important than race, and therefore school desegregation plans based on race are not beneficial to students or communities. Caldas & Bankston (1999) determine that school level family structure had a much stronger relationship with school achievement than school level SES or school level racial composition, with school level family composition (the number of students in single-parent families in a school) having more of an effect on academic achievement than even individual family structure. Armor (2002, 1995) argues that the achievement gap cannot be remedied by school policies, including desegregation plans, because the gap is primarily due to socio-economic differences between families. He contends that such differences between students begin at birth and are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. Therefore, desegregation efforts place undue stress on children and communities and displace valuable resources that could be used for other, more fruitful, educational reforms.

Morris & Morris (2002), Shujaa (1996), and Dilworth (1989) discuss the possibility that while desegregation efforts can moderately improve academic performance, the harm inflicted upon individual students and the larger Black community outweighs the benefits of improved academic outcomes. Clearly, the debate is immense, and as discussed in the previous section, differences in study design, sampling, methodology, statistical analyses, and operationalization of terms and parameters explain many of the discrepancies that exist in the literature.

An ever-growing body of research suggests that diverse schools have improved educational outcomes compared to schools that are racially homogeneous, yet perhaps the greatest advantage of diverse schools is that such schools prevent the harms strongly associated with segregated learning environments (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008). Segregated schools with high percentages of non-White students are more likely to have poor academic performance, weaker academic offerings, less rigorous classroom environments, fewer resources, less experienced teachers, and high teacher turnover. As demonstrated in Table 3.3, such classroom circumstances often lead to higher dropout rates, lower college attendance rates, and less access to informal and formal networks that assist in providing career opportunities. In addition, students in segregated schools, whether segregated White or Non-White, lack exposure to students from different backgrounds and are therefore deprived of the development of comfort in cross-racial contact (Wells & Crain, 1994). There are schools nationwide that predominantly serve students of color with excellent outcomes, yet the vast span of research illustrates that “separate (segregated) institutions of any kind are rarely equal in quality and opportunity to those attended by the majority, or privileged, segment of our population” (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008). Furthermore, “because educational achievement alone does not solve the problem of economic inequality, school desegregation must do more than raise [b]lack students’ test scores; it must also break the cycle of racial segregation that leaves [b]lacks and [w]hites worlds apart” (Wells & Crain, 1994, p. 533).

At the time of *Brown*, educators knew little about diverse schools, in terms of how to create them or make them more effective. However, the achievement gap between White and Black students closed substantially during the desegregation era, between

1964 and the late 80s, and “by the 1970s the evidence was clear that desegregation offered significant gains for minority students and that the most important of these gains were not measured by test score increases but by changes in students’ life chances” (Orfield, 2005, p. 7). Students attending desegregated schools seem to benefit in both short-term and long-term outcomes. Academically, students of all backgrounds, particularly students of color, appear to benefit from desegregated schooling. Table 3.2 presents research that indicates in the classroom, students seem to exhibit deeper ways of thinking, have higher aspirations, and have more positive interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Students of desegregated schools have higher graduation rates from high school and college and benefit from established networks. Perhaps most important, particularly for this study, are the long-term effects of attending desegregated schools. Graduates are more likely to develop cross-racial friendships and live and work in integrated environments – consequently curtailing the perpetuation of segregation (Wells et al., 2009). Communities also benefit from integrated schools by reducing the dropout rate, thereby reducing the number of individuals who are not prepared for the workforce and who would otherwise be more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system (Darling-Hammond & Wood, 2008). Most importantly, high quality integrated schools serve an important, fundamental role in our democracy by “acknowledging education as a civil right that should be made available to all on equal terms” (Darling-Hammond & Wood, 2008, p.v).

Contemporary researchers have found that desegregated schools lead to improved academic achievement. Table 3.2 presents research that indicates graduates of desegregated schools experience greater levels of interracial contact, and such contact is

associated with more positive intergroup attitudes, greater comfort with peers from different racial/ethnic groups, more tolerance and inclusivity towards individuals of different racial groups, and improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race relations. A diverse school environment is also associated with reduced negative racial stereotypes among young children of all backgrounds. Desegregated school systems also have higher levels of parent involvement (Bernard, 1990; Orfield, 2001). Additionally, graduates of desegregated schools seem to benefit from improved life opportunities, as shown in Table 3.2. These include higher occupational aspirations and attainment, higher graduation rates for students of color, more access to social and professional networks, an increased sense of civic engagement and interest in participating in democratic processes, as well as increased enrollment in college. Perhaps most importantly, graduates of desegregated schools are better prepared for a diverse world. Students educated in diverse schools are more likely to work in integrated environments (with positive experiences) and desegregated experiences lead to increased interaction with other racial groups in the future.

Clearly, the literature regarding this topic is vast, and for this reason a listing of pertinent studies regarding outcomes of desegregated and segregated schooling is provided, see Table 3.2 and Table 3.3. However, providing an all-inclusive listing of research on outcomes of segregated and desegregated schools is beyond the scope of this work. For this reason, Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 are not meant to be comprehensive and merely present frequently cited research based on the work of 553 Social Scientists (2006), Linn & Welner (2007), Pettigrew & Troop (2006), and Welner (2006). These four studies were selected as a starting point due to their comprehensive nature, eclectic

authorship (as in the case of 553 Social Scientists), and/or publication in rigorous peer-reviewed journals. The majority of the studies look at educational outcomes if social class is controlled, and students of color who attended desegregated schools are compared to students of color who attended segregated schools.



Table 3.2

*Outcomes of School Desegregation*

Outcome	Citation	Annotation
<b>Improved Academic Achievement</b>		
Improved critical thinking skills	Bransford & Schwartz, 1999 Schofield & Sagar, 1985	
Improved academic performance	Boozer, Kruegarm & Wolkon, 1992 Borman et al., 2004 Crain & Mahard, 1983 Cook et al., 1984 Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003 Schofield, 1995, 2001 Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2006 Trent, 1997 Mickelson, 2003 Mickelson & Bottia, 2010a, 2010b	Schofield, 2001: Effects are modest. Effects appear stronger for younger students and when students are desegregated voluntarily.  Findings on the achievement of Latino students are limited.
<b>Interracial Social Interaction</b>		
Greater levels of interracial contact are associated with more positive intergroup attitudes, greater comfort with peers from different racial/ethnic groups	Duncan et al., 2003 Kurlander & Yun, 2007 Trent, 1991 Pettigrew, 2004 Jackson & Crane, 1986 Black, 2002 Schofield, 1995 Wells et al., 2004, 2009	Duncan et al. (2003) utilized random assignment of roommates. Concluded that white students with non-white roommates developed more comfort interacting with minorities and were more likely to develop cross-racial friendships.
Students who have greater levels of interracial contact have more tolerant and inclusive viewpoints about individuals of different racial groups	Wells et. al, 2009 Eaton, 1996 Wood & Sonleitner, 1996 Ellison & Powers, 1994 Wells, 1995 Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006 Killen & McKown, 2005 Hawley, 2007 Killen, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007 Wells et al., 2009	Pettigrew & Tropp (2006), meta-analysis found 95% of 713 independent samples show that intergroup contact reduces prejudice.
Improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race relations	Kurlander & Yunn, 2001 Schofield, 1981, 1991 Slavin & Madden, 1979 Wells et al., 2004, 2009 Eaton, 2001	
Diverse school environment is associated with reduced negative racial stereotypes among young children of all backgrounds	Black, 2002 Ellison & Powers, 1994 Killen et al., 2007 Sigelman & Welch, 1993	

Improved Life Opportunities		
Higher occupational aspirations and attainment	Braddock, 1980 Carter, 1996 Dawkins, 1983 Dawkins & Braddock, 1994 Hallinan & Williams, 1990 Hoetler, 1982 Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990 Schofield, 1995, 2001 Yun & Kurlaender, 2004	Dawkins: Utilizes multivariate regression analysis. While a dated study, methodologically advanced for publish date.
Higher graduation rates for students of color	Orfield et al., 2004 Borman et al., 2004 Saatcioglu, 2010	
More access to social and professional networks	Braddock et al., 1994 Orfield & Eaton, 1996 Taylor, 1997 Wells & Crain, 1994 Dawkins & Braddock, 1994 Granovetter, 1986	
Increased sense of civic engagement, interest in participating in democratic processes	Gurin et al., 2002 Kurlander & Yun, 2001, 2007 Ma & Kurlander, 2005 Wells & Crain, 1994	
Increased promotion of college or enrollment in college	Braddock & McPartland, 1983 Crain & Mahard, 1983 Hallinan & Williams, 1989 Boozer et al., 1992 Schofield, 1995 Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000 Kurlaender & Yun, 2005 Orfield & Eaton, 1996	Hallinan and Williams (1989) found that black and white students who had cross-race friendships had higher educational aspirations than those with same-race friendships.
Better Preparation for a Diverse World		
Students educated in diverse schools more likely to work in integrated environments (with positive experiences)	Gurin et al. 2002 Duncan et al., 2003 Braddock, Dawkins, & Trent, 1994 Wells, 2005 Kurlaender & Yun, 2001 Braddock et al., 1994 Braddock & McPartland, 1989 Schofield, 1995 Trent, 1997 Stearns, 2010	
Desegregated school systems have higher levels of parent involvement	Orfield, 2001 Bernard, 1990	
Desegregated experiences lead to increased interaction with other racial groups in the future	Wells and Crain, 1994 Braddock & McPartland, 1989 Crain, 1984 Schofield, 1995 Orfield, M. & Luce, 2005 Kurlaender & Yun, 2001 Schofield, 1991 Orfield and Eaton, 1996 Trent, 1997	Includes occupational settings, neighborhoods, and colleges and universities

While Table 3.2 presents the outcomes of desegregated schools, Table 3.3 presents outcomes of segregated schools. Perhaps most importantly, graduates of segregated schools are more likely to have teachers of lower quality (Lankford, Loeb, & Wychoff, 2002; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006; Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2005), with predominantly minority schools having less qualified and less experienced teachers. Highly qualified teachers are more likely to leave predominantly Black and Hispanic schools, and racially isolated Black and Hispanic schools have higher teacher turnover (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004, 2005; Jackson, 2009). Segregated schools also exhibit concentrated educational disadvantages (Carey, 2004; Picus, 1994). Schools with higher percentages of minority students have fewer educational resources and racially isolated Black and Hispanic schools are more often located in high poverty, high crime areas (Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smekar, & Taylor, 2006). Moreover, graduates of segregated communities often continue to live and work in segregated communities (Braddock, 1980; Braddock & McPortland, 1983, 1989). Graduates of segregated schools have lower graduation rates (Sawson, 2004; Balfanz & Legters, 2004) and lower academic performance on standardized tests (Armor, 2006; Borman & Dowling, 2010; Borman et al., 2004; Brown-Jeffy, 2006; Mickelson, 2001, 2006). There is also evidence that segregated schools provide inadequate preparation for the workplace. Black students who attend racially isolated schools have lower rates of college completion (Camburn, 1990) and obtain lower-paying and more racially isolated jobs than Whites (Boozer et al., 1992; Grogger, 1996; Stier & Tienda, 2001; Stearns, 2010).

Table 3.3  
*Outcomes of K-12 School Racial Segregation of Black and Hispanic Students*

Outcome	Citation	Annotation
<b>Lower Teacher Quality</b>		
Highly qualified teachers are more likely to leave predominantly Black and Hispanic schools; Racially isolated Black and Hispanic schools have higher teacher turnover	Carroll et al., 2000 Hanushek et.al., 2004, 2005 Jackson, 2009 Loeb et al., 2005	Race predicts teacher turnover more so than working conditions, student poverty, or teacher salary
Predominantly minority schools have less qualified and less experienced teachers	Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002 Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006 Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2005	
<b>Concentrated Educational Disadvantages</b>		
Schools with higher percentages of minority students have fewer educational resources	Carey, 2004 Picus, 1994	Examples include: larger class sizes, inadequate facilities, lower per-pupil spending
Racially isolated Black and Hispanic schools are more often located in high poverty, high crime areas	Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smrekar, & Taylor, 2006	
<b>Negative Community Effects</b>		
Graduates of segregated communities continue to live and work in segregated communities	Braddock, 1980 Braddock & McPortland, 1983, 1989	
<b>Lower Academic Success</b>		
Lower graduation rates.	Swanson, 2004 Balfanz & Legters, 2004	
Lower academic performance based on standardized testing.	Armor, 2006 Borman & Dowling, 2010 Borman et al., 2004 Brown-Jeffy, 2006 Mickelson, 2001, 2006	
<b>Inadequate Preparation for the Workforce</b>		
Black students who attend racially isolated school obtain lower-paying and more racially isolated jobs than Whites	Boozer et al., 1992 Grogger, 1996 Stier & Tienda, 2001 Stearns, 2010	Grogger, 1996, actually found a negative relationship between Black enrollment and wages, meaning that higher wages for Black graduates are associated with school desegregation
Lower rates of college completion	Camburn, 1990	

### Segregated / Desegregated Schools and Racial Identity

As recent scholarship demonstrates (Mickelson & Bottia, 2010a, 2010b; Muller et al., 2010; Perry & McConney, 2010), desegregated schools are vital not only to bolster academic achievement outcomes, but also for promoting social cohesion in our diverse society (Braddock & Gonzalez, 2010; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Wells, 1995). The work of Wells et al. (2009) illustrates the transformative power of desegregated school at a personal level. They interviewed over 500 graduates of desegregated schools who generally reported that they benefitted from their schooling experiences in terms of personal growth and development. While experiences of graduates have not been extensively studied, the limited research available is promising in regards to a positive overall effect for individual life outcomes, particularly in regards to identity development and interracial contact (Wells et al., 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005, 2009). Wells et al. (2009) states, “Their stories are hopeful because virtually all of the graduates we interviewed said that attending desegregated public schools dispelled their fears of other races, taught them to embrace racial and cultural differences, and showed them the humanness of individuals across racial lines. (p.5).

While enhanced cross-racial understandings are certainly important (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), such considerations were not at the forefront of the *Brown* decision in 1954. Instead, segregated schools were seen as unconstitutional because students did not receive equal protection under the law—segregated schools harm students of color. In his opinion, Justice Warren states,

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it

has the sanction of law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has the tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system.

The court was influenced by the work of Psychologist Kenneth Clark, the leading expert for the petitioners. His testimony marked the first time the NAACP Legal Defense Fund addressed the psychological implications of segregation. Through the use of skin colored crayons and identical dark and light-skinned dolls with children ages 3-7, Clark determined that children clearly associated darker skin with inferior social status (Clark & Clark, 1950).

The original research conducted by Clark & Clark (1939a, 1939b, 1940, 1950, 1963), and the subsequent times this testing has been recreated (see Aboud, 1988 for a detailed, though dated list), has been for the expressed purpose of providing information regarding the formation of racial concept and racial prejudice in children. Although the concept of racial formation is a complex issue, Clark & Clark, and other researchers have reached similar conclusions: children prefer lighter skin color, regardless of race, socio-economic status, or region of birth (Aboud, 1988; Clark & Clark, 1950; Fishbein, 1996; McMillian, 1988; Stevenson & Stewart, 1958).

In Aboud's seminal work *Children and Prejudice*, 1988, the author meticulously references and summarizes more than fifty studies that replicate the overall concepts presented in the published works of Kenneth and Mamie Clark. All studies surveyed

address the issues of racial understanding, self-rejection, and presence of prejudice in children (p.35-37). Several studies contradict Clark's findings (Aboud, 1988), yet the overall consensus is consistent with Clark's conclusions. Most researchers agree with the following broad statements: ethnic attitudes are acquired between the ages of 3-5, White children are consistently negative towards members of other ethnic groups, minority children are initially more negative towards members of their own ethnic group, and by age 10 all children show a preference for their own group over others (Aboud, 1988).

There are many explanations for these findings, the most commonly accepted explanation is based on child development and learning theory. If Piaget's theory of child development is utilized, then children in the preoperational stage (ages 2-7) are not yet able to conceptualize abstractly and can only understand physical situations, including personal experiences involving race. Children are able to understand preference and treatment, but are not yet able to understand the feelings or social contexts that accompany these observations and experiences (Piaget, 1969). This would account for findings when children as young as three are able to recognize what color they are, and the color of the person they would like to be. The next stage of development is referred to as the concrete operational stage (ages 7 -11). At this stage children are able to contextualize physical and emotional experiences to create logical structures (Piaget, 1969). Around 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade, abstract conceptual understanding for students becomes routine, and therefore children are able to understand the color they are, and the color of the group they are a part of, therefore showing preference for their own group. From a developmental viewpoint, the Clark studies and more modern interpretations (Aboud, 1988; Fishbein, 1996; McMillian, 1988) suggest that young children are deeply affected

by racial discrimination and prejudice, whether in the pre-operational or concrete operational stage.

A half-century following “the doll studies,” the role of diverse environments in shaping personal identity continues to be important. There is also evidence that suggests diverse school environments are associated with reduced negative racial stereotypes among young children of all racial and ethnic backgrounds (Black, 2002; Ellison & Powers, 1994; Killen & Stangor, 2001; Sigelman & Welch, 1993). The role of schools, arguably young children’s most influential setting, is paramount in shaping feelings and experiences regarding race and therefore self-worth and self-concept. This is particularly important when thinking of those students who attended desegregated preschools and kindergarten programs, such as many of the respondents included in this study.

While the Clark studies and the dozens of studies that have emerged in the decades following are intriguing, many educators, social psychologists, and sociologists find such a framework limiting in explaining processes of racial identity development. Cross (1991) writes extensively on this subject and critiques the research focus of the doll studies as simplistic. He states, “the interpretive lens of the Clarks... somehow lost its sensitivity as they fell into line with the intellectual trends of the time and began to see simplistic patterns of pathology in the personal and group identity of the average Negro” (p. 137). Furthermore, Cross maintains that there is a low correlation between reference group orientation studies (such as the doll studies) and self-esteem. He presents numerous reasons for this, including: 1) limited generalizability in studying 3-4 year old children, 2) Black children are often somewhat bicultural (for example, they tend to have both Black dolls and White dolls to play with), 3) Blacks have multiple reference group orientations,



4) there is limited predictive validity of color preference in regards to self-esteem.

Therefore, while interesting historically, the validity of the doll studies is questionable, at best. Instead Cross proposes the theory of racial identity development to better understand the process of identity formation.

### Racial Identity Development

The development of self is a complex process that is shaped by an endless array of personal choices, characteristics, and social and historical contexts (Waters, 1990). Schools are significant spaces for academic and social preparation and are therefore critical in understanding the identity development process (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Schools serve to mediate the racial identity development process, with the racial composition of a school affecting the racial identity development of individuals from different backgrounds in different ways. A school that is predominantly Black will most likely be more culturally nurturing to students of color than a school that is predominantly White (Shujaa, 1996). However, racially isolated schools inhibit interracial contact, an essential ingredient in developing a positive racial identity. In this way, desegregated schools would serve as positive mediators of racial identity for White students and students of color, while racially isolated schools could inhibit development of all students.

People are most commonly identified in terms of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, region of birth, language, and/or physical and mental ability. Such identifying categories can be classified as dominant (systematically advantaged), with other groups identified as subordinate or targeted (systematically disadvantaged) (Tatum, 1997). An individual could have aspects of their

identity that are simultaneously dominant, subordinate, and targeted (such as a White, female, lesbian). Most often, it is our targeted identities that receive attention, from ourselves and from others, while our dominant identities go unexamined (Tatum, 1997). Furthermore, dominant groups are often resistant to readily identify structures of power, privilege, and inequality (McIntosh, 1988). These examined and unexamined aspects of our personal self are critical in identity development, and such examinations are more likely to occur in diverse settings, such as schools.

Helms (1993) defines racial identity as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p.3). Racial identity development theory refers to the “psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is, belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership” (Helms, 1993, p.3). While these theories are helpful in developing a better understanding of identity development, the “inherent danger of social science frameworks... is the creation of a master narrative that tries to speak of all African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and other ‘involuntary minority groups’ as if their members were exactly the same” (Carter, 2005, p.8). For this reason, it is important to note that there is no single explanation of how, why, and when individuals form their own personal identities. However, in order to better understand the process of identity development and the experiences of students in desegregated schools, I provide an overview of the theory of racial identity development, originally developed then modified by Cross (1971, 1991, 1995, 2001) to discuss racial identity development among Blacks, and modified and extended by Helms (1986, 1993) whose work theorizes racial identity development

among Whites. I then discuss the concept of cultural flexibility which offers an alternate model in which individuals can thrive with multiple identities.

Cross' model, also referred to as the psychology of Nigrescence (the process of becoming Black), has undergone three major revisions since it was first introduced in 1971. While aspects of the theory have changed, the general understanding has not. Nigrescence is a "resocializing experience; it seeks to transform a preexisting identity (a non-Afrocentric identity) into one that is Afrocentric" (1991, p.190). Being a prime agent of socialization, schools are an essential part of this process. Critical identity issues may emerge for Black students "educated in contexts in which their social and cultural realities are either muted or invisible" (Carter, 2010, p.22). Cross contends that Black individuals encounter five stages of identity development, see Table 3.4.

Table 3.4  
*Overview of Nigrescence Theory, developed by Cross (1971, 1991, 1995, 2001).*

<b>Stages of Development</b>	
Pre-encounter	The personal and social significance of an individual's identity has not been internalized. Black individuals are often unaware of their "miseducation" (Woodson, 1933) and typically view life through a Eurocentric perspective.
Encounter	Transition is usually precipitated by an event or experience of racism or injustice. This "encounter" allows the individual to identify himself or herself as Black. This stage stimulates a range of emotions, many of which can be cathartic and energizing, while others can be disruptive.
Immersion/ Emersion	During this stage individuals begin to dismantle their previous identity and construct a new frame of reference. Someone literally immerses him or herself into the "world of Blackness" (Cross, 1991, p. 203). This can sometimes manifest as an anti-White / pro-Black attitude. Emersion refers to the "emergence from the emotionality...racist, and oversimplified ideologies of the immersion experience" (Cross, 1991, p.208). This is a period of extreme cognitive dissonance.
Internalization	In "working through the challenges and problems of the transitional period, the new identity is internalized, evidencing itself in naturalistic ways" (Cross, 1991, p. 210). "Habituated and internalized, Blackness becomes a backdrop for life's transactions" (p.210). However, it is important to note that individuals in this stage do not necessarily gravitate to Black Nationalism (p.222).
Internalization- Commitment	Generally distinguished from the previous stage as the individual develops and maintains a strong commitment and sustained interest in Afrocentricity.

Cross (1995) suggests that individuals can regress or become stagnant at one stage. For example, a conscious high school student could be in the internalization-commitment stage, while many adults exist in the pre-encounter stage. It is also important to note that a person's racial identity may be directly or indirectly related to his or her achievement (Ford, Harris, and Schuerger, 1993). Specifically, there may be a curvilinear relationship between racial identity and achievement, with those in the earliest stage (pre-encounter) and those in the last stages (internalization-commitment) having the highest achievement orientation (Grantham & Ford, 2003). This point is particularly important to

keep in mind when trying to understand the possible effects of desegregated schools on racial identity and therefore on student achievement. Due to more positive interracial contact, a demonstrated outcome of desegregated schools, a successfully integrated school would presumably have more students in the internalization-commitment stage rather than the immersion/emersion stage, therefore possibly increasing academic achievement.

Drawing upon the work of Cross (1971, 1978, 1991), Helms (1993) created a model of White racial identity development. She states, “The development of White identity... is closely intertwined with the development and progress of racism in this country. The greater the extent that racism exists and is denied, the less possible it is to develop a positive White identity” (p.49). There are two major developmental tasks in the process of forming a positive White identity, the “abandonment of individual racism and the recognition of and opposition to institutional and cultural racism” (Tatum, 1997, p. 94). These tasks occur through six stages, see Table 3.5.

Table 3.5  
*Overview of White Racial Identity Development Theory, developed by Helms (1986, 1993)*

<b>Stages of Development</b>	
Contact	Individuals typically perceive themselves as color-blind and see prejudice and racism as individual acts rather than a systemic reality.
Disintegration	Individuals become aware of the pervasive nature of racism in American society, and the role Whites play in maintaining a system of advantage based on race. A relationship, experience, or observation usually serves as a catalyst for this phase. Cognitive dissonance exists as individuals begin to see the myth of meritocracy.
Reintegration	At this stage an individual consciously acknowledges a White identity. Residual feelings of guilt and anxiety are often “transformed into fear and anger toward Black people” (Helms, 1993, p.60). Thoughts and actions can be expressed actively or passively, through apathy, avoidance, or inaction. Many Whites become fixed at this state indefinitely.
Pseudo-independent	First stage of defining a positive White racial identity. Individual actively questions the myth of White superiority and is able to acknowledge how he/she as an individual perpetuates racism in everyday actions; however, individuals may not be completely conscious of the racial “smog” of everyday life (Tatum, 1997). Moreover, the pseudo-independent person still looks to people of color to deal with the “problem” of racism.
Immersion/emersion	This stage includes a reeducation of what it means to be Black and White in the world. Changing the views of White people becomes salient, rather than focusing on people of color. “Emotional as well as cognitive restructuring” happen during this stage (Helms, 1993, p.62).
Autonomy	In this stage, the individual no longer feels a need to “oppress, idealize, or denigrate people on the basis of group membership characteristics” (Helms, 1993, p.62). The worldview of the individual is no longer rigid, but rather fluid and open to nuance. Autonomous individuals often actively seek out opportunities to learn from other cultural groups. This stage should be thought of as an on-going process.

Navigating the complexities and disparate experiences of racial identity

development is difficult, particularly in school settings. The racial hierarchies outside the school shape what happens inside the schools. The racial composition of a school likely interacts with the larger social and cultural narrative of racial hierarchies. In a developmental period when identity markers are deeply meaningful, many students “find

meanings in how classrooms and school activities are organized and the degrees to which they are encouraged to interact with one another both socially and academically” (Carter, 2010, 21). Yet, due to widespread residential segregation, many Whites’ lives “are structured so as to limit their interaction with people of color, as well as their awareness of racial issues,” and thus many remain at the contact stage indefinitely (Tatum, 1992, p. 13). However, experiences such as increased interaction with people of color lead to cognitive dissonance and new awareness that mark the beginning of the Disintegration stage (Tatum, 1992). Such development benefits individuals and the greater community by reducing interracial conflict, promoting cross-racial understandings, and ultimately decreasing systemic racism and prejudice (Tatum, 1992).

There is some evidence that African-American students fare better in same race schools due to their culturally nurturing environments, which may promote the development of a strong sense of self (Shujaa, 1996). Other researchers have found that students of color feel more attached to schools when they attend schools that are racially concentrated non-White (Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001). Studies in higher education have found that Black students in racially concentrated White colleges report alienation, discrimination, and strained relationships with peers and staff (Allen, 1988, 1992; Bennett, 1984; Chavous, 2002; Cureton, 2003; Willie, 2003). These studies suggest that interracial contact is a “necessary but insufficient condition for the attainment of holistic social integration for most, if not all, of its students” (Carter, 2010, p.3). While Black students could possibly benefit socially from being in all Black school environments, based on the theories of racial identity development, such isolation is likely to prevent the development of an advanced racial identity.

Theoretically, individuals develop more advanced racial identity development from increased interracial contact, and such contact is more common in desegregated schools. The findings of Wells et al. (2009) are consistent with this assertion that desegregated schools promote advanced racial identity development for both Black and White students. Graduates of the class of 1980 experienced ‘cognitive dissonance’ during their desegregated experiences, and as such began to acknowledge the intricacies and multi-faceted aspects of race and class in society (Wells et al., 2009). The graduates indicated that their high school experiences “made them more open-minded, less prejudiced, less fearful of other races, and far more adept at reaching across cultures” (p.215). White graduates told Wells et al. (2009) that they “could not buy into simplistic notions about ongoing racial inequality in the United States because they had known people of color that did not fit the stereotypes that [w]hites so often attribute to them” (p.216). Wells et al. provides evidence that desegregated schooling, at the high school level, contributes to a more advanced racial identity development, for members of all racial and ethnic groups. Such development, then, also seems to promote the development of “cultural flexibility” (Carter, 2005, 2010).

#### Cultural Flexibility

The concept of “cultural flexibility” (Carter, 2010) originally draws from the work of Zerubavel (1995) and his discussion of frameworks of thinking, which he describes as rigid, fuzzy, or flexible. “Rigidity promotes ossified, ‘frozen’ structures and, therefore, an essentially static view of the world” (p.1098). In opposition to rigidity, fuzzy-mindedness ignores structure, resources, and boundaries. The flexible mind represents an ideal mental state that “allows individuals to celebrate and participate in a variety of different local,



national, and group-oriented cultural ways, as opposed to acceptance of either separatist or nationalist ideology (rigid), or humanist desires for global homogeneity (fuzzy), which supplant cultural diversity” (Carter, 2010, p.4). Culturally flexible individuals are able to traverse social and symbolic boundaries.

Rigid thinking follows a linear model of acquisition, whereas fuzzy-mindedness is developed with no apparent structural model. In contrast, flexible thinking is developed in a non-linear model. A vital step in the “development of an equal partnership for minorities in the academic, social, and economic life of the United States involves moving away from assumptions of the linear model of cultural acquisition” (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p.395). Non-linear models hypothesize that individuals can maintain a positive identity as a member of several identity groups simultaneously, thereby reducing internal conflicts and negative psychological impact and providing benefits from the “personal and emotional growth” that accompanies a multicultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p.401). Studies of “bicultural” students demonstrate that they produce more positive academic, social, and psychological outcomes, compared to their “monocultural” peers (Carter, 2010, 2005; Darden, 1991; LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Thus, an important function of a desegregated school is the development of culturally flexible students who, “over the course of their social development, effectively navigate diverse social environs such as the workplace, communities, and neighborhoods” (Carter, 2010, p.2). Students’ cultural flexibility may be determined by a host of individual and psychological factors, including self-concept, attitudes, and values (Carter, 2005; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Self-views (such as racial identity

development) are one central factor in determining cultural flexibility, but the link between self-views and academic success, participation, willingness to move across boundaries, and long-term outcomes as adults has not been extensively studied. Carter (2010) does reveal significant associations between self-esteem, academic success, extracurricular placement and cultural flexibility for Black students, and Black students in racially diverse schools scored higher on the cultural flexibility scale than those in majority-White schools.

This discussion regarding racial identity development and cultural flexibility is largely dependent on theory, for theory predicts, and many studies suggest, that interracial schools increase the interracial contact and increased contact leads to positive racial identity development as well as the development of cultural flexibility for some students. Yet, “the consequences of intergroup experiences are very much dependent on the structure of the contact situation” (Carter, 2010) and decades of research have shown us that schools are complex cultural sites with extreme variation between schools, classrooms, and individuals.

#### Trends Toward Resegregation

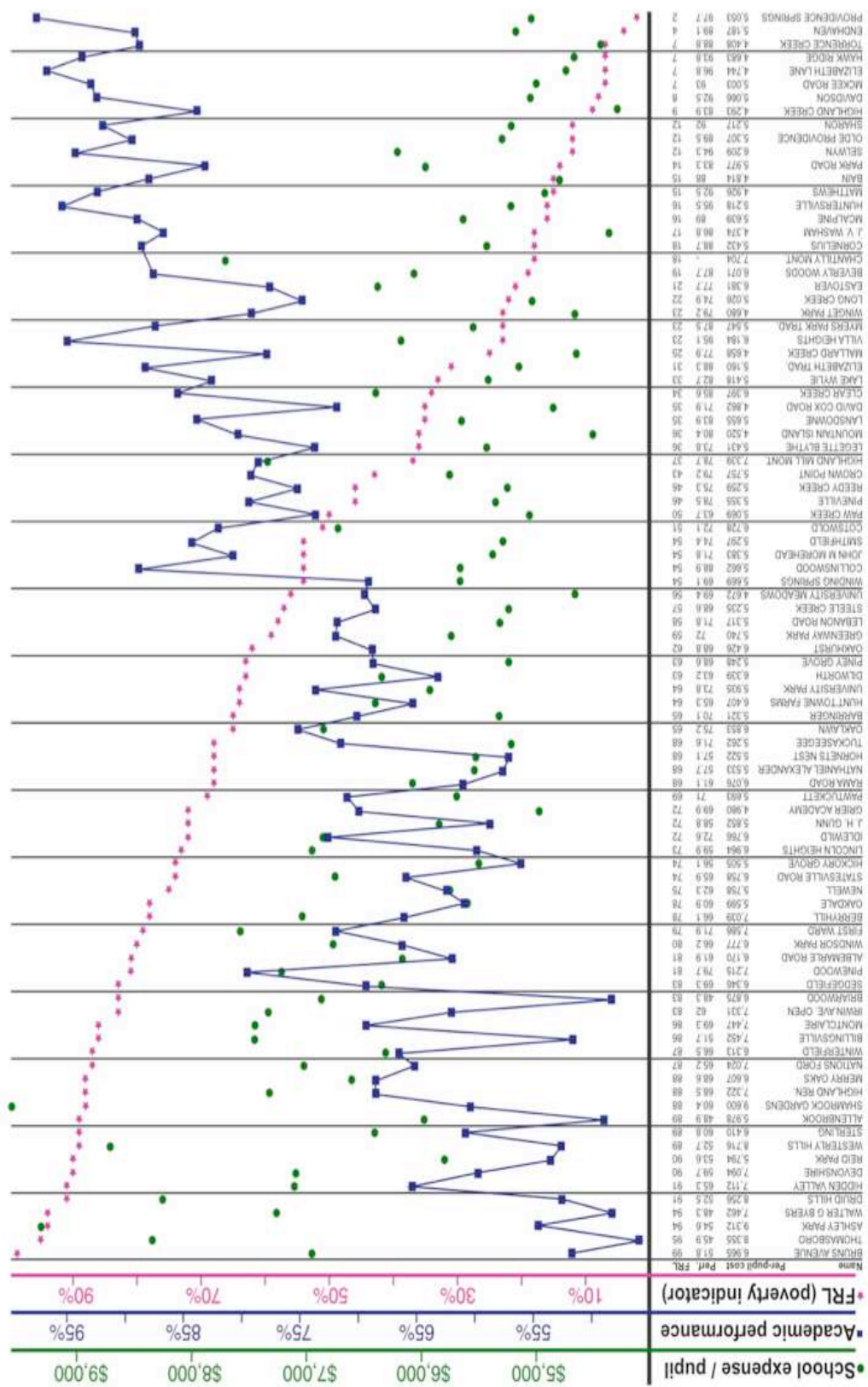
During the latter part of the 1990s the number of Black segregated schools increased in all but two states, those states being Michigan and New Jersey, which were already highly segregated and showed no change (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). At this same time, “the proportion of black students in majority white schools has decreased by 13 percentage points, to a level lower than any year since 1968” (Frankenberg et al., 2003, p.59).

Charlotte schools have also substantially resegregated. As discussed previously, from 1971 through 2002, the school district in Charlotte operated under a court order to desegregate its schools, but this legal mandate ended in 2002. Following a series of lower court rulings, a 1999 declaration of unitary status was upheld in 2002. That year CMS instituted a neighborhood schools-based enrollment policy, initially called the Family Choice Plan (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010b). Critics of the plan cite increased economic stratification and racial isolation in the schools, due in part to “higher levels of poverty in the segregated black schools, lower levels of information parents have when choosing schools and less access to the social, human, financial and cultural capital which parents and their children would receive in a more integrated setting” (Southworth, 2004, p. 43; and see also Mickelson & Southworth, 2005). Simply put, due to the residential segregation in Charlotte, a neighborhood schools-based plan has led CMS to a system of segregated schools similar to those in existence prior to *Swann*. Neighborhood based student assignment has led to disparate educational outcomes for children based on race and SES.

Currently in CMS, a correlation exists between school-level academic performance and school-level socioeconomic status. As discussed earlier, CMS uses SES as the measure for their annual Equity Report instead of race, and as a result data is collected and distributed by the district using this measure. Figure 3.1 shows that as poverty increases (represented as stars), student achievement decreases (represented as squares). Increased per pupil spending (represented as circles) can counter some of the effects of a high poverty school, such has been the case with Shamrock Gardens Elementary. High per pupil expenditure to fund lower teacher/student ratios, hire

supplementary staff, and provide additional professional development opportunities can improve outcomes in high poverty schools, yet such expenditures are costly and impractical as a district-wide effort. Moreover, high pupil expenditure does not guarantee positive results, such as in the case of Westerly Hills Elementary. While beneficial, additional funds do not seem to be sufficient to improve the academic outcomes of high poverty schools.

Figure 3.1  
 School Expense per pupil, Academic Performance, and Poverty Status of CMS Elementary Schools, 2006-2007 (Swann Fellowship, 2008)



In CMS, because of their historic use for desegregation efforts since 1991, current potential to continue desegregation, and public perception as a drain on other schools in the city, magnet schools are a controversial topic and beyond the scope of this study. However, many of the most diverse and successful schools in CMS, with the lowest per pupil expenditure, are magnet schools. In Figure 3.1 see Barringer Elementary, Villa Heights Elementary, and Beverly Woods Elementary. In Charlotte, magnet schools are theme-based and students are assigned through a lottery process to a partial or a full magnet. Partial magnets include a combination of magnet students and students from the neighborhood, while full magnets draw from neighborhoods in a specified magnet zone, and do not include neighborhood students unless such students enroll through the lottery process. Magnet schools play an important role in promoting diverse schools in a highly racially segregated community like Charlotte. Figure 3.2 is a map of Mecklenburg County overlaid with information regarding magnet schools and levels of economic disadvantage. The northern and southern parts of the county have the lowest percentage of economically disadvantaged students, while the center of the county has the highest concentrations of high poverty students. By locating magnet schools in high poverty areas, the district lures families from the more privileged northern and southern edges of the county to highly successful magnet schools located in more economically disadvantaged areas.

Figure 3.2  
 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Magnet Status, and Economically Disadvantaged Student Percentage, 2009-2010

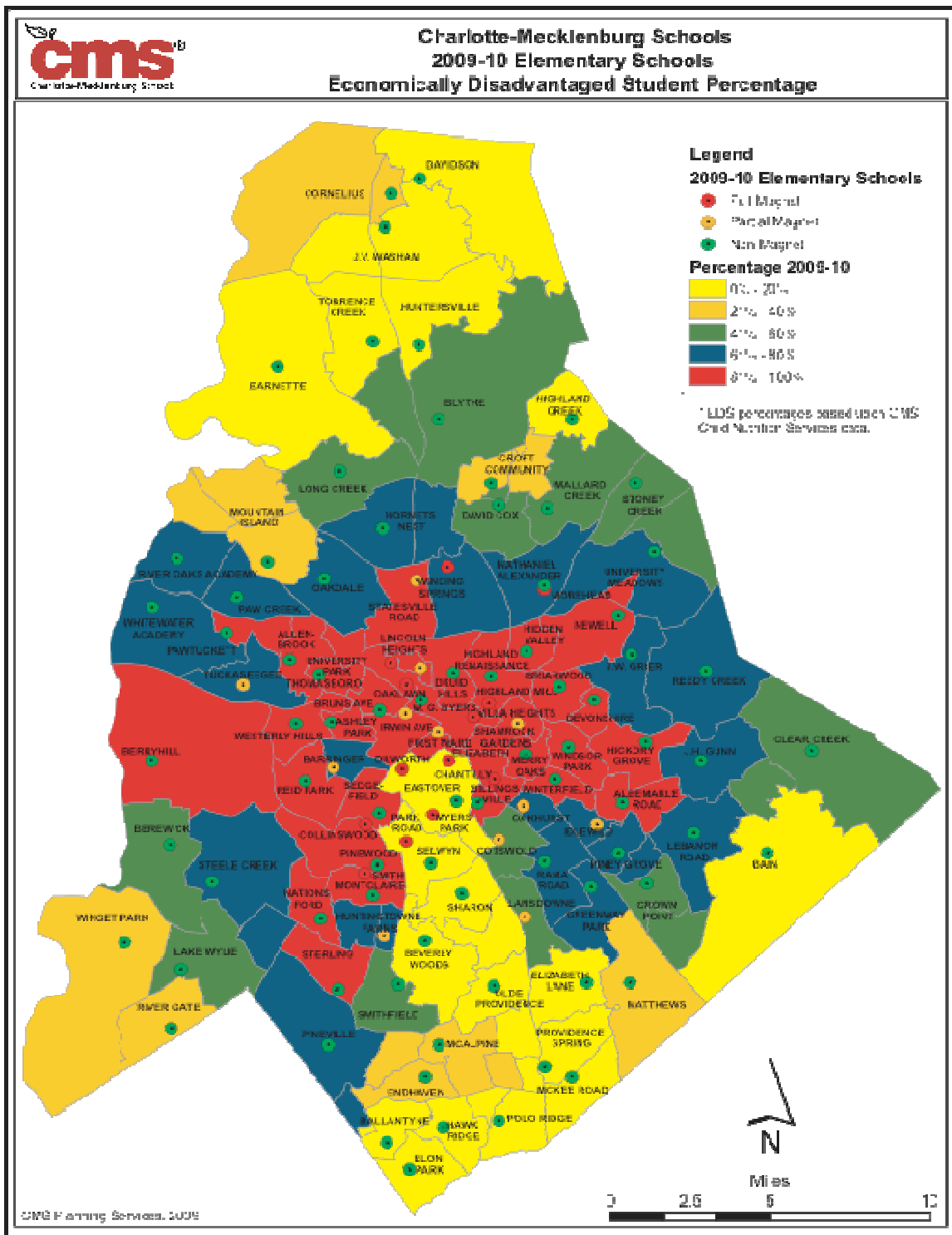


Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 use different terminology to refer to SES. Figure 3.1 uses free/reduced lunch status (as a proxy for SES), as was standard in 2008, when the figure was released. As of 2010, due to state mandate, CMS releases data regarding student levels of “economic disadvantage” (ED). ED is based on data from Child Nutrition Services determined by free/reduced lunch status. Utilizing race as an indicator of racial composition is preferred to only using free/reduced lunch status, because while inextricably connected, race and SES are not perfectly correlated (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2008). Unfortunately, such information is not readily available using CMS documents because as discussed previously, the district views equity as a concept based on the socioeconomic status of the student, rather than racial identification.

Equity remains an important topic for the Charlotte community. CMS attempts to address the challenges inherent in meeting the needs of schools of concentrated poverty by utilizing various funding and support structures based on a school’s classification. In 2009, all 171 schools received “foundational support” (funds allotted from the state and the county), 70 schools were designated FOCUS schools (with specialized funds from district), 35 schools were designated Title I schools (received funding from state, county, and federal funding sources), and 11 schools received intensive support and were designated as part of the “Achievement Zone” (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Equity Report, 2009).

In planning for the 2010-2011 school year, the achievement zone was disbanded, however during the years in use, the achievement zone was a group of the lowest performing schools in the city. The schools were all under school improvement, as specified under NCLB (2001). The zone was mainly comprised of middle schools and



high schools, with two elementary schools also included. Schools in the achievement zone were supported by district leaders with experience in turning around low performing schools, and the support was beneficial. In 2009-2010, schools in the achievement zone exhibited improved academic outcomes and higher graduation rates than the previous year (CMS, 2010). While not as poor performing as those schools in the achievement zone, FOCUS schools are given additional resources, such as smaller class size and additional incentives for teachers. FOCUS schools have low rates of academic achievement, high levels of student poverty, and are almost completely racially segregated.

While race is not identified within many CMS documents, individual school profiles located on the CMS website contain the racial composition of each school. Utilizing school data from the 2008-2009 schools and cross-referencing that data with the list of identified FOCUS schools, I found that of the 70 designated FOCUS schools, all are racially segregated non-White and all have White populations under 15%, with several FOCUS schools having White populations under 5% (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, School profiles, 2008).

Using publicly available data from the CMS website, I conducted a comparative descriptive analysis of the composition of elementary schools in CMS from 2001-2002 and 2006-2007, for race and free/reduced lunch status, see Table 3.6. While free/reduced lunch status is not an optimal indicator (Esminger et al., 2000), such information can be used as a proxy for SES. The years for comparison were selected because 2001-2002 was the last year CMS existed under the *Swann* mandate, and 2006-2007 was the most recent data available at the time this analysis was conducted.

In 2008, there were 91 elementary schools; however, I only compiled data from those schools also in operation during the 2001-2002 school year (N= 79). Since the majority of schools built since 2001 have been on the outer edges of the county, where the population is majority White, the schools not included in the analysis are primarily racially concentrated White. Based on the definition of hypersegregated schools (schools with more than 90% enrollment of a specific race/ethnic group) and research that suggests “a balance of equity and excellence exists in schools where 61-90% of the population is White and Asian and 10-39% of the population is Black and Hispanic” (Brown, 1999, p.18), I selected 60% and 90% non-white as the cut-off points for racial composition. Schools identified in Table 3.6 are either segregated or hypersegregated.

In 2001-2002, the year prior to the implementation of the neighborhood schools-based plan, 9% of schools were 90% non-White, yet just four years later, this number had risen to 32 schools, an increase of 457% in hypersegregated elementary schools. The percentage of schools that were 60% non-White also increased, with 43 schools being racially segregated non-White in 2001-2002, compared to 56 schools in 2006-2007, an increase of 130%. The increase in schools segregated by SES also increased; in 2001-2002, there were no schools hypersegregated by SES, but in 2006-2007, 9 schools had rates of 90%+ free/reduced lunch, an increase of 900%, see Table 3.8. In summary, schools in CMS dramatically re-segregated by race and SES just years after the declaration of unitary status. This change in racial and socio-economic composition has the potential for far-reaching implications for students throughout the district —those who are now in racially and socioeconomically segregated minority and poor schools,

and those who exist in homogenous white, middle class school settings with little access to diverse experiences as this study will show.

Table 3.6

*School Level Racial and SES Characteristics of Elementary Schools in 2002 and 2007\**

	<b>2006- 2007</b>	<b>% of schools</b>	<b>2001- 2002</b>	<b>% of schools</b>	<b>% Increased Segregation from 2002-2007</b>
+90% non-White	32	40.50%	7	9%	+457%
+60% non-White	56	71%	43	54%	+130%
+90% free/reduced lunch	9	11%	0	0%	+900%
+60% free/reduced lunch	44	56%	30	38%	+147%

\* Counts are not mutually exclusive (e.g., a school that is 94% non-white and 91% free/reduced lunch is represented on the table four times)

Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2008

Although quantitative indicators, such as those provided above, can illuminate trends regarding resegregation and efforts to promote diverse schools, such data are limited in their applicability to individual students. Instead of studying desegregation efforts at a macro level, it is useful for researchers to focus on individual experiences and use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, particularly ethnographic and case study research and narratives, to construct a more meaningful discussion of schooling in both racially diverse and racially homogenous environments (Mickelson, 2010; Wells et. al, 2009). This study seeks to do this with a sample of CMS graduates whose experiences attending high school during the mid 1990s can speak to these issues in intimate detail.

## Summary

The context of the experiences of CMS graduates from 1995-1998 is complex, yet beginning to understand and make sense of this complexity is vital to understanding the long-term outcomes and perceptions of schooling from this population. While the literature on outcomes of desegregation is vast, concerns about methodology are prominent when judging the value of desegregation as a wide-scale educational reform. Understanding the historical and theoretical underpinnings of the research and political movements guiding desegregation reform is also important. The research is clear—racial composition has an effect on a variety of schooling outcomes, and diverse schools appear to be more beneficial in both short-term and long-term measures. School composition also plays an important role in the development of racial identity for both White students and students of color. Diverse schools seem to promote advanced racial identity development as well as the ability to be culturally flexible. Are there differences in the ways students' short- and long-term outcomes are influenced by racial composition if schools are diverse or racially imbalanced? Although the weight of the evidence suggests that diverse schools benefit students academically and socially, schools throughout the United States are resegregating at an alarming rate. This study builds the social science evidence literature regarding the effects of desegregated schools. This study also provides insight into the complex experiences of a population who benefitted from the reform the most—the graduates who attended desegregated schools throughout all years of their schooling.

## CHAPTER 4: Methods

To increase understanding of the graduates' experiences and perceptions of their schooling experiences, I present a collective case study on the graduates of three Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools from 1995-1998 and weave together both qualitative and quantitative information, including the following: archival data from a survey administered to all graduates of the class of 1997 (referred to as the 1997 survey), data from the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire, document analysis of yearbooks, and one-on-one interviews. The overarching question I answer concerns how graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School describe and make sense of their schooling experiences. An archival dataset from 1997 is used to paint a picture of the graduates from each school, thus providing a valuable context for the other data points. Yearbook analysis served a two-fold purpose, first as a device used for sampling, and second as a tool to determine interracial contact within each school site. I employ the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire to survey graduates of each school to ask questions on a wide range of schooling experiences. Many questions address basic demographic information while the majority of the survey consists of scaled questions that address long-term outcomes of schooling experiences. Intense interviews are used as the primary data source, and as such provide contextual information to provide insight from observations arising from other data sources. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the research questions and data sources I employ to answer each question.

Table 4.1

*Research Question and Data Sources*

	Research Question	Data Source(s)
General Q	How do graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School from 1995-1998 describe and make sense of their schooling experiences, particularly in regards to interracial contact, racial identity development and diverse understandings of greater society?	Diversity Assessment questionnaire, interviews, 1997 dataset, yearbook analysis
Sub Q a	Were there differences in long-term outcomes of graduates between the three schools?	Diversity Assessment Questionnaire, Interviews
Sub Q b	Were graduates aware that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were under a court-ordered desegregation plan during their years of schooling? Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school?	Interviews
Sub Q c	Did the racial composition and organizational structure of schools affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development?	Diversity assessment questionnaire, interviews, yearbook analysis
Sub Q d	Did experiences in desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults?	Diversity assessment questionnaire, interviews

## Case Study Approach

This study is a collective case study that utilizes multiple data sources. The comparative analysis allows extraction of similarities and differences of students' perceptions based on the racial composition of their school. A major strength of the case study approach is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence that develop

into converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2003). Any finding based on multiple streams of evidence will be more compelling and accurate than data collected from a single source because triangulation reduces the risk that “conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method” (Maxwell, 1998, p.88). Graduates are members of a culture-sharing group with experiences unique to their age and geographic location, while also part of a bounded system, a graduating class. Numerous sources of data employed in case study methodology allows the researcher to focus on the embedded experiences of a specific culture. I employ administrative data from CMS, data from a 1997 survey, an analysis of yearbooks, answers to the DAQ, and a series of in depth interviews.

*Archival Survey Data to Provide Context of Schools in 1997*

In a district the size of CMS, there are many similarities among schools; however, there is also a great deal of variability on numerous dimensions. This variability can be a result of countless factors, including demographics of a school, geographic location, curriculum, staff, facility, and school culture. While these factors are not necessarily key to student achievement in high school, including such information is essential to fully understand the school’s desegregation efforts and must be included in any comparative analysis. Professor Roslyn Mickelson has conducted extensive research regarding the experiences and attitudes of students in Charlotte area schools. In 1997 she conducted a sample of senior English classes from every high school in the district. A questionnaire was administered to students in selected English classes that resulted in a data set with over 200 variables including demographic information, perceptions, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and achievement indicators. This data provides a rich context to

paint a picture of the student body of each individual school in 1997, and thus provides a comprehensive description of the three sites studied in this research. I crosstabulated various indicators by high school in order to compare key variables that describe differences and similarities among North Mecklenburg High School, Garinger High School, and Independence High School. Appendix A presents the survey used to gather these data.

While archival data are often used in case studies, the information or insight gleaned from such data sources varies tremendously. In many cases, the validity of archival evidence is uncertain because it is difficult to know the conditions under which the data was collected (Yin, 2003). However, in this case, the available information was collected by a well-known social scientist interested in issues surrounding desegregation efforts, particularly attitudes and perceptions of students in segregated and desegregated environments. The data collection was funded by the National Science Foundation and the standards of data collection were rigorous, including a randomized sample of all twelfth grade students in CMS, regardless of their academic track. For this reason, the dataset can be considered a reliable and valid source of data regarding perceptions of schooling from the viewpoints of students prior to graduating in 1997.

#### *Yearbook Analysis*

Much has been written regarding the racial composition of classrooms, often referred to as ability grouping or tracking. Mickelson (1997) uses the above-mentioned dataset to provide evidence of the wide scale practice of tracking in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools in 1997. Acknowledging such practices that “subverted *Swann*” (Mickelson, 2001) is essential to understanding lived experiences that shaped the



perceptions from graduates of desegregated schools. The segregation of races within larger desegregated environments did not only occur at the classroom level, but presumably during extracurricular activities as well. It is assumed that the degree of interracial mixing in all aspects of the school environment will have an impact on the perceptions of graduates who attended desegregated schools. Thus, such information is important to acquire.

While tracking, often based on race/ethnicity, is fairly hidden in that such practices occur at the classroom level, racialized groupings of sports teams, clubs, and extracurricular activities are clearly shown in the photographs of any yearbook. Clotfelter (2002, 2004) analyzed yearbooks from schools throughout the United States in order to better understand interracial contact and desegregation efforts. Clotfelter (2004) established that the degree of interracial contact in school organizations depends on three factors, 1) the racial mix of the school, 2) how often students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds participate in activities, and 3) how evenly the students from various racial groups are distributed across organizations. He states, "To be sure, the racial mix of the student body necessarily sets the bounds for what interracial contact is possible, but the details of contact within the school must be considered within any comprehensive assessment" (p.145). Thus, yearbook analysis serves as a valuable tool to better understand the degree of interracial contact the graduates experienced.

Yearbooks used in this research were provided by graduates of each school, who offered their personal copies. Data analysis of the 1997 yearbook includes information regarding the racial composition of the staff, student government, homecoming courts, sports teams, arts organizations (including choir, band, orchestra, art clubs, and drama),

service clubs, senior superlatives (example, best dressed, most likely to succeed, etc.), and any other pertinent information within the yearbook. I also provide descriptive information of the yearbook itself, such as size, advertisements, and the amount of interracial contact displayed in paid advertisements.

### *Diversity Assessment Questionnaire*

The Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ) is a 70-item student survey developed by researchers at The Civil Rights Project at UCLA in collaboration with the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education. The DAQ was designed to be a classroom-administered questionnaire that asks students about their experiences with diversity in their school and classrooms. The survey—targeted for 11th grade students, but suitable for any high school grade—also includes questions about students' future goals, educational aspirations, attitudes and interests. The instrument was piloted in Louisville, KY (Kurlaender & Yun, 2001) and has since been administered in seven school districts around the country. Special permission was granted by the Civil Rights Project to use this instrument.

Instead of administering the survey to a class of students during the school day, the DAQ was individually distributed to graduates through an Internet link (this process is described in detail later in this chapter). Given that the survey was designed for classroom administration, several modifications needed to be made to the verb tense and content of questions. To ensure the spirit of the survey remains as close to the original as possible, I relied upon the expertise of Marion Bish to assist in the revision process. Dr. Bish is a professor of survey methods and program evaluation at UNCC, and she provided feedback on the modifications of the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire. See

Appendix B for the original copy and Appendix C for the copy of the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire altered for use in this research study. The survey was replicated on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), a well-known survey administration site, and distributed to graduates through an Internet link.

### *Intensive Interviews*

Intensive research interviews about the perceptions of graduates of desegregated schools have been conducted by Wells, Holme, Revilla, and Atanda (2009). For their book *Both Sides Now*, they conducted over 540 interviews, including 268 interviews with graduates of desegregated schools from the class of 1980. In *Community Attitudes Toward a Desegregated School System* (1979), Maniloff interviewed 56 individuals within the Charlotte community who had particular insight into the process of desegregation, including district personnel, community leaders, students, and parents. Both Wells et al. and Maniloff use interviews effectively to better understand graduates and community members' experiences with desegregation. Both studies employed a semi-structured interview format that allowed the researcher to engage in conversation about pre-determined ideas, while simultaneously granting the researcher freedom to deviate from these questions if the need arose.

The interviews in this data collection are formatted much the same way. I utilized an interview protocol (see Appendix D); however, this protocol served to facilitate a natural conversation that allowed me to understand each individual's experiences with and perceptions of desegregated schooling. Interviews are interesting sources of data; however, the information gleaned from interviews must be interpreted, analyzed, and

understood within a larger context to be of use in understanding a social phenomenon. The yearbooks, 1997 survey dataset, and DAQ provides that context.

### Site Selection and Sampling Processes

Due to the mandate resulting from *Swann* (1971), CMS operated under a court-ordered desegregation plan from 1972-2001. As previously mentioned, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is one of the few school systems nationally that maintained desegregated schools long enough for a student to attend thirteen years of school in desegregated schools. In 1984, CMS received national recognition for its desegregation plan (Cole et al., 1984). The same year, in 1984, the class of 1997 had just entered kindergarten. Thus, the majority of graduates in 1997 entered into kindergarten in CMS within a desegregation plan that was a model for other districts nationwide. This is a dramatically different context than it would have been for a class that participated in desegregation when the plan was in its first stages of implementation, and presumably controversial.

In 1997, CMS had eleven high schools, 24 middle schools, and 58 elementary schools. While CMS had existed under a court-mandated desegregation plan since 1972, schools had varying levels of racial diversity at that time. Judge James McMillian's original ruling in *Swann* (1971) established the criteria for determining racial balances based on the district's percent of Black students. Using this standard in 1997, the following categories existed for identifying a school as desegregated or racially identifiable (Mickelson, 2004), see Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*Categorization of School Based on Swann Ruling*

<i>School Label</i>	<i>Racial Composition</i>
Racially Identifiable White	< 25 % Black
Racially Identifiable Black	> 56% Black
Racially Desegregated	> 25 % Black, < 56% White

Schools for this study were selected using the demographics of CMS and the standards of racial composition from the *Swann* ruling, which essentially identified groups of students as Black and non-Black (White, Asian, Latino, and multiracial students were grouped together). In 1997, CMS was 51% White, 41% Black, and 8 % identified as “other” (Mickelson, 2001). Using the dataset compiled in 1997 by Mickelson and the specifications of the *Swann* ruling, I determined that Independence was the most racially desegregated with 35% Black students, Garinger was the most racially identifiable Black with 63% of students being Black, while North Mecklenburg was the most racially identifiable White with 22% of students being Black.

Due to the IB programs in place at Independence and North Mecklenburg in 1997, I considered selecting different schools (East Mecklenburg was discussed as an alternative because it was the next racially balanced high school in the district), but decided against this when I determined that Independence was the only high school in the district at the time legally considered desegregated. Furthermore, the results of the study indicate that the IB and non-IB respondents held similar perceptions, and therefore I can presume that participating in the IB program was not a substantial confounding factor.

### *Sampling*

The sampling process for the DAQ and interviews is based on the premise of purposeful sampling rather than convenience or probability sampling. In fact, there was nothing convenient about the sampling processes necessary for this research.

Undoubtedly, the sampling procedures for this research were difficult; and this may be why research on this population has not been conducted previously. Graduates move from the town they grew up in, many females change their names due to marriage, and in this age of technology, few people in the targeted demographic (age 30-35) have a landline (which means they are not listed in the phone book). Insider research is generally viewed as a sampling technique that should be avoided (Glesne, 2006); however, because of the challenges in accessing this population, my insider status proved invaluable.

Because of the nature of the research questions it was important to access graduates from specific demographics. Previous research on the perceptions of graduates of desegregated schools utilized reunions to compile a database of subjects. Wells et al. (2009) attended the 20-year reunions for the class of 1980, made connections with graduates willing to participate in the research study, and compiled their contact information. Initially, I thought that this same sampling technique could be employed; however, no schools selected had 10-year reunions for the class of 1997. As a result, I used an alternative approach to identify participants—the Internet.

### *Facebook Research*

Identifying appropriate individuals to interview took over twelve months due to the difficulty of accessing graduates from three different schools without any formal network or database to facilitate the process. First, using 1997 yearbooks, I compiled a

list of graduates, specifically identifying students in leadership positions (student government, homecoming queen/king, captains of sports teams, etc.). I assumed such students would be more likely to respond to a survey regarding their schooling experiences because of their commitment to school while a student. Furthermore, I assumed these students would have established networks to access graduates. Using the pictures in the yearbook I identified the gender and estimated the racial/ethnic classification of each graduate. I initially contacted senior class presidents from each school, knowing that they tend to be in charge of organizing their reunions. Through [www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com), [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com), and [www.classmates.com](http://www.classmates.com), I was able to contact the senior class president from Independence and North Mecklenburg. I was not able to find the senior class president for Garinger. I initiated contact, and then I explained the research project and my interest in accessing any database available. One did not respond to the second round of emails and another responded to say that she was not interested in helping.

As a CMS graduate of 1997, a graduate of NC State University (a school with many CMS grads), and an active community member who has affiliations with several formal and informal networks of same-age peers, I have access to many 1995-1998 graduates of CMS through my own personal network. With 1997 as the target year, my intent was to focus on the two years prior and two years after; however, later, I determined that the class of 1999 would be problematic because they graduated in the year that *Swann* was overturned, and the media coverage and public discourse surrounding that decision would likely have influenced their opinions and possibly changed their experiences.

Using the yearbooks, then, I found seven people I casually knew (four from Independence, three from North Mecklenburg) and reached out to them by phone, email, and Facebook to explain my research and ask for any assistance in finding graduates who would be willing to participate by completing an online survey. I also posted several “updates” on my Facebook page with the link to the DAQ on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and sent personal emails out to over 150 individuals who had loose ties to CMS.

After my initial contact with the seven acquaintances, I began a long and complex process of contacting other graduates. For example, a colleague in the Principal Fellows program at UNCC worked at Independence High School. Knowing that many graduates return to work where they went to school, I asked him to ask the staff if anyone graduated from Independence from 1995-1998. From this request I found two graduates and I sent them the survey link by email. Similarly, several graduates from Garinger responded to an email sent from a close friend’s brother who graduated in 1993 but who knew graduates from 1995 and 1996. I enlisted family members and close friends in the process as well. My best friend played soccer in college with a graduate of North Mecklenburg. I was given her name and looked her up on Facebook. She did not respond to my Facebook message; however, while I was on her Facebook page, I noticed that we had a mutual friend. When I clicked on her education information (a tab on Facebook pages), I found out that she was a 1998 graduate of North Mecklenburg. I also shamelessly solicited contacts during everyday interactions. For example, while standing in line at the grocery store I saw a woman with a bag that said CMS. I began a discussion with her and found out that she was a 1994 graduate of Olympic, but her sister was a Garinger graduate from 1996. I contacted her sister via email and she completed the online survey. I also utilized



snowball sampling (Waters, 1990). After someone completed the survey online, I sent him or her an email or Facebook message asking them to pass the link along to any graduate of CMS from 1995-1998.

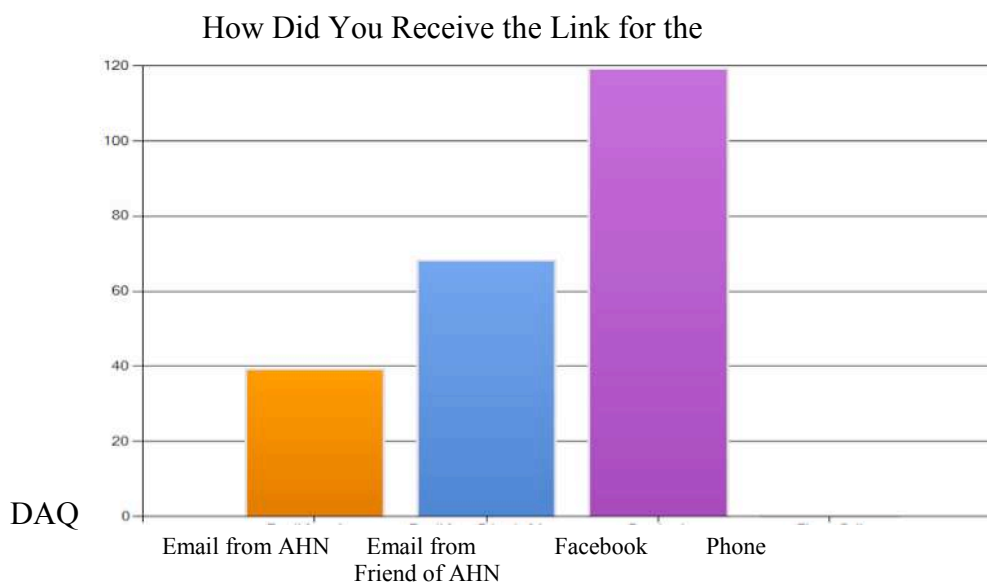
Utilizing these techniques, I was able to find the majority of respondents I needed for Independence; however, I was missing the necessary diverse respondents from North Mecklenburg and Garinger. Desperate situations call for desperate measures, so I resorted to a form of Facebook “stalking.” I began searching Facebook and classmates.com for graduates whom I had identified as leaders of their respective high schools, but very few of these individuals responded. For example, the homecoming king from one school responded to my initial email and said he would participate; however, he only completed the first page of the survey. When I contacted him by email to ask him to complete the survey, he did not respond.

I then used a function of Facebook that searches for individuals based on their high school and graduating class. For example, I looked up Garinger, class of 1997, and then I cross-referenced the list of graduates with my own network. Any mutual friend (a friend of mine on Facebook who is also friends with a graduate) will be listed. When I scrolled through the list of graduates, I targeted demographics I needed, looked for mutual friends, and then contacted the mutual friend to ask if he or she would introduce me to the person I was seeking. For example, I needed a non-White and non-Black respondent from Garinger. Using the school and class search function, I found an individual who was of Asian descent (based on his picture and name) and I discovered that we had a friend in common. I sent a message to the friend of mine who knew this possible respondent, explained that I needed an introduction, and then made contact with

the survey link. Generally this approach was more successful than a “cold contact.” I found that sending a message to someone with whom I shared no friends on Facebook was generally unsuccessful (though I did find 4 respondents through cold contact). However, using mutual friends to capitalize on “weak ties” between the respondent and myself was generally successful, and provides an interesting application of network theory. Almost every respondent to the survey has an interesting story about how they found the survey link, and the most common method of initial contact was through Facebook, see Figure 4.1. After I employed these various techniques and strategies, 209 individuals started the survey, with 192 completing the survey from 11 different high schools. From these 11 high schools, I isolated the data for the sites chosen for this comparative study.

Figure 4.1

*General Path to Survey Link*



From the survey responses, twelve individuals were selected from each selected school site for in-depth interviews based on the demographics I needed to answer the research question by race, ethnicity and class, see Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*Demographic Information of Interviewees for Each Site*

<i>African-American</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Asian, Hispanic, or Other</i>
2 female	2 female	2 female
2 male	2 male	2 male

### Data Collection

Data collection occurred in three stages. I began by reading several historical narratives on the history of Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. I spoke with members of the Charlotte community regarding their memories of CMS in the 1980s and 90s. Because my family also had experiences with CMS, I was able to talk to my parents and siblings (who graduated from CMS in 1987 and 1993) about the school system. As a graduate of CMS, I was able to contact friends and acquaintances from high school to discuss their perceptions of their own experiences. In addition, as a current employee of CMS, I am constantly in contact with staff members who have worked in the system for many years. For example, the principal I currently work with was a teacher at Ranson Junior High during the late 80s and is a graduate of CMS herself, graduating just three years after the *Swann* decision. In my daily life I am surrounded by a wealth of institutional memory, and career educators are always willing to talk and remember. In addition to these conversations I also used *The Charlotte Observer* archive to read articles written about desegregation from the mid 1980s to the late 90s. During the initial stage of this study I

used the 1997 dataset as well as the yearbooks to provide a historical context for the graduates I would be surveying and interviewing. This information led to the creation of the interview protocol as well as a general context to better understand the experiences of graduates.

The second stage of the data collection process involved soliciting responses for the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire, as described in the section on sampling methods. As discussed previously, the survey was presented in an online format through [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The survey opened on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and closed June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010. There were four situations where I conducted interviews with individuals who did not first complete a survey. When this occurred, I contacted the respondent after the interview, gave them the link for the online survey, and asked for them to complete it. The DAQ took an average of 14 minutes to complete, with 92% completion rate.

The third stage of data collection involved conducting one-on-one phone interviews. Interviews were conducted with twelve graduates from each school site, for a total of 36 interviews. There is a significant literature regarding the role of survey methods in eliciting responses. Different survey methods often produce different answers to the same questions (Glesne, 2006; Hammersley et al., 2000; Maxwell, 1998), particularly when using scale responses (Dillman & Christian, 2005). Dillman & Christian (2005) found that survey modes are a source of instability in responses, and the best way to ensure valid and reliable data is through using multiple methods. Dillman et al. (2008) found that respondents to telephone interviews were “more likely to acquiesce or express social desirability” to questions than are respondents to mail and Internet questionnaires. For this reason, data from the interviews was reported only when

triangulated with data from the historical documents, the 1997 dataset, and the DAQ. Furthermore, the interview protocol was explicitly designed to prevent socially desired responses and instead presented information in an intentionally ambiguous way. The success of this approach was evident by the sharing of information that some would consider socially undesirable.

At the outset of the study, I considered having an African-American colleague conduct interviews with non-White participants, thinking that individuals would be more open in their interviews. However, once I began the interview process, I found that phone interviews, and the feeling of anonymity that the telephone provides, fostered a level of comfort with all respondents. Respondents seemed comfortable sharing intensely personal information, regardless of their race, gender, or ethnicity.

The interviews were scheduled by Facebook message, email, phone, or text message and catered to the preference of the respondent; for example, I conducted an interview at 6:00am to meet the schedule of a young mother, and I conducted another at midnight to meet the need of someone who worked second shift. Interviews lasted anywhere from 19 minutes to 128 minutes, with the average time being 50 minutes. During and immediately after the interviews I took field notes. Using a speakerphone and a digital voice recorder, I recorded all interviews following the recitation of the informed consent form and the verbal agreement of the respondent.

## Data Analysis

### *Archival Dataset Analysis*

The dataset provided by Professor Roslyn Mickelson contains over 200 variables pertaining to high school life. Of these variables, I selected 32 that were most useful in

providing a context for the information that emerged from the survey and interview data. I utilized SPSS software to conduct cross tabulations, a simple descriptive procedure, between variables and the three school sites.

#### *Diversity Assessment Questionnaire Analysis*

During the conception phase of this research project, I intended to replicate statistical procedures previously used with the DAQ by other researchers. In *Is Diversity a Compelling Interest? Evidence from Louisville*, Kurlaender & Yun (2001) used the DAQ to examine students' future goals, educational aspirations, attitudes, and interests. In addition to descriptive statistics, they developed composite variables created from indicators in the DAQ as both outcomes and predictors. Then, they used OLS Regression to see whether there were substantial and significant differences in educational aspirations across race, gender, and immigrant status.

However, due to the unconventional sampling procedures, the non-random sample, and small sample size of this study, the DAQ results are not suitable for regression analysis. Like the variables from the 1997 data set, the data has been analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare responses between the three target schools.

#### *Yearbook Analysis*

After acquiring yearbooks for each site, I created a spreadsheet that included basic information, such as the size of the yearbook; the racial and gender composition of the staff as well as that of the administrative team, student government, homecoming courts, sports teams, arts organizations (including: choir, band, orchestra, art clubs, and drama), service clubs, senior superlatives (example, best dressed, most likely to succeed); number of personal and sponsorship ads; and number of advertisements that demonstrate

interracial contact. Information was tabulated by race and gender based on observations of pictures, then compared between the three school sites. This analysis is similar to the analysis Clotfelter (2004) conducted.

### *Analysis of Interviews*

When I first began this research project, I assumed that I would use a qualitative research analysis program to assist in analyzing the interview data. However, after several discussions with experienced qualitative researchers, I decided to analyze my data without the use of computer software. I made this decision for several reasons; most importantly, I wanted to be intimately familiar with the data. I wanted to, as one professor put it, “sleep in it, dream about it.” I was counseled that conducting the interviews, transcribing, and coding the interviews myself would be the most successful way to ensure that I was immersed in my data.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and I transcribed them verbatim. Once transcriptions were completed, I reviewed them using the script, original recording, and notes I took during the interview in order to check for accuracy and consistency. Following the completion and transcription of all interviews, I analyzed transcripts in several ways. Many of my research questions dealt with specific information, such as if the respondent graduated from college. A lot of information could be reduced to simple yes/no responses. I began by creating a spreadsheet loosely based on my interview protocol that included 42 data points for each respondent. These included facts such as where they attended elementary and middle school and where they currently work and live. This spreadsheet also included information that emerged from conversation, such as whether they knew CMS was under a court-mandated school

desegregation plan how they got to school. Once this spreadsheet was completed for each school, specific themes began to emerge.

I began the coding process by reading all transcripts four times. During the first read, I did not make any notations. During the second read, I highlighted key words, such as “tension,” “comfortable,” “rigor.” At this time, I created a list of general themes that seemed to be emerging from the transcripts. During the third read, I highlighted key phrases, such as “didn’t feel unsafe” or “one Black kid in AP history class.” The fourth time, I generalized the main idea of the key phrases into themes, such as “evidence of tracking” or “parental concern.” From these themes, which emerged from individuals and within schools, I created broad categories— academic, social, home, other. Once the themes were placed in broad categories by school, I began to look for recurring themes in various categories, such as school, gender, race, amount of time in CMS, magnet status, general SES, and education of parents. Themes, both murky and crystal clear, began to emerge, oftentimes as a paradox of experience, in clear opposition to another respondent, or a respondent contradicting themselves during the same interview.

In discussing the data analysis process of their book *Both Sides Now*, Wells et al. (2009) state,

The findings are the most powerful themes that develop from the data. Yet, these themes did not come forth from the interview transcripts and documents in a simple, coherent, and uncontested manner. Rather, they appeared in a complicated, messy manner that reflects the complexities and often the contradictions of the human experience. (p. 45)



Similarly, the task of analyzing 36 interviews has not been simple, but rather disordered, and at times the results seemed incongruous. This process has required patience and occasional assistance from professors and colleagues at UNC-Charlotte. I also spent a great deal of time speaking “off the record” with several colleagues who have worked within CMS for decades, as well as with close friends who are also graduates of CMS. Often through discussion and with a fresh perspective comes clarity.

### Validity and Reliability

Researchers strive to improve our understanding of a problem, with the intent of contributing to the solution of that problem (Bickman & Rog, 1998). However, research that is neither valid nor reliable contributes nothing. Creswell (2002) suggests seven verification processes to ensure that qualitative research is valid, summarized below.

- 1) Prolonged engagement and persistent observation: Enduring engagement and observation of phenomenon being studied.
- 2) Triangulation of data: Use of multiple data sources to reach similar conclusions.
- 3) Peer review and debriefing: Use of peers to discuss research design, findings, and analysis.
- 4) Negative case analysis: Provide cases that serve as foils to one another (e.g. studying a racially identifiable White school and a racially identifiable Black school).
- 5) Clarification of research bias: Inclusion of subjectivity statement and explicit description of attempts to eliminate bias within the research design, collection, and analysis.
- 6) Rich, thick description: Throughout the research, the social phenomenon must be described with thorough attention to detail and inclusion of interdisciplinary research.
- 7) External audit: Utilize an anonymous, or unknown reviewer to identify unanticipated methodological and content issues.

By design, I incorporated all seven of these verification processes into the design of this study. The most prominent of these is triangulation. Triangulation reduces the risk of “systematic distortions inherent in the use of only one method, because no single method is completely free from all possible validity threats” (Bickman & Rog, 1998, p.93). In addition, the use of intensive interviewing allows the researcher comprehensive access to the participant and is therefore a more valid form of understanding perceptions than simple survey methods (Brenner, 1985).

While the overall design of this research study is strong, several caveats must be explained. First, there are issues with the DAQ and interview sampling procedures that certainly introduce sampling bias. Due to the lack of an existing database regarding graduates from 1995-1998, the sampling procedures relied on Internet resources and personal relationships. Graduates most likely to have an Internet presence are those that are more well-educated. Also, because these graduates have access to a computer, they are more likely to be in a higher socioeconomic class, which made the study more biased in terms of class in the sample population. Another potential for bias comes from the use of snowball sampling, beginning with my own personal connections. As a middle-class, White female, many of my friends, family members, acquaintances, and loose networks are of a similar race and class background. Therefore, the snowball technique likely biased the sample towards students in the three school sites who are from a similar background as me. Second, triangulation is only as good as the data utilized. But, triangulation across all data sources mitigates validity problems with only one data source and enhances the overall reliability of findings.

## Ethical Concerns

While the goal of this research is to produce valid and reliable knowledge, this must be done in an ethical manner. Such considerations permeate the qualitative research process. The “complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena raise multiple ethical issues for the researcher that cannot be solved solely by the application of abstract rules, principles, or guidelines” (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2002). Throughout the course of the study, I took precautions to ensure that participants were treated fairly and with respect. First, all DAQ, 1997 survey participants, and interviewees identities are confidential. Second, prior to responding to the survey or participating in the interview, all participants verbally consented to participating in the research study, or electronically signed an informed consent form, see Appendix E. Third, during the transcription process, I assigned all interviewees pseudonyms, as were any individuals mentioned by name during the course of the interview. Fourth, information for the study, including files, field notes, transcriptions, and audio files, have been kept in a secure locked place.

Finally, I acknowledge that my actions as a researcher have consequences for those who participate in the research, as well as for those who read the research. I have kept the complexity of this topic in the forefront of my consciousness throughout the process. An important aspect of recognizing my own limitations is acknowledging the subjective nature of research and the role personal background and experiences have on the meaning I make of the world around me. During the interview, I asked respondents if they would like to see the final product. Several indicated they would, and a final copy will be sent to those interested, and they will be encouraged to read and react to the

overall findings. Doing so will provide respondents with the opportunity to respond to my analysis of the interviews and present an alternative view, particularly if I misrepresented an individual experience or perspective.

#### Subjectivity Statement

To the extent that any social scientist is subjective, it is useful for the researcher to acknowledge the possibility that findings are influenced by the researcher's framework, ethics, and values. I offer my subjectivity statement in this spirit.

I, Amy Hawn Nelson, am a graduate of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; I attended South Mecklenburg High School as part of the class of 1997. My oldest brother also graduated from South Mecklenburg High School in 1987, with my other brother following him in 1993. I have clear memories of the impact of race on my schooling experience, many positive and a few negative. As a career educator I am firmly committed to ensuring that all students have equal access to an excellent education. I have always agreed with the widely accepted belief that desegregated schools benefit all children. I know that as a White, upper middle class student, I undoubtedly benefited from my diverse school experience. I have witnessed, firsthand, as a student, teacher, and administrator, the abundant benefits of diverse schooling experiences. But I have also witnessed firsthand countless acts of egregious racism and unconscious bias towards students of color, and many of these acts occurred in desegregated schools.

These acts have not been committed by "bad" Whites who have blatantly racist attitudes, but by caring educators who have not developed (or have not wanted to develop) an awareness of the effect of "racial smog" (Tatum, 2008) that permeates every aspect of our society. Most White, middle class educators are not aware of the privilege

that comes with their skin color, their education, their knowledge of the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1995, p.24), and their socioeconomic status. They are certainly not willing to admit that this lack of privilege for other students affects their performance and achievement, and low achievement is not simply due to a lack of effort or intelligence, but cultural differences. Educators are often unwilling to see that students from different cultural backgrounds are gifted in areas not deemed important to those in power, and, as such, educators see many students of color as lacking or deficient.

While desegregating schools is an important equity-minded reform that has demonstrated positive academic and social outcomes for students, such reforms have been, and continue to be undermined by teachers that lack cultural competencies. The importance of culturally relevant pedagogy remains critical, and should be emphasized in all schools.

## CHAPTER 5: Results

This collective case study sought to explore how the graduates of CMS from 1995-1998 describe and make sense of their desegregated schooling experiences. Using data from yearbook analysis, results from a questionnaire distributed to students in 1997, results from the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ), and intensive interviews, the study sought to answer several questions, including:

- Were there differences in long-term outcomes of graduates between the three schools?
- Were graduates aware that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were under a court-ordered desegregation plan during their years of schooling? and Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school?
- Did the racial composition and organizational structure of schools affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development?
- Did experiences in desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults?

The study's results will be presented in three parts. First, I will provide a context of the selected schools and the class of 1997 using the 1997 dataset, results of the DAQ, and yearbook analysis. Second, I will discuss themes that emerged from the interviews with graduates of Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg High School. Lastly, I will compare and contrast experiences of graduates by school site to discuss the effects, both positive and negative, of school desegregation efforts. This section will expound upon the

duality—the double-edged sword—of the graduates’ experiences, a key finding. The double-edged sword refers to the positive and negative consequences of attending a desegregated school.

### The Schools

Since the target year for the study was 1997, school sites were selected based on the student demographics from this year. In 1997, Garinger was a predominantly Black school located in the east side of Charlotte within a diverse yet socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood with little financial support from local businesses or the PTA. Students had high rates of interracial contact and the staff was quite diverse. Students felt less safe there than Independence and Garinger, and some respondents reported racial tension.

The demographics of Independence High School approximated the demographics of Mecklenburg County in 1996-1997. The student body was 57% White and 35% Black compared with 64% White and 28% Black for Mecklenburg County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The staff was predominantly White. Independence was located on the southeast side of Charlotte on the edge of Mecklenburg County in Mint Hill, NC, an area generally considered suburban and middle-class in 1996-1997. Students had high levels of interracial contact, and some reported racial tension. Independence was known for a strong athletics program (the football team was known statewide), International Baccalaureate (a rigorous academic track with an International Focus, known as IB), and

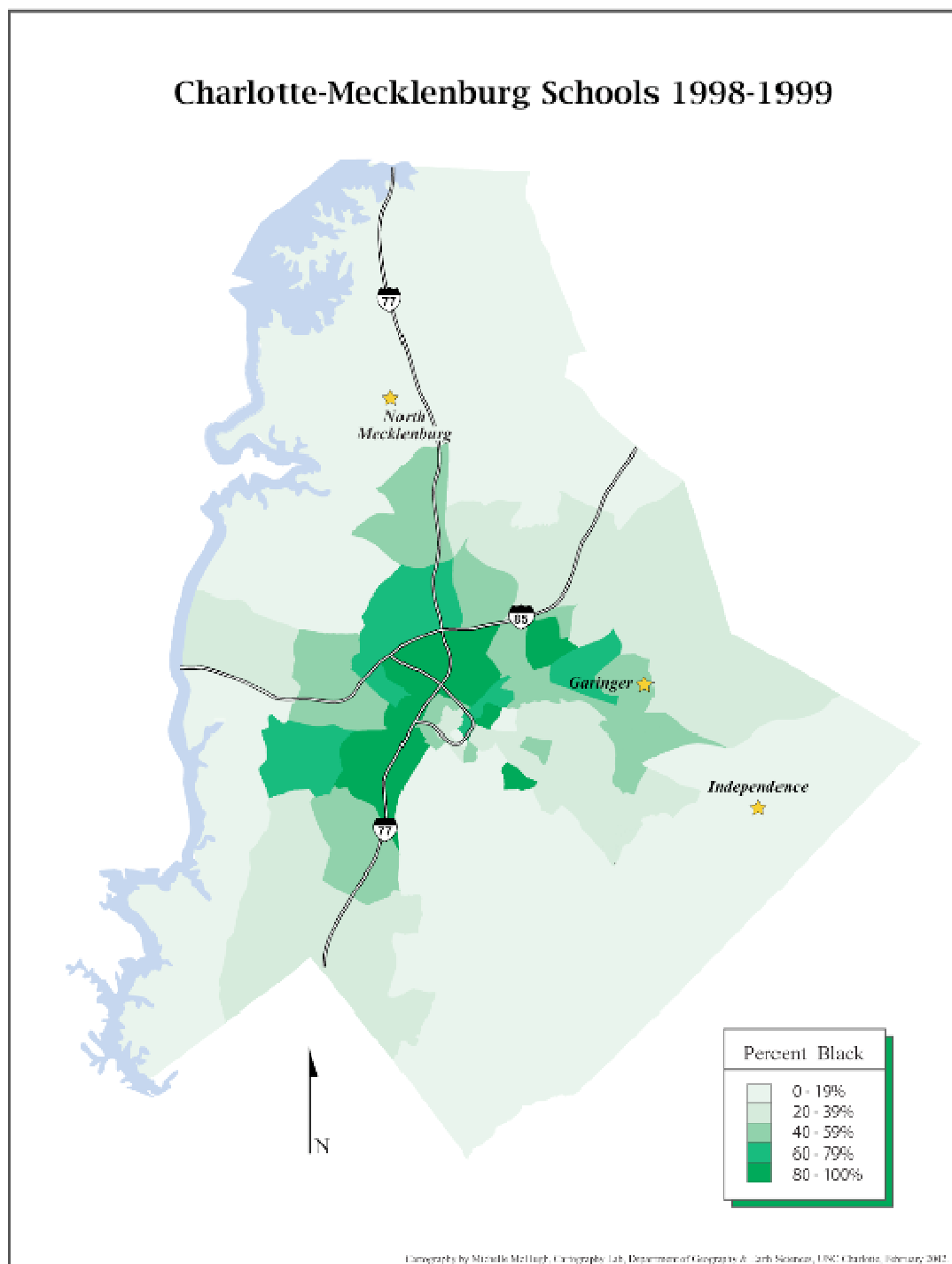
generous community support from local businesses as well as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

North Mecklenburg was located on the northern edge of the county in Huntersville, NC, an area generally considered rural and suburban, middle to upper-middle class. In 1997, there was a tremendous amount of economic development in the Northern part of the county, and students often described their school as overcrowded and above capacity. North Mecklenburg was racially isolated White with a population that was 22% Black. As with Independence, the staff was predominantly White. Students generally felt safe at school. Interracial contact was not as common as in the other two schools, and North Mecklenburg had higher levels of reported racial tension (including fights and hate speech) than the other school sites.

Figure 5.1 presents a map of Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 1998-1999 with the school sites identified as well as the concentration of Blacks in the county at this time. North Mecklenburg was located at the northern end of the county in a predominantly White residential area. Garinger is located in the east part of the city in a predominantly Black area. Independence was located on the southeast part of the county, an area that was predominantly White.



Figure 5.1

*School Sites and Percentage of Blacks In Mecklenburg County*

Source: Modified from Mickelson, 2005

*The Class of 1997*

The class of 1997 came of age during a time of relative peace and prosperity in the United States, particularly in Charlotte. Charlotte has long been viewed as an ideal city to live in, and population growth and economic development have been steady for several decades (Charlotte Chamber, 2010). Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools have generally been considered a strong school system with high academic achievement. In 2004, CMS was included in the list of top ten “best educations in big cities” by Forbes Magazine (Schiffman, 2004). As noted previously, while the district was 60% White in 1996-1997 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), schools had varying demographic levels, see Table 5.1. Garinger had the highest concentration of Black students in the district, while North Mecklenburg had the lowest. Independence was the most racially and ethnically diverse high school in the district, see Table 5.1. In 1996-1997, each school had senior classes of a similar size: Garinger had 447, North Mecklenburg had 535, and Independence had 508 twelfth graders. Yet each school had substantially different school level demographics.

Table 5.1

*Racial Composition of Three High Schools in 1996-1997*

<i>Racial Composition in 1996-1997</i>						
<i>School Site</i>	Total	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black	Non-Black Hispanic	White
Garinger High School	1925	5 (<1%)	112 (6%)	1209 (63%)	54 (3%)	545 (28%)
Independence High School	2288	17 (1%)	101 (5%)	799 (35%)	57 (2%)	1314 (57%)
North Mecklenburg High School	1995	6 (<1%)	37 (2%)	444 (22%)	13 (<1%)	1495 (75%)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2010

*1996-1997 Yearbook Analysis*

Yearbooks are generally considered sentimental keepsakes for students to purchase and keep as a memento of their schooling experiences. However, yearbooks also provide a unique window on the culture of a school by providing photographic and narrative evidence of the experiences of the students. Yearbooks are particularly useful in determining levels of racial diversity for students, staff, and student groups (Clotfelter, 2004) because they capture whether the informal (voluntary) and formal groups are segregated or integrated.

The racial composition of a school's staff is considered an important factor in determining whether a school is desegregated. *Green v. New Kent County* (1968) provided criteria for assessing if schools desegregated in six areas: student assignment, facilities, transportation, staff, faculty, and extracurricular activities. Yearbooks provide

information regarding the desegregation of extracurricular activities based on club and team photographs.

For this analysis, I categorized individuals in yearbook photographs as White or non-White, based on my visual inspection and conventional practice (hair, skin color, and facial features). This method does not adhere to rigorous scientific methods; however, for descriptive purposes it suits the needs of this research study. A simple count of the staff pages determined that of the staff members pictured, Garinger had the largest percentage of non-White staff members (43%) while Independence and North Mecklenburg had approximately the same percentage (15% and 16%), see Table 5.2. Therefore, Garinger had a diverse staff; however, the staffs of Independence and North Mecklenburg was predominantly White. Staff members play an important role in high school life, not only by teaching, but also by serving as advisors for extracurricular activities.

Students create yearbooks, usually through a class or an afterschool club, with the assistance of a staff member who serves as an advisor. Yearbooks are costly to produce and are rarely profitable or even self-sustaining. In addition to the individual cost to the student, school and PTA funding sources typically supplement the budget for a yearbook. Thus, the funding streams of a yearbook can indicate the general financial circumstances of a school. Since yearbooks are often supported with advertisements purchased by the student body and area businesses, such advertisements can also be an indicator of the support given to the school by the community. Table 5.2 presents comparative statistics for the three yearbooks. It reveals that in comparing the three yearbooks, the size of the yearbooks indicates that Garinger had less financial support than Independence and North Mecklenburg to produce and subsidize the cost of the yearbook. The number of

advertisements present in each yearbook substantiates this premise. Independence and North Mecklenburg had comparably sized yearbooks with similar numbers of advertisements purchased by students, organizations, and local businesses. In contrast, Garinger had a substantially smaller yearbook with just 15% of the advertisements found in the other schools' yearbooks.

Table 5.2

*General Yearbook Information*

<i>General Yearbook Information</i>				
<i>School Site</i>	Size of Yearbook in pages and dimensions	Number of Pages of Paid Advertisements	Number of Advertisements with Interracial Contact	Racial and Gender Demographics of Staff
Garinger High School	191 pages (8.5x11 inches)	15 pages	10 ads	167 with pictures 43% non-White 37% male
Independence High School	343 pages (9x12 inches)	108 pages	12 ads	81 with pictures 16% non-White 36% Male
North Mecklenburg High School	300 pages (9x12 inches)	104 pages	5 ads	147 with pictures 15% non-White 29% Male

When looking for the effects of desegregated schools, yearbooks also provide insight into the role of student organizations as mediators for interracial contact and presumably interracial friendships (Clotfelter, 2002, 2004). Hallinan & Williams emphasize the role of student organizations in fostering positive interracial relationships, stating, "Since interaction, whether by chance or by choice, generally leads to positive sentiment," students who participate in diverse extracurricular activities "are more likely to become friends than those who are in different groups" (1989, p.68). Furthermore,

there is some evidence that out-of-class student interaction may “take on greater significance than the formal educational process” (Granovetter, 1986, p.83). This suggests that interracial contact in extracurricular activities could be more important than interracial contact in the academic setting. Differences in the degree of interracial contact in schools indicate a difference in opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, schools with more diverse student organizations presumably provide more opportunities for interracial contact, and likely also provide more opportunities to develop positive sentiment towards members of differing racial ethnic groups.

Following the methods employed by Clotfelter (2002, 2004), I utilize yearbooks to determine the degree of interracial contact in student organizations in the three schools in this study. The focus of this discussion is on organizational membership. This descriptive analysis serves as a way to determine if there were differences in interracial contact, based on observed racial composition of pictures of student organizations in the 1996-1997 yearbooks, between the three schools. The description does not draw any conclusions regarding the causes of the observed segregation or integration, nor does it attempt to measure the strength of friendship ties in the organizations or schools.

Table 5.3 shows differences in the observed racial compositions of student organizations, with North Mecklenburg having 15 all-White and 0 all-Black organizations, in contrast to Independence with 5 all-White and 2 all-Black organizations, and Garinger with 2 all-White and 7 all-Black organizations. Of the groups pictured in the yearbooks, 10% of the student groups at Independence were racially homogeneous compared to 22% at Garinger and 48% at North Mecklenburg. The analysis suggests that

sports are more racially isolated than cultural and academic groups (such as choir, band, and debate), with soccer, softball, tennis, and swimming being predominantly White athletic groups. This is consistent with Clotfelter's findings in his analysis of a nationwide sample of yearbooks (2002). This analysis suggests that in the three schools desegregation levels in informal and formal organizations varied widely and that certain types of groups are less likely to be diverse (e.g. baseball, soccer, cheerleading). Finally, the analysis highlights the role of school racial composition on student extracurricular activities. Specifically, it shows that the only legally desegregated school, Independence High School, had the most diversity in extracurricular activities as well as the most student involvement in voluntary activities. Such increased participation and increased interracial contact indicates positive outcomes for students.

An analysis of the advertisements section of the yearbook also indicated substantial differences in interracial contact between schools, see Table 5.2. Families, businesses, and informal groups of students pay for advertisements; therefore, pictures included are completely voluntary and not directly linked to a school-sponsored group. For this analysis, I did not focus on advertisements that were purchased for individual students, nor did I focus on ads bought by local businesses. Instead, I focused on those ads purchased by *groups of students*, including clubs, teams, and friendship groups. Ads such as these are voluntary and purchased by groups of students to indicate meaningful friendships. In this way, such advertisements could provide a more authentic view of interracial contact (pictures that included a diverse group of students that are friends). This is one piece of evidence, and may have to do with money and other factors, alone it is not useful; however, in context, it is a piece of the larger puzzle.

Though Garinger had only 15 pages of advertisements, 10 of the advertisements showed some sort of interracial contact. Independence had 108 pages of advertisements and 12 ads with interracial contact. In contrast, North Mecklenburg had 104 pages of advertisements and only 5 ads showed interracial contact. This suggests that students had more informal, substantial, and non-school related interracial contact at Garinger and Independence than at North Mecklenburg High School.



Table 5.3  
*Degree of Interracial Contact Based on Yearbook Analysis*

<i>Racial Composition of Student Organizations</i>				
<i>School Site</i>	<i>All White</i>	<i>Racially Mixed</i> (at least 2 White or Non-White individuals)		<i>All Non-White</i>
Garinger High School	HiQ* Key Club	Marching Band Junior ROTC Beta Club DECA SADD Men's Ensemble Chamber Choir Women's Ensemble Orchestra Theater Debate Football Soccer	Volleyball, V & JV JV Cheerleading Basketball Women's V Basketball Wrestling Swimming Indoor Track Baseball Softball Tennis Women's Tennis Color Guard Women's Soccer	E Phi E, Black Fraternity U Phi B, Black Sorority Cross Country V Cheerleading* JV Basketball* JV Women's Basketball Track
Independence High School	Baseball, V* & JV* Girl's Soccer, V* & JV* Sports Medicine	Football, V & JV Basketball, V & JV Girls Basketball, V & JV Wrestling Volleyball, V & JV Track Soccer, V & JV Cheerleaders, V & JV Lettergirls Tennis, B & G Cross Country Athletic Trainers Diving Swimming Softball Marshalls Odyssey of the Mind Order of the Patriot Patriot Singers Spanish Club Spanish Honor Society Symphonic Band Chess Club IS Officers Photo Club Debate	Executive Council DECA High Q Junior Class Council Choir Sophomore Council Senior Council FHA FBLA JROTC HOSA Key Club Marching Band Latin Club National Art Honor Society FTA Chinese Club ICU Freshman Council Wind Ensemble Poetry Club Vocational Honor Society Concert Band Drama Club Civitan Ecology Club French Club	Gospel Choir* NAACP*
North Mecklenburg High School	Soccer, V & JV Girls Soccer, V & JV* Baseball, V* & JV Softball* Tennis* Girls Tennis* Volleyball, V Cheerleading* Swimming Girls Swimming Wrestling* IB	Football Basketball, V & JV Girls Basketball, V & JV JV JV Volleyball Cross Country Girls Cross Country Track Girls Track	Marching Band Choir Cosmetology Debate Class Council	

\* Indicates group included at least one non-White member, or one White member

In summary, three main points can be made based on the analysis of photographs in the yearbooks from Garinger, North Mecklenburg, and Independence from 1996-1997. First, and perhaps most importantly, Garinger and Independence High Schools had less segregated student organizations and therefore students had greater opportunities for interracial contact and interracial friendships than they did at North Mecklenburg High School. Second, based on the number of advertisements and the size of the yearbook, the inference can be made that the yearbook club (and presumably other student organizations) was better funded at North Mecklenburg and Independence than Garinger. Third, Garinger had substantially more teachers of color than Independence and North Mecklenburg, and while Independence was the most racially diverse high school in terms of student demographics, the school staff was not diverse. In conclusion, in 1996-1997, Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg were substantially different school environments with varying opportunities for interracial contact for students.

#### *1997 Archival Dataset*

Mickelson's 1997 dataset provides me with the opportunity to contextualize the DAQ data, 36 interviews and the yearbook analysis with responses from a representative sample of about 50% of the seniors at each of the three schools. The archival data set enabled me to further tease out the similarities and differences between the three schools' social contexts, including intergroup relations. The dataset was collected from a representative sample from 12<sup>th</sup> grade English classes in all Charlotte-Mecklenburg High Schools in 1997. The original dataset includes over 200 variables; however, in order to paint a picture of Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg High Schools in 1997, only 22 descriptive measures were selected for this analysis.

While the schools have many similarities, definitive differences emerge (see Table 5.4). For example, Garinger and Independence had the same number of students in college preparatory classes (51%), while North Mecklenburg had 65% of students in college preparatory classes. North Mecklenburg had the highest percentage of gifted students, with 31% of the student body identified as gifted, compared to 25% at Independence and 14% at Garinger. This is particularly interesting considering that Independence had the district wide IB program in 1996-1997. Given the rigor of IB, one could assume that Independence had the highest percentage of gifted students, but this is not the case. However, Garinger's low rate of identified-gifted students is consistent with national trends in which Black students are less likely to be identified as gifted (Ford et al., 1993). (It is important to note that researchers have consistently determined that these differences are not cognitive but rather have to do with the structure and identification processes of gifted programs, see Ford, 1998). Because Garinger had the highest percentage of Black students, it is not surprising that it also had the lowest number of identified gifted students.

Based on the number of students in college prep classes as well as the number of students identified as gifted, the average SAT scores from each school are somewhat unexpected. Based on the previous indicators, the assumption would be that North Mecklenburg would have the highest SAT scores. However, Independence and North Mecklenburg had similar averages for both the Math and Verbal SAT, around 500 (out of a possible score of 800). However, Garinger was 60+ points lower on both standardized tests, see Table 5.4. Perhaps this indicates a clear difference in the overall academic achievement of the three schools, or perhaps Garinger encouraged more students to take

the SAT which, in turn, lowered the overall school average (Wainer, 1986). As with all variables presented in this section, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the root cause of the observed discrepancies and similarities. Instead, the information is merely presented as points for comparison.

Table 5.4

*General Academic Information*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>% of Students Taking College Prep Classes</i>	<i>% of Students in School Certified Gifted</i>	<i>Average SAT Verbal Score</i>	<i>Average SAT Math Score</i>
Garinger High School	51%	14%	439	438
Independence High School	51%	25%	500	509
North Mecklenburg High School	65%	31%	502	500

Research demonstrates a clear correlation between student achievement and teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Peske & Haycock, 2002; Whitehurst, 2001). Therefore, teacher quality is regarded as a critical factor when researching differences between the academic outcomes of various schools. While years of experience and advanced degrees are widely used as indicators of teacher quality, such indicators are not ideal (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). However, these are the only variables available for measuring teacher quality for the three schools in 1996-1997. Based on these limited indicators, the quality of teachers in each school seems similar, see Table 5.5, and would not account for variability in academic outcomes, see Table 5.4.

Perhaps the variable that could explain any observed differences in academic performance would be the financial support of the school, as indicated by Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fundraising efforts. PTA fundraisers are important funding streams for schools, and money raised is often used to buy supplementary materials and supplies which schools would not be able to purchase otherwise. In North Carolina, PTA funds may not be used to purchase staff positions, but funds can be used to buy books, uniforms, equipment, computers, professional development for teachers, fieldtrips, etc. In 1996-1997, the PTA of Garinger raised just \$7781, 20% of what was raised by Independence and North Mecklenburg in the same year, see Table 5.5. This fact, coupled with the lack of support for the yearbook discussed in the previous section, could possibly indicate a pattern of weaker financial support for Garinger, compared to the other school sites.

Table 5.5

*General School Information, Fundraising and Teacher Quality Indicators*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Total Amount Raised by PTA in 1996-1997</i>	<i>% of Teachers with less than 3 yrs experience</i>	<i>% of Teachers with Masters Degree</i>
Garinger High School	\$7781	24%	37%
Independence High School	\$39403	26%	39%
North Mecklenburg High School	\$34198	28%	29%

Another variable that is often used to explain low academic performance is termed student mobility or transience in the educational literature (Demie, 2002). These terms refer to student movement among schools and districts. Students who are more transient often have lower rates of academic performance. While no variable in the dataset describes transience among schools in the district, there is a variable to describe transience between districts. In looking at the class of 1996-1997, all three schools had comparable numbers of students who had been in CMS from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, around 40%, see Table 5.6. North Mecklenburg had the highest percentage of students who were new to the district, with 19% of students being in the district less than 4 years. This would make sense considering the residential development surrounding North Mecklenburg at this time. Because this variable demonstrates district attendance rather than school attendance, few assumptions can be made based on this description, except to say that trans-district transience does not seem to be related to any observed variance in student achievement.

Table 5.6

*General School Information, Student Mobility*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>% of Students in CMS K-12</i>	<i>% of Students in CMS Less Than 4 Years</i>
Garinger High School	43%	14%
Independence High School	41%	11%
North Mecklenburg High School	44%	19%

Tracking, as discussed previously, is widely viewed as having a negative effect on academic achievement of students not in top tracks and contributing to the achievement gap between White students and students of color (Burriss & Welner, 2005; Oakes, 2005). One reason critics believe tracking is deleterious is that placement processes are often highly correlated with students' race and class and not necessarily with their prior achievement (Meier et al. 1989; Oakes 2005). This critique reflects practices in CMS (Mickelson, 2001). As shown in Table 5.7, at the school level, North Mecklenburg had the highest percentage of students in Advanced and Gifted English, while Independence and Garinger had significantly fewer students in Advanced and Gifted English. However, Garinger and Independence had equal rates of students in the lowest academic track, about half of the student population, see Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

*Percentage of Students in Academic Tracks*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Regular English</i>	<i>Advanced English</i>	<i>Gifted English</i>
Garinger High School	49%	34%	10%
Independence High School	49%	27%	9%
North Mecklenburg High School	35%	27%	24%

However, when academic tracks are analyzed by race, a different picture arises. Mickelson (2001) utilizes the 1997 dataset to provide compelling evidence that in 1996-1997, academic tracks were stratified by race throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. White students were more likely to be in higher tracks than Black students,

regardless of prior achievement. She demonstrated that even when CMS high schools were desegregated at the school level, academic courses were segregated by race.

Table 5.7 provides school level information that looks fairly benign; however, when these data are taken apart by race and subject, a difference picture emerges. Table 5.8 presents information on the percentage of African-Americans in English classes in 1996-1997. Courses are identified by title and grade level. Table 5.8 shows a large percentage of students in Exceptional Children classes at both Garinger and North Mecklenburg; with these students being disproportionately Black in both schools. Additionally, at each school site, lower level courses are disproportionately Black and upper level course are disproportionately White. If students' track placement were not associated with race, the percentage of Black students in upper level courses would be similar to the demographics of the school. However, this is not the case. Garinger had the highest representation of Black students in upper level classes, 57% of students in AP English in 11<sup>th</sup> grade were Black, compared to 7% at Independence and 1.4% at North Mecklenburg. North Mecklenburg had mere token representation of Black students in AP classes, with classes having just one or no Black students enrolled. While legally desegregated at the school level, Independence was resegregated at the classroom level, with Black students comprising just 34% of the student body, but making up between 44-54% of the students in regular classes.

Table 5.9 demonstrates that the enrollment of students in math courses is consistent with the enrollment of Black students in English courses in Table 5.8. All three schools have a disproportionate representation of Black students in low level math classes and a disproportionate representation of White students in advanced math classes. At



North Mecklenburg, Blacks comprise less than 22% of the school, yet the lowest math class, Algebra I, is 39% Black. When compared to advanced English classes, it seems that Black students at Garinger were likely to be in advanced English courses, whereas Black students at Independence are more likely to be in advanced math classes. This is particularly clear when looking at the enrollment of AP Calculus across the three school sites. At Garinger, while Blacks made up 63% of the student body, only 13% of the students enrolled in AP Calculus were Black versus 18.6% at Independence and 6.4% at North Mecklenburg. In both Table 5.8 and 5.9 it seems that tracking was prevalent at all three schools, yet more noticeable at North Mecklenburg due to token representation of Black students in advanced classes, both English and Math.

Widespread tracking, more so than other variables present, could explain disparate experiences in academic coursework and presumably academic achievement between White students and students of color at Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg. The in-depth interviews discussed later in this chapter will provide additional information regarding this phenomenon.



Table 5.9

*High School, % African American in Math “Core” Classes 1996-1997*

<b>Lower Level Classes</b>		Algebra			Integrated Math		Technical Math			Geometry	
School	% AA	Alg I PT/A	Alg I PT/B	Alg I Math I	Tech I	Tech 2	GEOM	GEOM AG	GEOM	GEOM AG	
Garinger	63.2	69.2	76	68.8	84.8	70.8	56.8	-----	139/244	56.8	
		47/68	165/217	133/193	59/70	17/24	138/243				
		48/68	169/222	135/196	59/69						
Indep	33.7	44	43	50	53	-----	35.8	28.5	58/167	2/7	
		11/24	84/196	55/111	25/49		65/176				
		11/26	88/204	80/158	28/51						
North Meck	21.6	39.4	-----	36.1	28	-----	23	-----	55/228		
		102/251	25/74	43/122	9/29		45/206				
		92/240	23/69	46/124	9/36						

**Upper Level Classes**

<b>Upper Level Classes</b>		Integrated Math			Algebra			Pre-Calculus			Calculus		
School	% AA	INT Math II	INT Math III	Alg II ADV	Alg II ADV	Alg II Trig AG	Pre Calc ADV	Pre Calc AG	Calc AP	Calc AP	Discrete Math	Comp Science AP	
Garinger	63.2	57.2	48.5	58.8	38.8	40.9	50.9	19.9	13.3	-----	-----	-----	
		32/57	8/17	74/124	14/36	9/22	28/55	5/23	4/30				
		35/60	9/18	72/124			4/22						
Indep	33.7	28.6	0	25.2	33.3	12.4	-----	10.6	18.6	10.4	5	5	
		21/77	0/1	73/283	9/27	5/39		5/48	4/22	2/22	1/10	1/10	
		34/113		71/286	8/24	4/33		5/46	4/21	2/17	0/9	0/9	
North Meck	21.6	23.5	16.6	21.8	7.6	7.2	8.4	2.8	6.4	-----	-----	-----	
		11/45	4/24	34/157	7/91	5/69	6/70	2/70	3/47				
		12/53		33/149	7/90	5/70	6/72		3/62				

Source: Mickelson, Exhibit 1F.2 from *Belk & Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, Nos. 99-2389, 99-2391

The socioeconomic status of students is also considered an important indicator of academic achievement (Lareau, 2003). SES is generally determined using rates of free/reduced lunch status in schools, although researchers have determined that high school students are less likely to self-report qualifying for free/reduced lunch than younger students. Therefore, when studying high school students, an alternative indicator, such as mother's educational attainment, is more valid (Esminger et al., 2000). In comparing the three schools, the variable for mothers' educational attainment was remarkably similar, see Table 5.10, and would not indicate notable differences. However, when the schools are compared based on the family unit of students (who the student lives with), there are notable differences. Among the three schools, mothers had similar educational backgrounds, meaning the earning potential is similar. Yet, only 53% of students at Garinger lived in dual-parent households, compared to 80% of students at North Mecklenburg who lived with two parents, and were therefore more likely to live in a dual-income household, see Table 5.11.

Table 5.10

*Highest Educational Attainment for Mother by School Site*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Less than High School</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Some College</i>	<i>4 Year College Degree</i>	<i>Graduate Degree</i>
Garinger High School	5%	23%	35%	23%	11%
Independence High School	3%	38%	38%	22%	11%
North Mecklenburg High School	5%	27%	34%	25%	10%

Table 5.11

*Who Student Has Lived With for Majority of Life*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>2 parents</i>	<i>Mom</i>	<i>Other relative</i>	<i>Dad</i>	<i>Guardian/ Foster Parents</i>
Garinger High School	53%	40%	3%	3%	<1%
Independence High School	63%	32%	<1%	3%	<1%
North Mecklenburg High School	80%	14%	2%	3%	<1%

Indicators of parental involvement between the three schools were generally consistent; although parents from North Mecklenburg were more involved than parents from Independence and Garinger, see Table 5.12. These differences could be speculated upon in countless ways, but such differences are most likely related to the fact that there are more single-parent households in Garinger and Independence, and single-parent households are typically lower in income with greater restrictions on time and fewer opportunities for parental involvement (Lareau, 2003).

Table 5.12

*Indicators of Parental Involvement*

Question	School	NO	YES
My parents sometimes help me with homework	Garinger High School	40%	60%
	Independence High School	34%	66%
	North Mecklenburg High School	29%	71%
One of my parents attended Back-to-School night this year	Garinger High School	87%	13%
	Independence High School	82%	18%
	North Mecklenburg High School	73%	26%
Parents Make School Decisions With Me	Garinger High School	27%	73%
	Independence High School	27%	73%
	North Mecklenburg High School	15%	85%

As anticipated, given the SES of students from the three schools, students from North Mecklenburg were more likely to have a computer at home and receive the newspaper, see Table 5.13. Students from North Mecklenburg High School were also more likely to take art, music, or dance classes outside of the school than students from Independence and Garinger, see Table 5.14. This item was designed by Mickelson (1997) as a proxy for cultural capital. Responses by school indicate that students from the three schools had differing opportunities for culturally enriching experiences that have been shown to positively affect academic achievement (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1971; Lareau, 2003; Mickelson, 2001).

Table 5.13

*Indicators of Academic Resources at Home*

Question	School	NO	YES
We have a daily newspaper at home	Garinger High School	43%	57%
	Independence High School	38%	62%
	North Mecklenburg High School	31%	68%
We have a computer at home	Garinger High School	46%	54%
	Independence High School	37%	63%
	North Mecklenburg High School	19%	81%

Table 5.14

*Indicator of Cultural Capital*

Question	School	NO	YES
I take music, dance, or art lessons after school	Garinger High School	73%	27%
	Independence High School	72%	28%
	North Mecklenburg High School	67%	33%

Though it may be tempting to attribute differences in student experiences and long-term educational outcomes among the schools to students' effort, Table 5.15 shows no dramatic differences between school sites and the amount of effort put into schoolwork. In addition, there are no dramatic differences in the amount of time spent working in a paid job outside of school, see Table 5.16.

Table 5.15

*How Much Effort Do You Put Into Your Schoolwork?*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Degree of Effort</i>				
	<i>Don't try at all</i>	<i>Just enough to get by</i>	<i>Avg. amount of effort</i>	<i>Try pretty hard, but not as hard as I can</i>	<i>Hard as I can</i>
Garinger High School	1%	12%	26%	46%	15%
Independence High School	0	16%	31%	41%	12%
North Mecklenburg High School	2%	15%	23%	44%	18%

Table 5.16

*Hours Worked In a Paid Job*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Hours Per Week</i>				
	<i>0</i>	<i>1-5</i>	<i>6-10</i>	<i>11-19</i>	<i>20 or more</i>
Garinger High School	29%	5%	8%	19%	39%
Independence High School	25%	6%	11%	18%	40%
North Mecklenburg High School	21%	5%	13%	26%	36%

One set of items in the questionnaire asks, “Please tell us about your future goals and plans. How far do you want to go in school?” and “How far do you expect you will go in school?” There are distinctions between the three schools. Table 5.17 shows that students from Garinger have the highest educational aspirations among the three schools, with 42% of students aspiring to complete an advanced degree, compared to Independence with 33% and North Mecklenburg with 37%. Table 5.18 shows that students from Garinger seemed to have higher expectations as well, with 37% of students expecting to receive an advanced degree, whereas students from Independence and North



Mecklenburg seem to have lower expectations, as approximately half of students expected to receive a 4-year degree.

The responses from students at Independence and North Mecklenburg are aligned with the approximate amount of students who are in the college preparatory track, meaning that the aspirations and expectations are somewhat realistic. In contrast, students from Garinger aspire to and expect to complete advanced degrees when students are not enrolled in the necessary prerequisite classes to reach such a goal, indicating that their aspirations and expectations are somewhat unrealistic. This seems to be indicative of what is referred to as the attitude-achievement paradox (Mickelson, 1990). Mickelson found that Black and poor students express high regard for education in the abstract, yet differences between Black and White students emerge when concrete attitudes are examined. Students with more "concrete" attitudes toward educational and occupational chances are those who understand "the realities that people experience with respect to returns on education from the opportunity structure" (1990, p. 45).

Students in all schools, but particularly at Garinger, seemed to ascribe to high aspirations for education that may or may not be unrealistic given their track placements. As Table 5.8 demonstrates, Black students at Garinger were more likely to be in advanced classes compared to Black students in other schools, with Black students making up 57% of AP English classes in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Similarly, Southworth & Mickelson (2007) showed students at racially isolated Black schools had a better chance of being in top tracks than Blacks at racially isolated White schools and racially balanced schools. However, Table 5.7 shows that 44% of students are in college preparatory classes, yet at Garinger, 75% of students expected to attend college or receive an

advanced degree. This discrepancy indicates that students were somewhat unrealistic in their expectations, and this was not due to being in a more advanced academic track.

Table 5.17

*How Far Do You Want to Go in School? (Educational Aspirations)*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>HS Diploma</i>	<i>Technical Certificate</i>	<i>Community College</i>	<i>4 year Degree</i>	<i>Law, MBA, Medical, PhD</i>
Garinger High School	2%	6%	13%	37%	42%
Independence High School	2%	2%	15%	49%	33%
North Mecklenburg High School	3%	3%	13%	44%	37%

Table 5.18

*How Far Do You Intend to Go in School? (Educational Expectations)*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>HS Diploma</i>	<i>Technical Certificate</i>	<i>Community College</i>	<i>4 year Degree</i>	<i>Law, MBA, Medical, PhD</i>
Garinger High School	5%	7%	13%	38%	37%
Independence High School	3%	2%	15%	54%	26%
North Mecklenburg High School	3%	6%	13%	49%	29%

What conclusions can we draw regarding the class of 1997 from Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg from this dataset? Students from all schools had similarly qualified staff members, were similar in the amount of effort they put into schoolwork, held similar attitudes toward educational attainment, worked a similar number of hours in a paid job, and attended school with a similar percentage of students who have attended CMS schools from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. However, students from North Mecklenburg came from more privileged backgrounds than students from Independence

or Garinger. Students of North Mecklenburg were more likely to live in two-parent households, receive parental support with schoolwork and decisions, participate in lessons for art, dance, and music, and have tools at home such as newspapers and computers. Students from Garinger were less likely than students from Independence to have this support. At school, students at North Mecklenburg were more likely to be designated as gifted and have access to higher-level academic courses. Students at North Mecklenburg and Independence were more likely to score higher on the SAT as well as benefit from strong financial support from area businesses and the PTA.

Students from North Mecklenburg and Independence appear to benefit from more financial and academic advantages than Garinger. The question, however, is whether these advantages affected the long-term outcomes of graduates. The results of the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ) will now be used to study general long-term outcomes of desegregated schools.

#### *Findings from the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire*

As stated previously, the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire was administered through an online survey site to a self-selected, small sample of respondents, some of whom also provided interviews (Garinger N=32, Independence N=21, North Mecklenburg N=25). The questionnaire was completed prior to the in-depth interview that a subgroup of DAQ respondents completed. The sample suffers from selection bias. Respondents were predominantly college graduates with access to the Internet. Respondents were also motivated to answer the DAQ, further disentangling them from non-respondents. Consequently, no results can be generalized to the population of

graduates from the selected schools. Instead, the following discussion merely serves as descriptive information to provide comparisons and context for interviews<sup>3</sup>.

The DAQ survey contained over 80 questions, and for the sake of brevity, I only discuss and compare answers that were discussed during in-depth interviews. Topics include: busing, tension, the workplace as an adult, the ability to work with others, and long-term outcomes (civic engagement, diversity in adult life, and interest in improving race relations).

Almost 70% of the respondents from the three schools received the link for the DAQ from Facebook and 89% stated that they could be contacted by phone to discuss the survey results. Over 90% of the respondents were born in the U.S. and all but one spoke English at home. All DAQ respondents self-identified their race, ethnicity, and gender. Of the respondents from the three schools, 60% were female, 40% male, 22% Black, 8% Asian, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 53% White, 1% Native American, and 7% Multiracial. Over 50% graduated in 1997. Over 60% of respondents lived in a racially isolated neighborhood during high school and 55% attended CMS schools from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Almost 50% of the respondents had a college degree and 25% had obtained a graduate degree. Around half currently live in Charlotte; 55% are married and 41% have children.

Across all three schools, around 80% of respondents were encouraged to attend college and took the SAT. Graduates from all schools showed some disagreement

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<sup>3</sup> Utilizing confidence intervals when discussing the results of the DAQ is appropriate due to the small nonrandom and non-representative sample. However, I do not include them in this analysis because the comparison of means in this study provides a context for the other data sources. I selected questions from the DAQ to discuss based on the thematic analysis of the interviews. The only time I compare means from the DAQ are when the information from the DAQ is triangulated with document analysis, 1997 survey data, and consistently supported by the interviews.

regarding the statement, “My teachers administered punishment fairly.” 100% of respondents from Independence and Garinger agreed to a question about having friends of a different race/ethnicity; however 20% of respondents from North Mecklenburg disagreed, meaning that they did not have friends from another race/ethnicity. Additionally, there were differences in how safe individuals felt at school. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 as feeling unsafe and 5 as feeling safe, Garinger students reported feeling the least safe with 3.15, North Mecklenburg students reported 3.46, and Independence students felt the most safe with 4.29 (with no student indicating he/she felt unsafe in high school).

The word “busing” emerges almost immediately in any discussion of desegregated schooling, particularly in Charlotte, where *Swann* (1971) became synonymous with busing in the national public discourse surrounding the decision. Then, as now, busing is an important part of school life in North Carolina. In CMS, every student who lives beyond a school’s walk zone (typically no more than half a mile), and who is attending school within his or her home “zone,” is provided bus transportation. In 2009-2010, eight years after the declaration of unitary status, CMS provided over 111,000 students with bus transportation (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2010c). Bus routes vary tremendously, based on whether the student attends a magnet school or a school in close proximity to their home. Bus routes can also be longer for large schools with expansive attendance boundaries and low population density in the areas surrounding schools, such as North Mecklenburg and Independence.

Results from the DAQ suggest that many students never rode a bus, see Figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and those that did, rode less than 20 minutes for the majority of their

educational career, see Figures 5.5, 5.6, 5.7. Consistent with the historical narratives of CMS that report Black students often bore the brunt of the busing burden in Charlotte, students from Garinger had longer bus rides throughout their educational career when compared to Independence and North Mecklenburg.

Figure 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 present the mode of transportation for Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. In K-6<sup>th</sup> grade students from North Mecklenburg and Independence were more likely to ride the bus, whereas graduates of Garinger were more likely to walk, bike, or be driven by car. This is consistent with residential patterns of students from the three school sites. Many students that attended Independence and North Mecklenburg lived in more suburban neighborhoods where students would not live within the walk zones of schools (1/2 mile or less). Students that graduated from Garinger were more likely to live in more densely populated areas, and therefore were less reliant on bus transportation for elementary school. In 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade, all schools had similar rates of bus transportation, with the majority of respondents riding the bus. This changed once students went to high school. Students at slightly Garinger were more likely to ride the bus, especially in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, than students from Independence and North Mecklenburg.

Figure 5.2

*Mode of Transportation for Garinger Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*

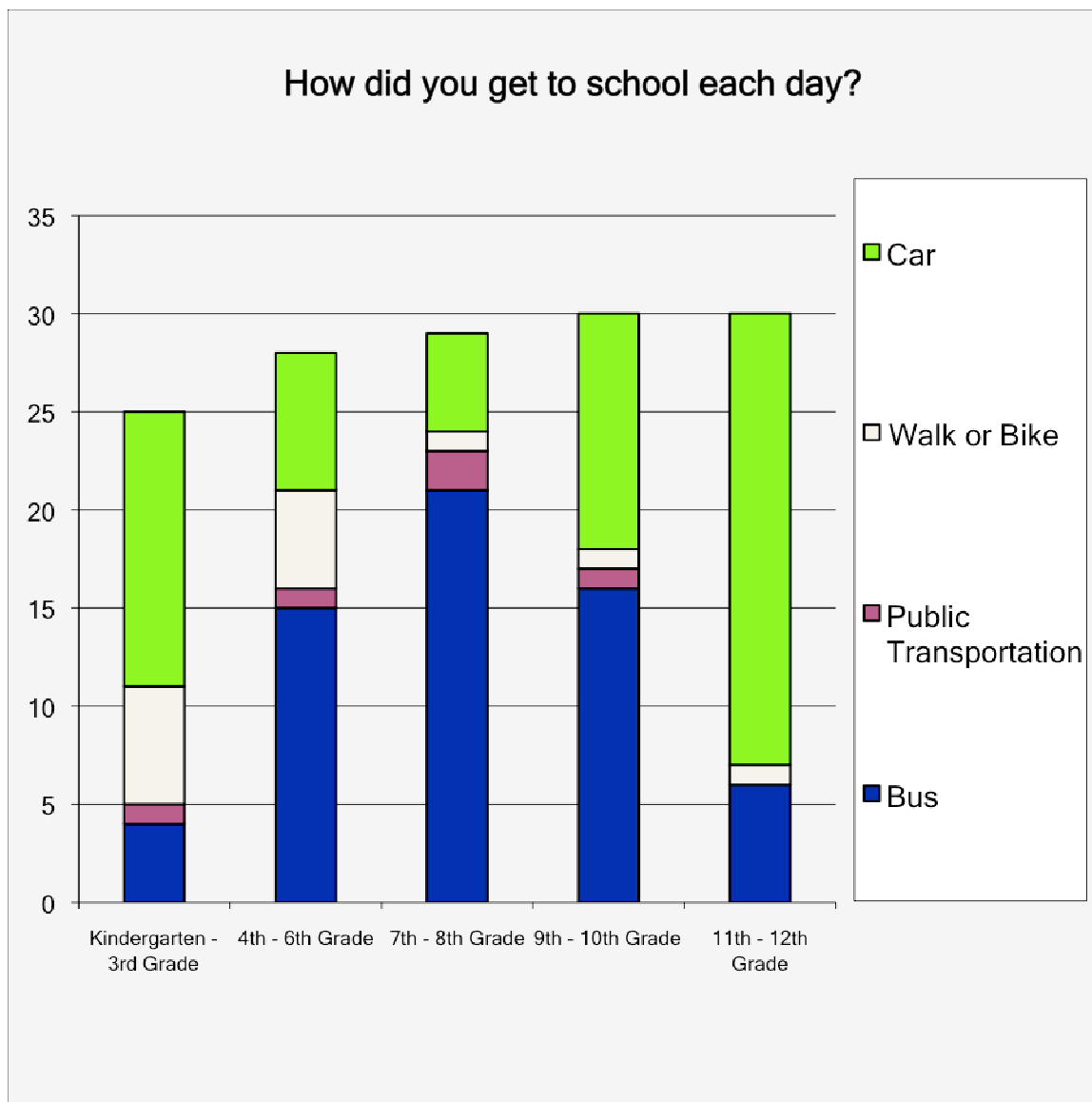


Figure 5.3

*Mode of Transportation for Independence Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*

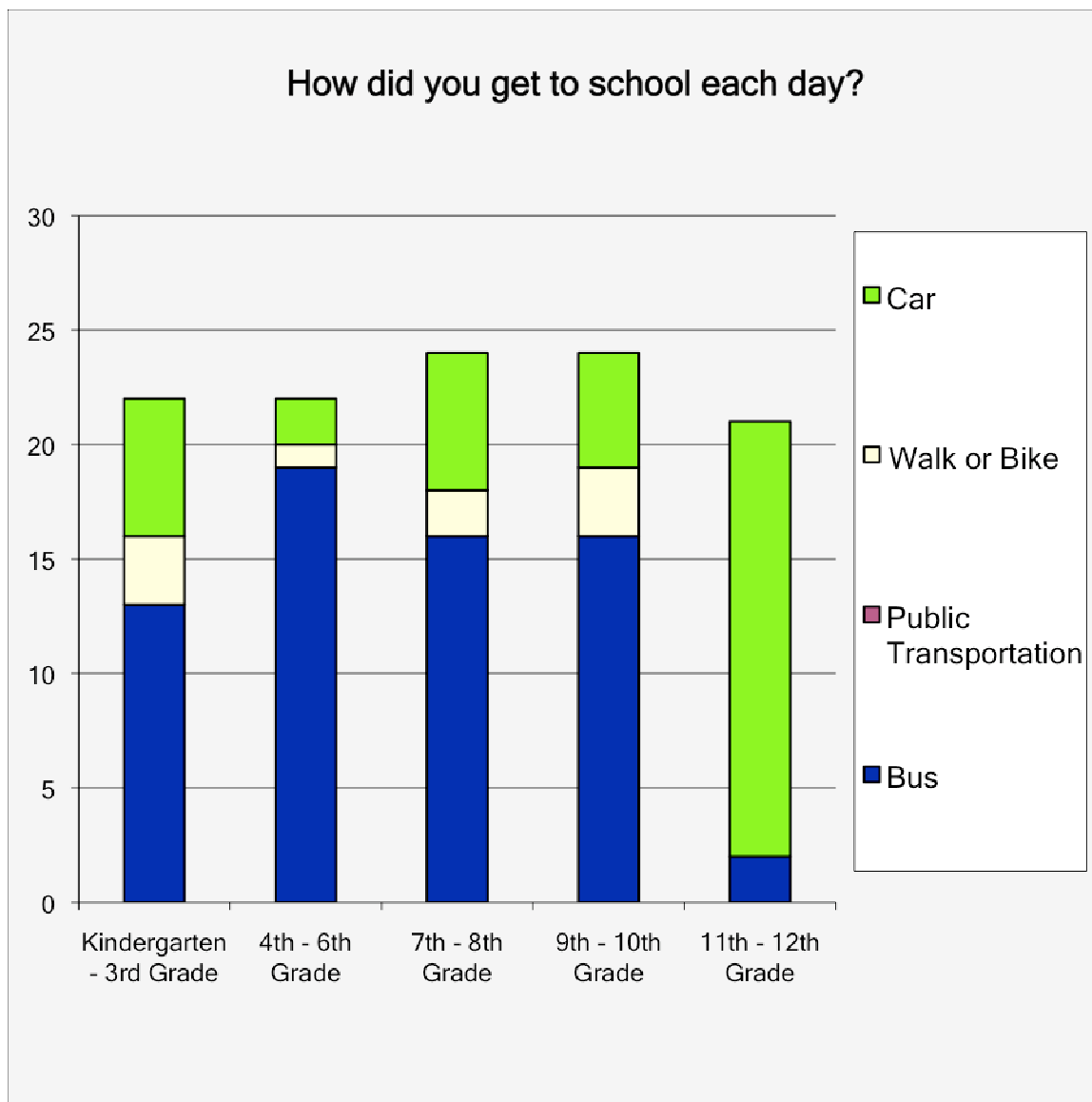
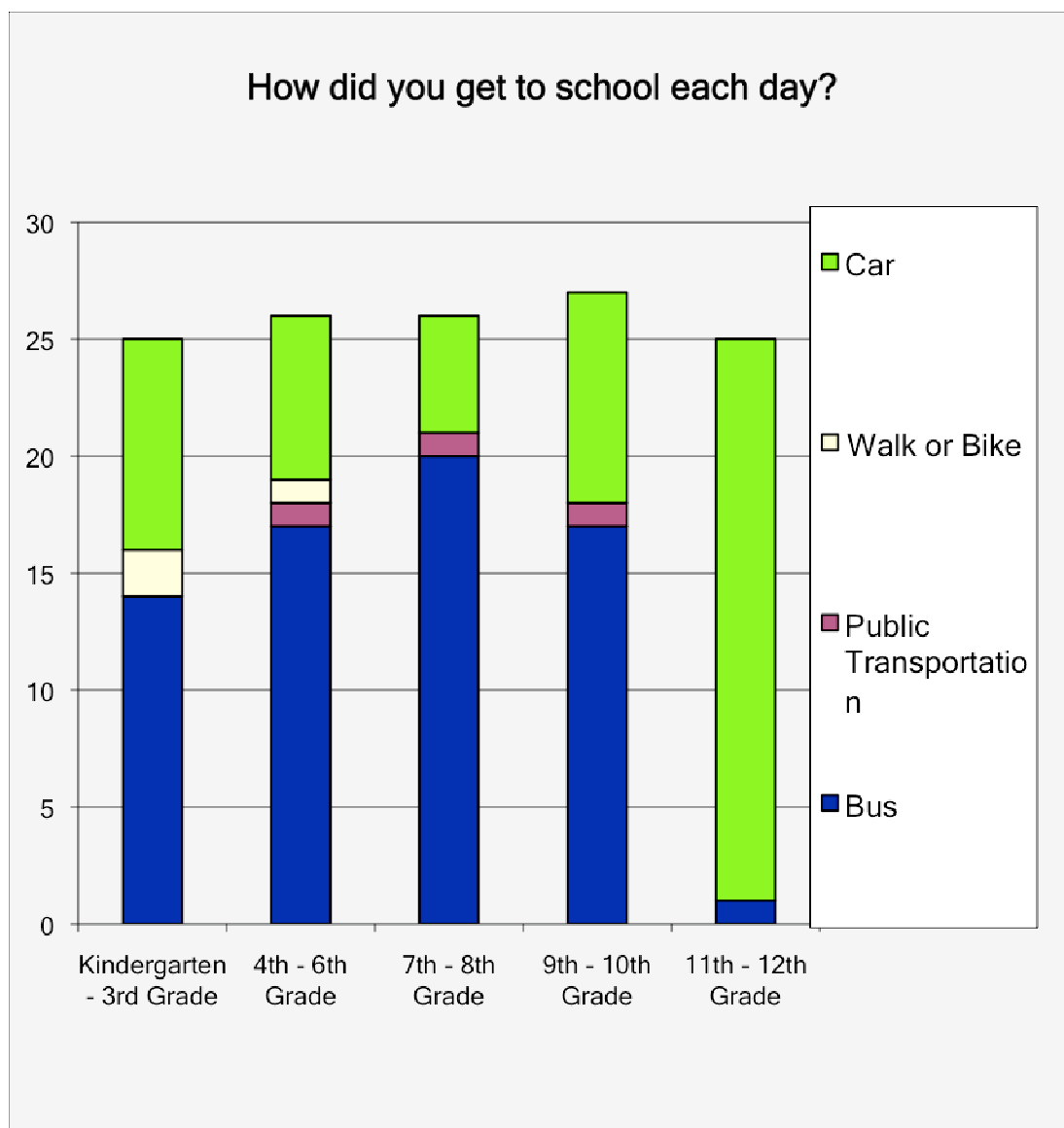




Figure 5.4

*Mode of Transportation for North Mecklenburg Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*



Figures 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7 show the length of bus rides for graduates from Garinger, Independence and North Mecklenburg from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Figure 5.5 shows that around 25% of respondents from Garinger had bus rides over 40 minutes from 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Figure 5.6 shows that 25% of respondents from Independence had 10-20 minute bus rides from K-8<sup>th</sup> grade. Graduates of North Mecklenburg seemed to have the most varied length of bus times. Figure 5.7 shows that between 1-3 graduates reported bus times in every category, from less than 10 minutes to more than 40 minutes from K-10<sup>th</sup> grade. In 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the majority of students from each school did not ride the bus. This was particularly the case with respondents from North Mecklenburg, with only 4 graduates reporting that they rode the bus in high school.

Figure 5.5

*Length of Bus Ride for Garinger Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*

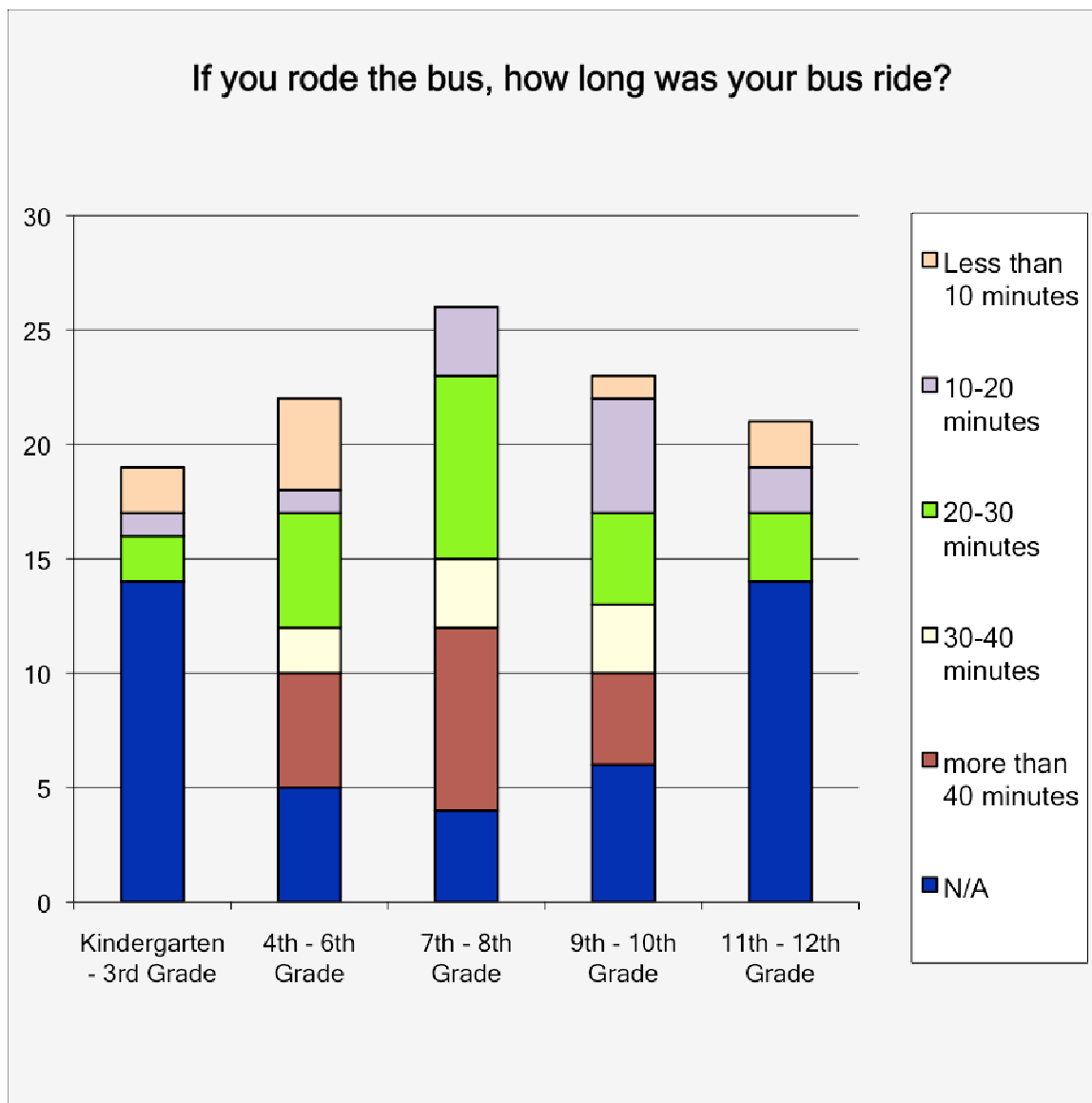


Figure 5.6

*Length of Bus Ride for Independence Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*

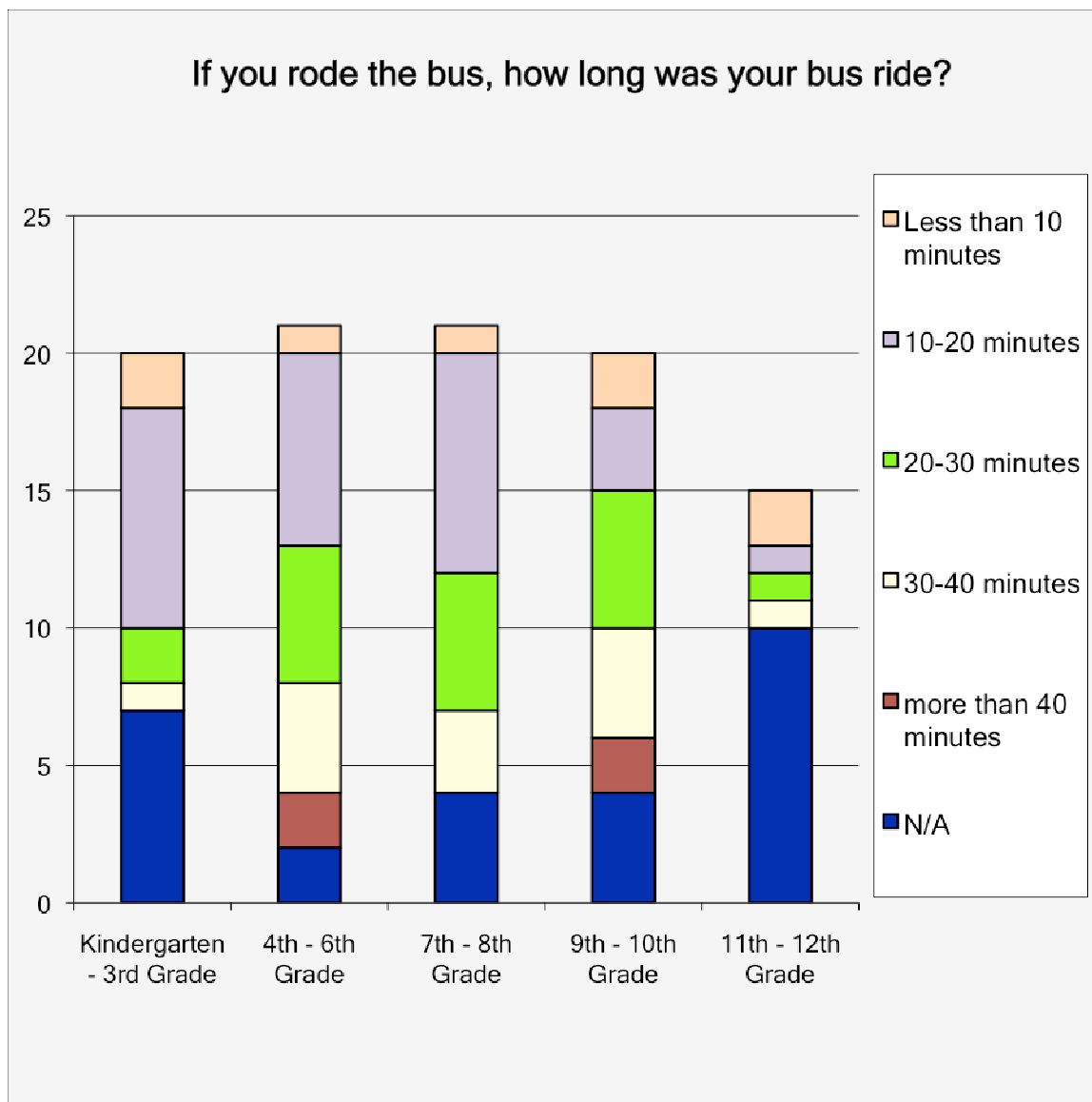
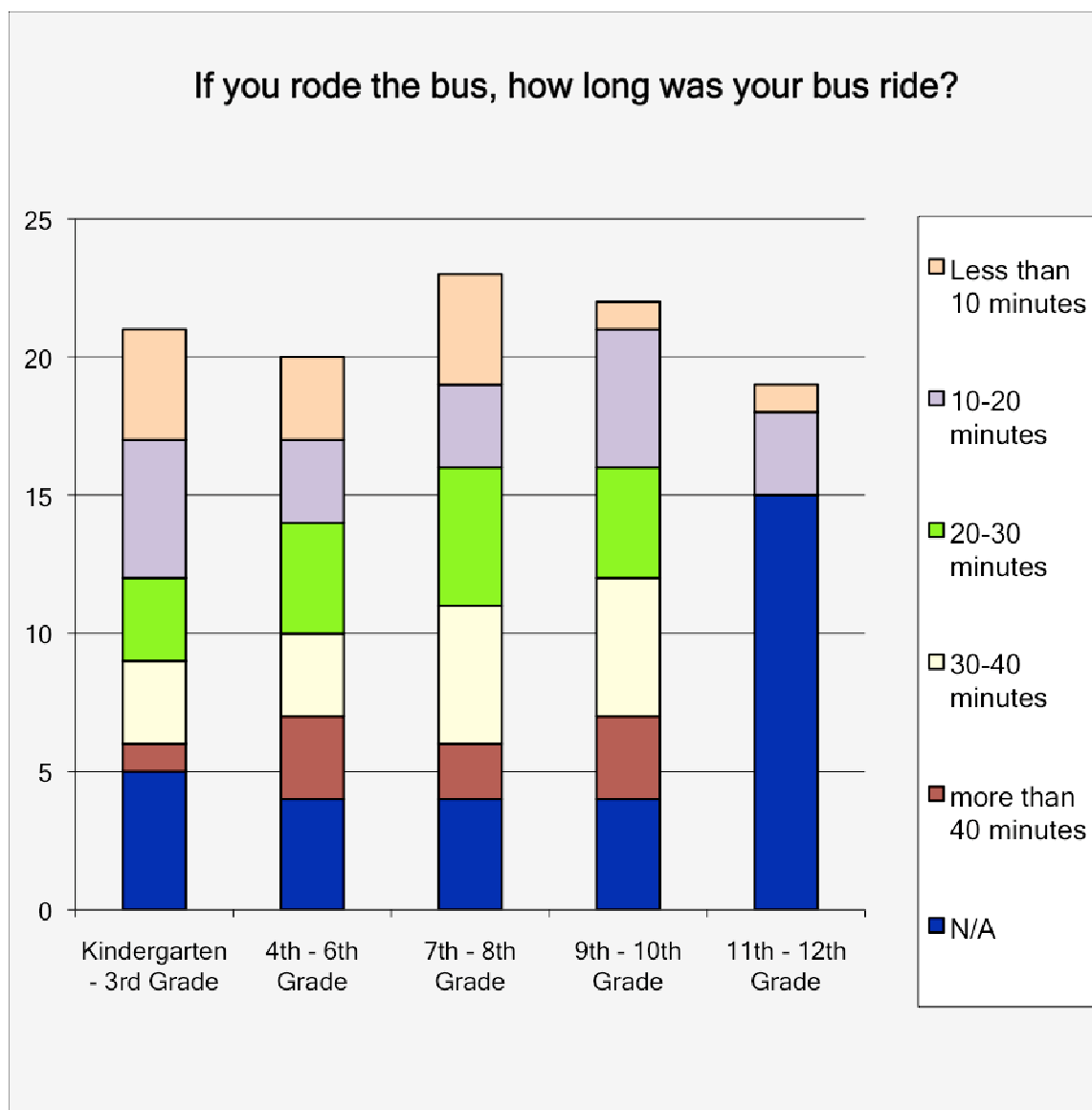


Figure 5.7

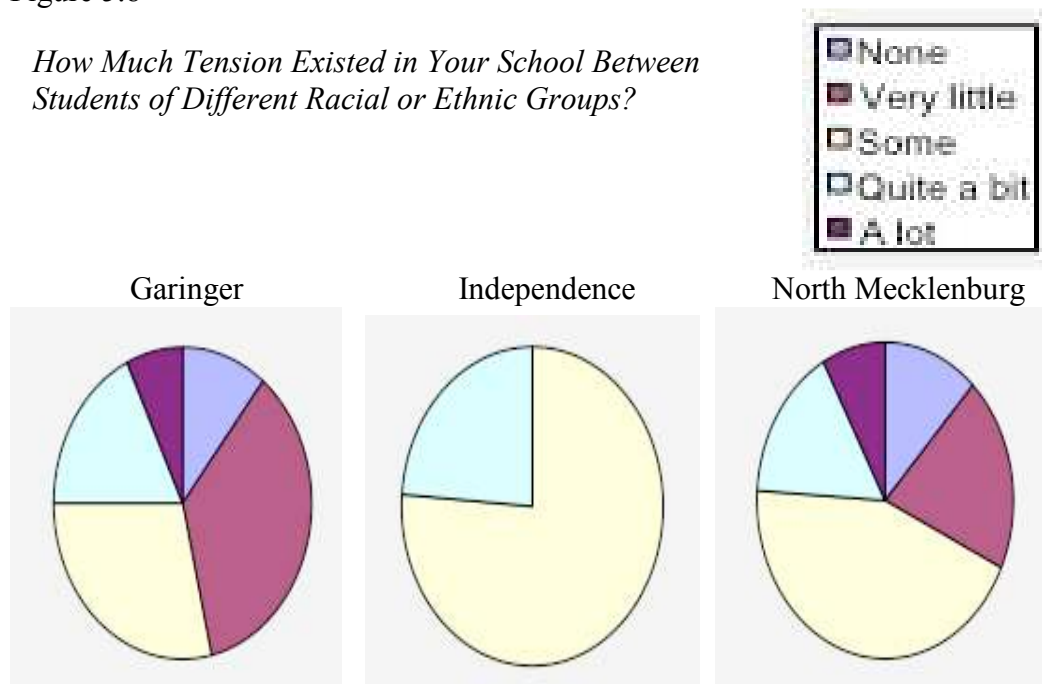
*Length of Bus Ride for North Mecklenburg Graduates from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade*



Another theme that emerged during interviews was the perceived (by graduates of other schools, the media) versus reported (by graduates) tension present in schools between students of different racial or ethnic groups. Graduates reported tremendous tension in middle schools and junior highs across the district; however, differing levels of tension seemed to exist in high schools. Based on public perception (including the perceptions of other graduates) and the news media, Garinger and Independence was perceived to have racial tension. However, discrepancies across school sites and between individual interviews quickly emerged, with contradictory information emerging even from different points in the same interviews. Based on the results of the DAQ and interviews, North Mecklenburg had more tension than the other school sites, see Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8

*How Much Tension Existed in Your School Between Students of Different Racial or Ethnic Groups?*



Similarly, during interviews, many graduates of Garinger and Independence repeatedly remarked upon their ability to get along with others, which they attributed to their experiences in high school. The outcomes of the DAQ from Garinger seem to be the most positive in this regard, with all respondents saying that their experiences either helped or had no effect on their ability to work with individuals from different ethnic/racial backgrounds, see Figure 5.9. The results from Independence were also positive, with over 75% of respondents stating that their schooling experiences positively affected their ability to work with members of other races and ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, Figure 5.10 shows that both Independence and Garinger had the most positive outcomes regarding preparation to perform well within a diverse workforce.

Figure 5.9

*How do you believe your school experiences affect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups?*

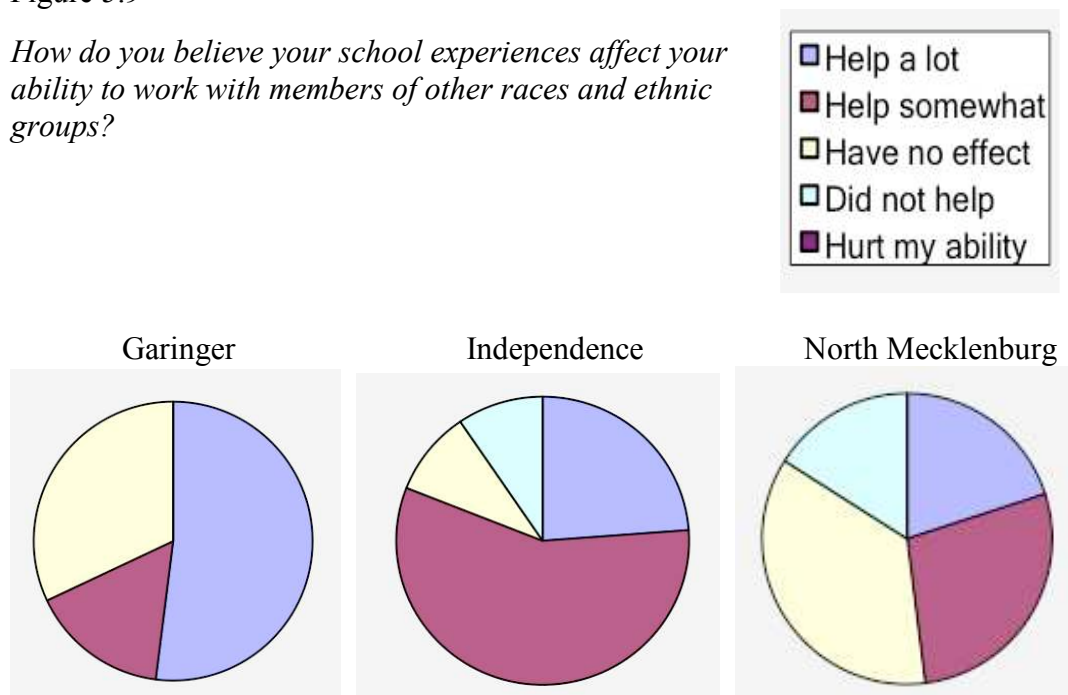


Figure 5.10

*After high school, how prepared did you feel to work in a job setting where people are of a different racial or ethnic background than you are?*

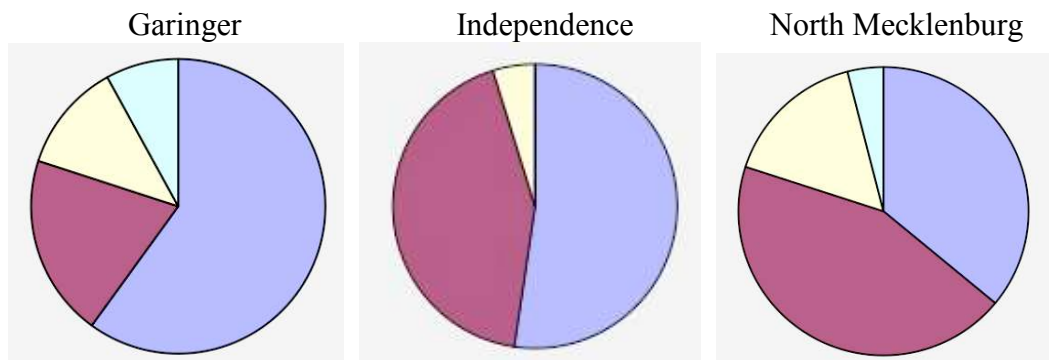


Figure 5.11

*How comfortable are you with a work supervisor who is of a different racial or ethnic background than you?*

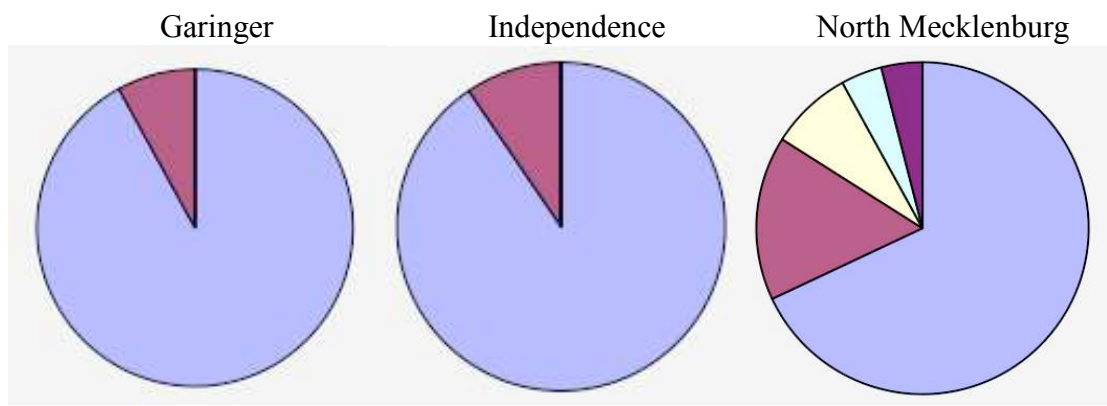




Figure 5.11 indicates that graduates of North Mecklenburg were not as prepared to perform well within a diverse workforce. While graduates of Garinger and Independence felt comfortable working under a supervisor who was from a different racial or ethnic background, several graduates of North Mecklenburg noted that this would not be comfortable. Table 5.19 further accentuates the differences between graduates of the three school sites regarding long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling. Graduates of Garinger and Independence were more likely to indicate that their schooling experiences increased their interest in volunteering in their community, living and working in a diverse setting, and working to improve relations between people from different backgrounds. Independence, which was the most racially balanced of the three, was the most positive in all outcomes, which is consistent with research on the long-term effects of desegregated schools.

Table 5.19

*Schooling Experiences and Interests for Graduates of Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg*

In the following items, indicate to what extent your schooling experiences (both classroom and/or extracurricular activities) changed your interest in:					
	Greatly Increased	Somewhat Increased	No Effect	Somewhat Decreased	Greatly Decreased
<b>Volunteering in your community</b>					
Garinger	21%	33%	46%	0%	0%
Independence	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%
North Mecklenburg	8%	29%	60%	0%	0%
<b>Living in a racially/ethnically diverse setting</b>					
Garinger	17%	17%	46%	0%	0%
Independence	14%	53%	33%	0%	0%
North Mecklenburg	4%	24%	68%	4%	0%
<b>Working in a racially/ethnically diverse setting</b>					
Garinger	17%	29%	54%	0%	0%
Independence	14%	57%	29%	0%	0%
North Mecklenburg	4%	24%	72%	0%	0%
<b>Working to improve relations between people from different backgrounds</b>					
Garinger	17%	38%	46%	0%	0%
Independence	14%	48%	38%	0%	0%
North Mecklenburg	20%	16%	64%	0%	0%

In summary, the results of the DAQ reveal that the majority of respondents from all schools had bus rides of less than 30 minutes, with many students not riding the bus at all. In addition, graduates of all schools reported tension between groups of students; however, the highest levels of tension were associated with North Mecklenburg, the racially isolated White school. Overall, the findings from the DAQ indicate that the respondents from the three selected schools had positive outcomes in terms of several non-academic long-term outcomes for desegregated schooling, including greater comfort with individuals from different racial/ethnic groups, improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning outlooks on and viewpoints about race relations, increased sense of civic engagement, increased capacity to work in integrated environments with positive

experiences, and increased interaction with other racial groups (such as living and working in diverse environments).

While definitive conclusions cannot be made from this self-selected sample of respondents, the data suggests that the most racially balanced school and the only school legally desegregated, Independence, had the most favorable outcomes in regard to long-term non-academic outcomes. Garinger, the racially isolated Black school, had the second most favorable outcomes. North Mecklenburg, the racially isolated White school, did not seem to exhibit outcomes as favorable as the other two schools did, with over 60% of graduates specifying that their high school experience neither increased their sense of civic engagement, nor improved their outlook regarding race, nor did it increase their comfort in working with individuals who are from different backgrounds than themselves. Utilizing the results of the DAQ in conjunction with in-depth interviews, I will now address the specific research questions for the study and themes for the case study will be presented.

#### Findings from In-Depth Interviews

The in-depth interviews were based on a semi-structured interview protocol involving nearly 30 questions I designed in alignment with the major research questions that guided this study and with an eye to issues addressed in prior studies of this topic (for example, Wells et al., 2009) (see Appendix D). The questions were designed to elicit information regarding memories and perceptions of schooling experiences from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, yet the protocol was designed to be intentionally ambiguous and only introduced politically charged words (such as desegregation) at the end of the interview. The themes emerged in a disjointed manner, with glaring inconsistencies and contradictions, often in

the same interview. The majority of graduates described their experiences in contradictory terms, as though their schooling was an endless balance sheet with costs and benefits. Many graduates reflected on their high school experiences as having made an indelible imprint on their current life, with both positive and negative effects. While there were graduates who recalled their time in CMS with great disdain, the majority of graduates were positive, hopeful, and insightful regarding their experiences. The contradictory or paradoxical nature of the interviews is consistent with the Wells et al. (2009) findings from graduates of the class of 1980. However muddled and contradictory, the voices of the graduates eventually coalesced to produce a coherent narrative when pieced together.

*We Were Under a Court Mandate?*

Based on my own experiences and countless discussions with classmates who attended CMS during the 80s and 90s, I became interested in knowing how and when graduates discovered that CMS operated under a court-ordered desegregation plan from 1971-2002. The findings from the interviews were consistent with my own experience. Two-thirds of the graduates I interviewed did not know about the court order.

When asked if she knew that CMS schools was desegregated by court order, Kailey<sup>4</sup>, a multiracial student from Garinger replied, “They were? CONTEMPT! (laughing) Wow. Did someone...did they go to jail for not fulfilling that mandate?” Another Garinger graduate responded, “I don’t know anything about desegregation. Did they do it here?” Several graduates saw desegregation as the “law of the land” and thought that every school nationwide was desegregated immediately following *Brown v.*

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms are used for all names in the text.

*Board of Education* (1954). Another graduate said that desegregation was only “when race used to be an issue in schools, not a term of today.” The view of desegregation as an historical event in decades past was common, with students saying that “it was all a part of what was happening like in the 70s” and “the first thing that comes to mind are the pictures from the 70s.” Some students had some background knowledge of early desegregation efforts because of family members. Tomas, a Latino graduate, said, “I know because my uncles came from Ecuador. And when they were like 14 or 15, they attended Garinger back then. And that was when I think they started desegregating.”

Clearly, many graduates did not know of the *Swann* (1971) decision and the desegregation plan put in place in the years following. Why didn't graduates know? One explanation is that students were educated in segregated schools. Three interviewees attended Hidden Valley Elementary, a school that was exempt from the *Swann* ruling in 1971 because at that time the school was already desegregated. However, the neighborhood became predominantly Black, and throughout the 80s (when the students in this sample were in elementary school) the composition of that school was majority African-American. According to one graduate, it was “allowed to be 99% Black.” Many interview respondents described at least one school they attended as being predominantly one racial group, often to their surprise. Lori, a Black female from Independence stated, “We moved to a different area and I went to a school that was predominantly Black, which is different for me. Even though I'm Black, it still threw me for a loop.” Nicole, a Black female from Garinger, said, “it was a shock going from Lincoln Heights to McClintock, which was predominantly White. I was used to a lot of different kinds of

people.” Erica, an Asian female recalled that there was only one other student of color in her kindergarten class.

Alternatively, perhaps students did not pay attention during history lessons on critical Supreme Court cases, or perhaps *Swann* was not a part of the official curriculum, or perhaps students did not read *The Charlotte Observer* or listen to the ongoing discourse surrounding CMS. Perhaps adults did not bring up the term “desegregation” for fear of talking about race and politics, two topics typically avoided in the South due to existing social mores. Regardless of the reason, the majority of graduates surveyed did not know that CMS operated under a court-mandated desegregation plan. The majority did not see their schooling experience as a political act, but rather, as one graduate put it, as “just the way it was.”

### *Busing*

Since almost all in-depth interview respondents were bused for desegregation (as opposed to being bused for transportation to their neighborhood school) for at least part of their schooling, it is somewhat surprising that graduates did not link their busing experiences to being part of a desegregation plan. Busing was another theme that emerged in every interview. There were certainly differing opinions regarding the use of busing. Josh, a White male graduate of Garinger stated, “I’m not in favor of busing kids an hour across town to go to a school just for racial balance. That was pretty hard on me.” Susan, a White female from Garinger said,

My dad told me how ridiculous it [busing] was. He says that we bought in that neighborhood because it was a neighborhood that was off the beaten path with good schools all around it. Had they known they would not have bought in their

neighborhood. They didn't think I'd be going to a school that was across the city. I think they were just in the mindset of when we were up North, that you went to school in your neighborhood.

Other graduates had perspectives that were pragmatic about busing, looking to the intended benefit. Lori, a Black female graduate of Independence stated, "I mean, no one appreciated having to wake up at 5:30 in the morning, but I think it was valuable." Many students talked about their friends on the bus, relationships with bus drivers, and sleeping on the bus. Alan, a white male from Independence said, "It was normal. That was just how things were." Similarly, Stan, a White male graduate of North Mecklenburg said, "Where the bus is taking you, that's where you got to go." Steve, a White male from Independence who was the only graduate who knew of the court ordered desegregation plan without having a background in law or having a family member in CMS, said, "I never cared about the bus ride. I think it was one of the big arguments about the whole desegregation thing, but kids like that kind of thing." In all, graduates were rarely upset about the bus ride, occasionally enjoyed it, and, most commonly, just resigned themselves to it as part of going to school. While busing was a controversial aspect of the original desegregation plan utilized after *Swann*, according to the majority of graduates interviewed, busing was not considered a hardship after the practice had been in place for many years.

#### *Diversity as Black & White in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*

In the original *Swann* ruling in 1965, Judge James McMillian defined racial composition as Black and non-Black (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971). Any student who was not African-American was automatically

considered non-Black. By modern standards, this seems rather strange because it treated Asians, Latinos, and Whites as members of the same racial category. Yet, Charlotte was a Black and White city with few other ethnicities present in 1965. This theme emerged in every interview with a graduate who was Non-White or Non-Black. Luis, a native-born American whose parents are Ecuadorian, moved from New Jersey in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He recalled his first experience at school, saying, “Wow. I’ve never seen this many White and Black people, ever.” Alyssa, a Black female from Garinger, compared her school in CMS to her previous school in New York City, she said, “It was more mixed than I thought it would be...I had more White people in my classroom than I had in New York. New York was more diverse with nationalities and people from different countries. But Devonshire [Elementary] was more diverse black/white.”

Erica, an Asian female, was the only person of Asian descent in her elementary school. She described questions students would ask her, such as, “Do you know karate? What language do you speak?” Such questions clearly showed other students’ ignorance and lack of exposure to students who did not fit the Black / White classification. Tomas, a Latino, said, “In the whole school, there weren’t many Latino or Hispanic people. I was always like the only one in the class for the most part.”

Interestingly, those students who were not Black or White were automatically considered Hispanic. Jess, a Lebanese female, said, “My classmates assumed I was Mexican because I was darker and had dark hair.” While such tokenism was difficult for the students, the majority of respondents said that as the schools became larger, they became more diverse, and more “others” were a part of the school population. One student whose primary identity was that of being a Muslim, explained that by high



school, “There were 4 or 5 Muslims at North Mecklenburg.” Such small numbers are by no means evidence that Charlotte became multicultural, but even incremental change improved the lives of those students classified as outside the norm of Black and White. Interestingly, in the narratives of diverse graduates, staff members were described as being responsible for the largest impact on their lives in school, both positive and negative. Students who felt their “otherness” sometimes felt celebrated, but often felt unsupported by staff members.

### *Dealing with Differences*

In the 80s and 90s, Charlotte was trying to be a city of the “New South” and was experiencing a tremendous boom in economic growth (Smith, 2004). However, most staff members at that time had lived their lives in a city dominated by Blacks, Whites, and Christians. Many students related experiences with staff members that would be extremely inappropriate and/or insensitive in today’s educational climate. Chris, a Pakistani male, had several stories about growing up in Charlotte as a Muslim in the 80s and 90s. He told a story about an incident that occurred with a teacher in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He said,

I was fasting because I’m Muslim. I was fasting at Ramadan and he came up to me and he was trying to force me to eat. And the guy, he wouldn’t let off and finally – I had to be taken to the office. My parents came and explained it. They wouldn’t listen to me, because I was a kid. But they finally listened to my parents.

While Chris recalled several negative incidents during his time in CMS, he also had several positive experiences. For example, in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Harding High School, his world studies teacher let him teach the section on Islam, and at North Mecklenburg his senior

year, the administration let him and the other 4 Muslim students leave school for Friday prayers.

Several Black students spoke of adults that nurtured them and cared for them, yet there were also those teachers who walked a line between soft bigotry and blatant racism. Nicole, a Black female, remembered a male teacher who would spank the Black girls in her 4<sup>th</sup> grade class for no apparent reason. Andre, a Black male graduate of North Mecklenburg, shared a story about his 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher talking to a group of boys: “She said that most of us will end up on prison before we make it out of high school.” Plainly, not every teacher had the skills and mindset to work effectively with students, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. In discussing the importance of staff members in diverse schools, Denzel, a Black male graduate, said, “Some teachers are prepared to deal with the issues that come with inner city situations and some are not.” While there were egregious stories, graduates also remembered staff members who had the courage to discuss race and create a safe place for students to sort out racial problems on their own.

Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, described a conversation which her teacher started with the whole class regarding an act of racial violence that had happened off- campus (a Black graduate killed a White graduate after racial slurs were exchanged). Tameka stated,

After the race discussion, IB students got together and decided to eat together everyday at lunch to show racial solidarity, “No, no, no, we’re going to show people we can be different.” So, for a couple of months, we all ate lunch, intermingled with each other. And IB was a diverse group.

Denzel, a Black male from Independence, described how the administration and staff dealt with the issues of race that came up after the shooting. He said, “Outside people came in and started a multicultural club, they really tried to bridge the gap. Anyone at the school could get involved and deal with the racial issues hands-on.” Interestingly, in all the interviews, only three staff members were credited with discussing racial issues with students: an administrator and an English teacher at Independence and a history teacher at Garinger. This is somewhat surprising due to the amount of race-related events described during interviews, particularly during the graduates’ middle school years.

#### *Elementary School versus Middle School*

Out of 36 interview respondents, 30 attended some part of elementary school in CMS. All graduates described lower elementary school (K-3) as somewhat utopian, with diverse classrooms, nice teachers, kind classmates, and small supportive classrooms. With some notable exceptions, teachers were remembered as effective and liked by parents, and schools were calm and orderly with positive climates. This picture begins to change when students move to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. CMS had paired elementary schools, with the majority of children attending suburban schools in K-3 and attending 4-6 in the central part of the city. In CMS in the mid 80s, some elementary schools were K-5 while many schools were K-3 and 4-6. In the interviews, students who attended K-5 schools (including Cornelius Elementary, Huntersville Elementary, Derita Elementary, Davidson Elementary, Elizabeth Traditional, Eastover Elementary, Hickory Grove Elementary, and Windsor Park Elementary) had more positive experiences than those who attended separate schools for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Most paired K-3 schools were located in White, middle-class neighborhoods, while most 4-6 schools were located in more economically disadvantaged, non-White central city neighborhoods. For example, two students interviewed attended Idlewild Elementary, a school located in a diverse but stable middle-class neighborhood, and then they were transitioned to Lincoln Heights Elementary School for 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade, which is a school located in an economically disadvantaged, African-American neighborhood. Similarly, a student attended Rama Road Elementary for K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade, located in a mostly White, middle-class neighborhood, then transitioned to Marie G. Davis, a school located in a predominantly Black neighborhood. While experiences in the K-3 school were positive, regardless of the racial composition of the school, experiences in the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> school were mixed.

Many graduates mentioned mild tension in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade between those students that were bused in (often the White, middle-class students), and those from the neighborhood (often poor students of color). Other students mentioned serious behavior problems in the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade and incidents of bullying that were not dealt with by staff. Two graduates referred to Lincoln Heights (grades 4-6) as being “rowdy” and described constant tension on the playground. Susan, a White female student at Marie G. Davis Elementary (grades 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>), was hit in the face by a Black classmate following a simple exchange of words. Though not all encompassing, the tension, behavior problems, and general lack of academic rigor experienced in 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade seemed to worsen in middle school and only began to abate in high school.

One graduate referred to his middle school as a “powder keg,” and this seemed to be the overall feeling of respondents. Behavior problems, inadequate teachers, serious

student behavior issues, and a general lack of rigor plagued junior high schools and middle schools. When the class of 1997 was transitioning between upper elementary to secondary school, CMS was introducing the middle school concept. This meant that many students experienced the transition between junior high (grades 7-9) to middle school (grades 6-8), and this seemed to help ease tensions somewhat. Students described the transition in many ways, from changes in teachers, to moving among all hallways in the building in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to having all classes on one hall in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (the middle school concept includes a team of teachers teaching the same group of students), to broad policy changes regarding discipline.

Mandy, a Black female, described the philosophical changes that often accompanied the transition to the middle school concept, stating:

When I got there in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, our school colors were red, black, and white...and they changed the school colors in the middle of the year... to green, purple, and white, I think, because they said it was more neutral colors because the school had a reputation of being one of the more hard core schools and the students were pretty aggressive and had behavior problems or what-not. So the school did have a transformation, but it was pretty daunting. It was pretty scary.

She concluded that the changes did help, and her 8<sup>th</sup> grade year was much more positive than her 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. Another student described the changes that occurred at John Taylor (JT) Williams Middle School the year he was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade versus 8<sup>th</sup> grade. His second year there, a new principal and a new Pre IB magnet program were introduced. He described the change as a “180 [degrees] the very next year.” However changes did not occur at all schools. Three students explained that they entered the IB program at

Independence in 9<sup>th</sup> grade just to be able to leave middle school a year early (IB students started high school in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, rather than 10<sup>th</sup>).

The rare positive experiences shared came from three students who attended private schools during the middle grades (this theme will be discussed later) and four students who attended Hawthorne Middle School (these four students went to North Mecklenburg, Independence, and Garinger). In the early 90s, Hawthorne was a countywide traditional magnet and one of the most diverse schools in the city. While negative experiences were discussed (particularly the division and tension between magnet students and ESL students and some bullying behavior), the overall feeling about the school was positive, particularly when it came to academics. Students who went to Hawthorne felt academically and socially prepared for high school.

*Schooling Strategies: Maneuvers, Magnets, Private Schools, and Homeschooling*

Perhaps the potential for negative experiences of 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade were well known, and for this reason, many parents utilized what I have termed ‘schooling strategies’ to ensure that their student avoided a particular school. Of 36 interviews, 26 described some sort of family discussion and use of a schooling strategy to try to control where they would go to school. These discussions demonstrate that parents most likely viewed schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg as unequal and offering a substandard education, regardless of the actual achievement levels demonstrated by students at the school. While parents of higher SES backgrounds tended to be more likely to go through “formal” channels (such as moving or private school), parents of all socio-economic backgrounds exhibited some strategy to ensure their child a quality education.

Five families moved to avoid a specific school, eleven students enrolled in private schools or were homeschooled at some point during their years of schooling, and seventeen students enrolled in a magnet program. Carrie, a White female Garinger graduate, stated, “Our neighborhood was zoned for JT [Williams], and at that time, that school had a pretty bad reputation so that is the reason I went to private school for middle school.” Two students at North Mecklenburg used false addresses (one “lived” with his grandmother to avoid going to Garinger, another “lived” with a friend so he could avoid going to Harding). Two families paid taxes in another county for a period of time to send their child to another school district. One mother was a real estate agent and selected schools across the city based on the reputation of the school, and used addresses from available properties. Jeff, a Black male graduate of Independence, described his parents’ sacrifice in moving his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year because they did not want him to attend Garinger.

Two graduates whose mothers are teachers in CMS described their mothers’ role in selecting their school. Mary, an Asian-American female, explained that her mother taught elementary school, and from K-5<sup>th</sup> grade, she attended either her home school or her mother’s school, depending on the teacher she was assigned. In another example, Neal, a Black male graduate, explained that he went to his neighborhood school, Garinger, to play football; however, his brother and sister went to a high school on the south side of town because their mother taught at the elementary school nearby and thought the school would provide better opportunities.

The students whose families did not employ schooling strategies and instead sent their children to the schools they were originally zoned for came from all kinds of backgrounds. Such families seemed to avoid the use of schooling strategies for one of

two reasons, 1) their zone did not include any perceived “bad” schools (for example, a student zoned for Davidson Elementary, Alexander Middle, and North Mecklenburg—all predominantly White schools—may not have seen the need to look for alternative placements), 2) parents/guardians were unaware of the need to be active in the selection of their child’s school (this included parents new to Charlotte, non-native English speakers, and less educated parents/guardians with lower socio-economic status).

Some graduates expressed regret over the use of such strategies. Carrie, described begging her parents to send her to Garinger because the small private Christian school she was in did not have the sport she wanted to play in high school. She also explained that Garinger offered courses she couldn’t take at the private school and had more resources than the other school (like a science lab). She stated, “So, they didn’t really want me to come out and go to Garinger but I insisted and then I ended up loving it. It was never as bad as what people perceived it to be.” Another graduate of Garinger described his parents’ attempt at homeschooling in 9<sup>th</sup> grade as a “disaster” and expressed his relief in entering Garinger in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. While schooling strategies were widely used by parents in CMS, the success of such strategies is unknown. The bigger question is the reason for the use of such strategies. Why were schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg viewed so differently?

### *School Reputations vs. School Realities*

Undoubtedly, high schools are classified and stereotyped. Throughout the interviews, Myers Park High School and Providence High School, schools located in upper middle-class White neighborhoods, were consistently referred to as the “good schools” and used as the standard against which to measure other schools. In contrast,



schools such as Garinger and West Mecklenburg, schools located in working-class Black Neighborhoods, were consistently viewed as offering a substandard education. For example, Nicole, a Black female from Garinger, stated, “I don’t necessarily believe that the same caliber of maybe teachers or curriculum or whatever was placed at Garinger than maybe Myers Park.” Similar generalizations often emerged in the interviews.

Theories as to how and why schools were categorized were often discussed. Magnet schools were immediately classified as good. One graduate stated, “It seems that magnet schools are public schools that have a private school feel.” One graduate classified a school as “good” if there were many stay-at-home moms. Other respondents talked about the importance of the neighborhood. Schools in “good” neighborhoods were viewed as more positive than schools in “bad” neighborhoods. A nice neighborhood was repeatedly described as a neighborhood where everyone had “big yards where kids played in the street.” Generally, a school was considered good if the school was predominantly White and bad if the school was predominantly Black.

Graduates described Independence as being “prejudiced” and “full of rednecks,” Garinger as being “ghetto,” while North Mecklenburg was described as being a “White” school, “where there were no Blacks,” and that it was “country.” Almost all graduates expressed some sort of amusement coupled with annoyance when discussing the reputations of their alma mater. For example, Mandy, a Black female graduate of Independence, stated, “We kind of had a joke that there was – we knew none of the Black kids could skip from school because you don’t want to be caught in this neighborhood by yourself.” However, she went on to say, “Yeah, but I didn’t feel any of that.” Susan, a White female graduate of Garinger, stated,

High school to me was a lot more laid back. I mean, you would tell someone you went to Garinger and the first thing people would ask is if you carried a gun. I mean, they would say ‘oh yeah, I hear you have a pay phone where people make drug deals and they have shootings there.’ I...I never witnessed anything like that.

Graduates of Independence were unanimous in saying that the reputation of their school was not deserved. Independence, they claimed, was not prejudiced and it was not redneck. The majority of Garinger graduates made similar claims, saying that their reputation of being “ghetto” and “dangerous” was not accurate. However, graduates of North Mecklenburg, particularly 7 of the students of color interviewed, agreed that their school was “White” and was not supportive of people that were “different.”

Intricately linked to the reputation and perception of a school is the overall feel of a school, the school climate. Moos (1979) defines school climate as the social atmosphere of a setting or "learning environment" (p. 81), in which students have different experiences depending upon the protocols set up by the teachers and administrators. Moos divides social environments into three categories: relationship, which includes involvement, affiliation with others in the classroom, and teacher support; personal growth or goal orientation, which includes the personal development and self-enhancement of all members of the environment; and system maintenance and system change, which includes the orderliness of the environment, the clarity of the rules, and the strictness of the teacher in enforcing the rules.

Generally, graduates of Independence described their school in a very positive light, with a positive school climate. There were definitely divisions between programs,

between the “regular” students, the IB students, and students in the International Studies program. However, teachers were effective, behavior issues were limited, students got along, and generally people were supportive of differences.

The climate of Garinger seemed to undergo a transformation sometime around 1995. Graduates of the class of 1995 describe changes their senior year, while graduates of the class of 1997 describe changes their sophomore year. One 1997 graduate student stated, “Actually, in my first year, it wasn’t very safe.” During this time, new administrators were brought in and the overall feel of the school became more positive. Socially, students got along. Respondents did express concern regarding a general lack of academic rigor (to be discussed later), inadequate teaching, and disparate resource allocation. As Josh, a White male graduate, stated, “There were still issues but I think a lot of it could have been overcome if the school didn’t feel like it got shafted compared to the rest of the schools.” While the overall experience at Garinger was not ideal, respondents were positive about their time there.

In contrast, based on survey and interview responses, the overall climate of North Mecklenburg from 1995-1998 was not positive. Eleven out of twelve respondents directly discussed racial tension among the student body, with six students explicitly using the term “racism.” It is important to note that the exact term “racism” did not emerge in a single interview regarding Garinger or Independence. Jasmine, a Black female, stated, North Meck was hard, just because up there the whole racism thing was off the chart at times. You could tell that, the White people there, we went to school with in elementary and junior high school. When we got to high school, we were still

friends to a certain degree, but you could feel when their line was – you could tell where the line was.

Stan, a White male graduate of North Mecklenburg, described one event, saying, “My junior year I came to school one day and a Black Cabbage Patch [Kid] is hanging with a noose from one of the telephone wires and ‘Black Niggers’ was spaced across the gym.” Steve, a Black male, described another event in which racial epithets were written on the side of a building during a football game and his disbelief when he found out who had done it. He stated, “They broadcast who did it and it was like one of my childhood friends. I was like ‘what the hell?’ I grew up with him from kindergarten and junior high.” Jasmine, described inequitable treatment of students often along racial lines. She stated, “They would issue suspensions or detention over stupid petty stuff, but not over the white girl smoking in the bathroom. You could have caused a fire.” Racial tension came from both sides, and the interviews suggest many Black students engaged in what could be described as extreme oppositional behavior.

Kelly, an exchange student from Latin America, who came to North Mecklenburg for her senior year, described in detail how difficult the transition was for her. Growing up in a fairly homogenous environment in her home country, she never experienced overt racial tension. When she first arrived at North Mecklenburg, she did not understand what she was experiencing. She stated,

They [Black students] would just sit on the floor and you pretty much have to step through them but they would not pick up their legs. Some people can walk through, or if they were opening the door to go through, they would not pull that open for you, knowing that they were just going to slam it on your face.

She continued, describing feeling prejudiced towards others for the first time in her life, and her internal battle to focus on individual behavior versus developing prejudicial views. Another White student from North Mecklenburg did not make this distinction. He stated, “Well, I don’t know how you want me to put it. Me and Black people don’t get along very well.”

Andre, a Black male who transferred to North Mecklenburg from East Mecklenburg for his senior year, had a particularly interesting vantage point due to his previous experiences in a racially diverse school (In 1997, East Mecklenburg was the most racially balanced school following Independence). He stated:

At East everyone was extremely different, everyone was socially acceptable for the most part. Even the kids that were the hippies or the goth kids. Sometimes you’d see some goth kids with some wrestlers and some kids in the baseball team and some hippie kids all sitting at a 10 foot table. But North Meck. That place was extremely... I don’t know how to put it. It was – it had like a very small percent of cool people. Like 5% of the school were cool people. The rest to me were either yuppies or thug wannabes. That was the whole school...So, it was one of those preppy schools and then the Black kids —most of the time came from the west side and they didn’t want to be there. So there was a lot of fighting and issues like that.

While divisions between groups of people were discussed in all the interviews, such divisions seemed more prominent in the memories of graduates from North Mecklenburg. The noted exceptions were those rare individuals who were able to traverse social

boundaries. In all three schools, particularly North Mecklenburg, social boundaries were most often crossed by athletes.

### *Interracial Contact*

The in-depth interviews were consistent with the findings from the yearbook analysis discussed previously. Independence and Garinger seemed to have frequent, organic, interracial contact, especially between those students in the IB program. Interracial friendships were common and, though not commonplace, interracial romantic relationships occurred without much notice, according to interview responses. Peer groups were generally racially segregated, but there were many exceptions, and some individuals were able to float among different peer groups.

Beyond the IB program at Independence, the most racially diverse friendship groups were students in athletic teams. One White male who played on the football team at Garinger talked about how he still keeps up with many players, especially now that everyone is on Facebook. Several Facebook pages are devoted to athletic teams from the various high schools, and often these pages are very diverse racially. One Black female from North Mecklenburg talked about playing softball, and she said that these girls became her closest friends. Kailey, a multiracial female (who self-identifies as multiracial, but is light-skinned and commonly referred to as White by classmates) from Garinger, recalled the acceptance she felt as a student athlete:

I was the only White kid on the track team and we would go to different track meets and, you know, little comments would come from different teams and different, and I just remember the girls on our team defending me, saying things

like “She’s my friend,” and “She is our sister,” and “She is one of us and don’t mess with her.”

When discussing elementary school, most graduates recalled having friends who were from a different racial/ethnic background. Chris, a Pakistani male graduate of North Mecklenburg, told a story about being bullied by a student in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and being assisted by one of only a few Black students in the class. He stated,

Back in those days, when it was really hot and humid, like, I’ll break out in a rash, right? And I like, I just remember this girl. She was like “Ew, Ew, you got that on your arm,” and there’s this Black kid, he was the first Black kid that I met in school, anyway, so he rubbed his hand against my hand and he was like “Oh, look, nothing happened.”

Other graduates recall being invited for play dates and birthday parties of classmates who were of a different race and ethnicity. Yet, numerous graduates from all three high schools talked about the changes that took place in peer groups beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Some indicated that the changes corresponded to being “pulled out” for AG (academically gifted classes), and the implementation of other ability grouping.

### *Tracking*

Following desegregation efforts in the 70s, CMS increased the use of academic tracks. Many educators claim that such “tracks” allow teachers to better meet the needs of learners; however, tracking has also been identified as a tool used to stem White flight (Gaillard, 2006; Oakes, 2005; Smith, 2004; Welner, 1999). Whatever the purpose, tracking dramatically undermined opportunities for interracial contact in all of CMS during the time respondents were in school (Mickelson, 2001).

In CMS, some students are identified as “gifted” in second grade. In CMS separate instruction for gifted students typically begins soon after. In the 80s and 90s, academically gifted (AG) education in K-6<sup>th</sup> grade put into place a pull-out approach where students were sent to another classroom for a period every day or a few times a week. This teacher and class were commonly referred to as AG. The majority of respondents were either identified AG or selected to take advanced classes for a number of reasons. As is consistent with the literature regarding tracking, students were cognizant of what “track” they were in and the racial stratification this created. Stan, a White male graduate of North Mecklenburg, explained, “I was in the advanced track, so most of my classes were predominantly White. I mean, there might have been a few people who were Asian. So obviously, there weren’t many Black people who were in those classes. I don’t know why, it just was that way.”

Tracking was widespread in the three high schools and participants discussed it at length in every interview. Josh, a White male, stated, “There were three levels. Well, actually kind of four levels. There was what we call the ESL school, which we didn’t really interact with them, not even on the playground.” This division between native and non-native English speakers emerged several times. Rodrigo, a Latino, said, “I don’t remember mingling so much with the kids that could speak English fluently.”

This racial and linguistic divide had many consequences, particularly for students of color. Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, stated,

In middle school in AG courses, I would be the only Black person in the class.

Every once in a while, somebody made a smart comment that they had to include a Black kid. Because I was the only one...I felt like I had to be doubly smart.



Tracking caused negative experiences for students of color in both higher and lower tracks. Nicole, a Black female, spoke about being in the regular class in 4<sup>th</sup> grade for a few months, until her mom complained that the work was too easy; then her teacher put her in the advanced classes, where she was one of three non-White students. She excelled and was classified as “gifted” later that year. Nicole had a parent that demanded academic rigor for her daughter, but many students do not have such advocates. Neal, a white male graduate of Garinger, acknowledged the effect tracking had on his classmates, stating, “A good number of the regular classes were majority Black, and so I think to some degree that hindered some kids in trying to develop into their full potential.”

Students were aware of the differing content, lower quality of teachers, and low expectations the lower tracks entailed. Tameka stated:

Regular courses were much less rigorous, even at Cotswold [Elementary]. If you were in regular courses, you weren't doing the same. Some of my friends were like, “What? You read the whole novel thing?” and I would say, “Yes, because I'm in AG. We read several novels this year.” So they were like, I don't want to say dumbed down, but some of the regular courses were less rigorous than—the teachers don't expect much of them, so they didn't do much.

The general assumption was that the “good” teachers taught the “smart kids” and left everyone else behind. In discussing the academics at North Mecklenburg, Kendall, a Black female, said, “I think it all depends on what curriculum you were in. I mean, I don't know. I was always in AG classes and the better teachers taught those classes....”

Several graduates discussed the fact that Black teachers never taught the advanced level

courses. Independence was the only school in which Black teachers were associated with advanced or AG track coursework.

Being placed in a lower track had long-term consequences. David, a White male from North, was diagnosed with severe ADD in middle school and described himself as a smart kid who struggled through school. His perception of his schooling experiences was the most negative encountered in all 36 interviews. He was in the regular track throughout his educational career and expressed extreme anger at what he views as the failure of CMS in providing him with an education. In discussing his high school classes, he said, "I just felt like I was just put in with kids that really acted up all the time." Kelly, a Latina exchange student placed in remedial English her senior year, describes similar frustrations:

It seemed that [being in remedial English] did me more wrong than good because I was put with a bunch of kids that did not care at all about anything or did not really put any effort... And the teachers spent pretty much all the class just treating them like fifth graders. She spent, say 95% of the time just correcting behavior, not really teaching.

Some students avoided this by opting to take advanced classes, at times fighting to be placed on the advanced track. Rodrigo, a Latino graduate from Garinger, said, "At the time Eastway [Middle School] had huge disciplinary problems. I took AG classes not because I was particularly smarter but because there was so much trouble and so much just nonsense going on in the regular classes."

Clearly, for the graduates of 1995-1998, tracking had an overwhelming impact on their schooling experiences. Being positioned in the high track in second grade placed

students on an educational trajectory that would almost completely ensure success. In contrast, being placed in the regular track meant being weighed down by behavior issues, inadequate teaching, low expectations, and fewer opportunities. There were certainly differences in the rigor between academic tracks, and there is also sufficient evidence that the rigor differed at the school level as well.

### *Academic Preparation*

When directly asked in the interview if graduates benefitted academically from their schooling experiences, 92% of graduates from Independence said yes, compared to 33% from Garinger and 50% from North Mecklenburg. Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, said, “I mean they [teachers at Independence] prepared me for college. My first few years were a breeze because I already had what they were covering.” This is in stark contrast to comments from Jay, a white male graduate of Garinger who was in AG classes all through school. He stated, “It wasn’t until college that I realized that the education I received in high school was kind of lacking. The first semester in college was, it seemed very abrupt.” Similarly, Nicole, a Black female graduate of Garinger who was in the advanced track, said,

I wasn’t pushed. School wasn’t a challenge for me. I actually never learned how to study until I was in college. I wasn’t prepared and that was the worst semester of my performance in college. It wasn’t because I was partying. It was because I wasn’t prepared.

Some graduates linked the quality of teachers with the quality of education. Josh, a White male graduate of Garinger, stated:

But for the most part, teachers tried to get out of there. There were the ones that we thought were good but they would end up leaving. We ended up with a lot of young, newer teachers that were just there for a little bit then leaving. And there were basically permanent rotations of substitutes. Which, I mean, it harms the psyches of the kids a lot I'm sure.

All respondents who discussed a lack of academic rigor were Garinger graduates. The logical assumption would be that this was a school level issue, with Garinger just having lower quality teachers and therefore providing poor academic preparation. Yet, throughout many interviews, when students began to reflect on the differences between majority White schools and majority Black schools, majority White schools were consistently perceived as more academically rigorous. Graduates told of differences even at the elementary level.

Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, described going from Briarwood, a predominantly Black elementary school, to Cotswold, a predominantly White school, and the differences between the content, style of teaching, and pace of instruction at each school. Avery, a Black male graduate of Garinger, describes going from Merry Oaks, a predominantly non-White school, to Charlotte Christian, a White private school in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He states, "At Merry Oaks, I made good grades. When I got to [Charlotte] Christian, I felt I was probably average at best. I had to work harder to make decent grades. I wasn't used to really working hard before that." He returned to Garinger, a majority Black school, four years later with the opposite experience. He stated, "Things weren't as challenging anymore...to make good grades wasn't as hard as it was before." Predominantly White schools, such as North Mecklenburg, also seemed to have more

course offerings. For example, Andre, a Black male who transferred to North his senior year, remarked upon North having more advanced placement (AP) classes than at other schools. He said, “I walked in there just starting to take AP classes versus kids that were taking them since sophomore year.” Differences in the academic preparation between schools clearly existed, and students of color and students in predominantly non-White schools seemed to be the most negatively affected by the disparities.

### *Racial Identity Development*

Academic opportunities were disproportionately available to students in racially isolated White schools and to students who were White in all schools studied. While academic opportunities seemed to be disproportionately accessible based on the race of the student and the overall racial composition of the school, what about opportunities for racial identity development? Interracial contact clearly serves as a precursor for racial identity development, and since Independence and Garinger had more opportunities for interracial contact, it is worth discussing if interracial contact promoted a more developed sense of self.

The interviews indicate that graduates of all schools exhibited evidence of racial identity development; however, graduates of North Mecklenburg were more likely to show evidence that they were in the contact or pre-encounter phase. Such individuals typically perceive themselves as color-blind, are unaware of the importance of race as a systemic reality, and generally subscribe to the “myth of meritocracy” (the deeply ingrained belief that success is based on hard work rather than systems of privilege). While there was intentionally not a specific set of questions dealing with racial identity

development in the interview protocol, the majority of respondents described some aspect of racial identity development during the course of the discussion.

Several graduates ascribed to the viewpoint described as “color-blindness,” a key indicator that the individual is in the early stages of racial identity development. Tomas, a Latino, describes this as, “people are people.” Other graduates described being taught color-blindness as a child. Jeff, a Black male graduate, stated, “My parents taught me that people are people instead of people based on color. That’s how I grew up. It’s not, ‘You’re Black, White, or Hispanic’; it’s either ‘you’re nice or not nice.’” While a color-blind mentality certainly emerged in many interviews, contrary to the finding of Wells et al. (2009), many graduates criticized such an approach. Perhaps this difference has to do with focusing on the graduates of 1995-1998 rather than the graduates of 1980 as their study did. In recent decades, public discourse has become more focused on multiculturalism rather than color-blindness, and graduates of the 90s might have been more affected by this change in discourse than graduates of the class of 1980.

Another key indicator of early stages of racial identity development are statements that deny the existence of systems of privilege that benefit individuals based on their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, beliefs, and appearance. While several graduates mentioned “working hard” to be where they are in life, the majority of graduates critiqued the idea of America as a meritocracy. Graduates of Garinger were overwhelmingly positive regarding their schooling experiences, with many stating that graduating from Garinger did not “hurt” them, but similarly, graduates of Garinger seemed to acknowledge the unequal opportunities offered there. Tomas, a Latino graduate of Garinger, stated:

They [my parents] would always tell me that the school doesn't make the students. The students make the school. So you can get a good education if you apply yourself and do the best you can do not matter what happened. I mean, obviously, if we have a teacher who's horrible and rigid or what-not, that could impede your learning but if you're dedicated and you try your best, you'll take the necessary steps to succeed and go forward....The person I am... I'd like to say that I'm the same person I would be no matter what. But I do realize that experiences and environment do play a part of who we become. But could I have received more opportunities? Of course, because you probably would meet people and befriend people who were connected and more involved. And I mean, I'm the second person in my family to go to college and graduate from college. My brother being the first and he attended the same schools I did. But yeah, had we gone to a different type of school, it probably would have been better. But those are the breaks.

Tomas sums up the general sentiment of Garinger graduates; they appreciate their experiences but acknowledge the perceived deficient education they received. Alyssa, a Black female graduate of Garinger, was more vocal in her opposition to the myth of meritocracy, saying, "People think it is all on your merit. But here [in Charlotte] it is more a system of where people award you things because of your race or your class...I mean, you keep building jails but you don't support education."

Several graduates described their own identity development in a way that was completely in line with the theories outlined by Cross (1971, 1978, 1991) and Helms (1993). Cross presents a theory of racial identity development for Blacks and Helms

presents a theory of racial identity development for Whites. At the most simplistic level, both theories state that individuals move from a period where race is not acknowledged to periods where race is acknowledged and, ultimately, critically acknowledged while simultaneously celebrated. Erica, an Asian female graduate of North Mecklenburg, said,

There was a stretch of years where all I wanted to be was like everybody else...I highlighted my hair and just really tried to be with more White people. In college, it was finally seen as a positive...Then I joined the Asian Chamber of Commerce...and I really tried to be in with the other Asian business people in the community. I did this Chinese dance group...but then, they said that I was really White, even though I was Asian. I tried and then some of it backfired. Then about 26 or 27 I came to the realization that I am who I am. I have a Southern accent. I do the things that I like and I don't do the things that I don't like.

In this brief anecdote, Erica describes her journey through the pre-encounter phase (“I wanted to be like everybody else”), the encounter phase (“It was finally seen as a positive”), the immersion/emersion phase (“I really tried...”), to the internalization phase (“I came to the realization that I am who I am”). Such a clear picture of racial identity development was rare, although several graduates told similar stories of self-discovery. Jasmine, a Black female graduate from North Mecklenburg, told of her own realizations of self-loathing that often describe the pre-encounter phase. She said:

I never wanted to be who I was. I wanted to be someone else. I remember I wanted to be White. I thought that the White girls were pretty. I thought that their hair was prettier and longer. I thought that they spoke more proper than we did. I thought that White people had more money than Black people. I remember my



Grandma smoked. So her smoke, the smell of smoke would be in my clothes and their parents didn't smoke.

Jasmine went on to describe her personal journey of racial identity development that became more positive as she got older, with her discovering her true self in her late 20s. Her narrative describes her time at North Mecklenburg as being in the encounter phase, a span that usually includes disruptive thinking and behavior. Perhaps, this stage in the theory of racial identity development explains the confrontational behavior of many Black students at North Mecklenburg. Students may have been transitioning from the pre-encounter phase to the encounter phase and most likely did not reach the internalization phase due to the pervasive racial tension present in the school.

The majority of graduates provided insight into their identity development in a more jumbled manner. For example, Andre, a Black male graduate of North Mecklenburg, discussed his personal racial awareness. He said, "I'm a light-skinned Black person, so I wasn't really liked by some White kids, and I wasn't liked by a lot of Black kids. So, I'd gotten into a lot, a lot of fights." Clearly this shows being in the encounter phase in middle school, yet later comments refer to his progress to the internalization phase.

Other graduates referred to the nuances of racial identity and the effect that racial identity has on relationships. In discussing his own racial identity compared to his brother's, Neal said, "The perception of what is Black varies." Neal graduated from Garinger and talked at length about the strong sense of self he developed there. In contrast, his brother graduated from South Mecklenburg High School, a school that was 70% White and located in an upper-middle class White neighborhood. He described the

differences between his identity and his brother's, particularly when they attended the same Historically Black University. Students there did not realize the two were brothers based on their perceived racial identities. As Neal states, he was considered "Blacker" than his brother. Neal played basketball and listened to R&B while his brother played golf, skateboarded, and listened to grunge. Such differences about what it meant to be "Black" emerged in many interviews, in ways the topic of "Whiteness" did not emerge in interviews with White graduates. Expectedly, White graduates did not discuss their identity in terms of being "White." However, identifying as White or Black came up in the majority of interviews with Black respondents.

Lori, a Black Female graduate, talks about being referred to as "White" in elementary school. She states,

I was raised by someone from the North, I didn't have the accent. I stood out and they noticed it and they didn't like it. So, a lot of times I was criticized for it... because I, and I hate to say this, sounded like a White person. Even though, I was just...being me.

The idea of "acting White" came up frequently, particularly in regards to being "smart" (Ogbu, 2004). As mentioned previously, this sample suffers from a selection bias of graduates who were in advanced tracks throughout high school. Perhaps one unintended benefit of the selection bias was the high percentage of respondents who are non-White and were in the advanced track throughout their schooling career. Several interviewees described being one of the few students of color in AG classes throughout school. As such, this population offers insight into those students who are Black and high achievers, often referred to as "acting White" by other students. Alyssa, a Black female graduate of

Garinger, said, “It seems you are a little different when you are seen as a smart kid as opposed to a Black kid.” Many graduates talked about the way in which they were identified as either smart or Black, but rarely both ways. One graduate even wrote about this topic for his senior exit essay; his title was “Being Smart and Black: My Story.”

Similarly, graduates discussed using sports as a way to be socially accepted while being smart. Neal, a Black male from Garinger, talked about the difficulty of being identified as smart and Black. He said, “I was extremely athletic, but I was a nerd. It was hard to prove that I was cool.”

Many Black students talked about the importance of discovering their personal sense of identity by attending a historically Black college (HBC). Tameka, a Black female graduate, said, “After going to Randolph [Middle School] and Independence [High School], I wanted a historically Black college experience.” Denzel, a Black male graduate of Independence, said, “Going to an HBC helped me identify more with the history of African-Americans; it was a very uplifting experience.” Interestingly, two respondents from Garinger and three respondents from Independence attended HBCs, but no respondents from North Mecklenburg attended an HBC.

Among all three school sites, Black respondents, particularly Black females, showed the most advanced racial identity development. Perhaps this is due to a selection bias where only those individuals who are in the later stage of identity development will respond to an online survey titled the “Diversity Assessment Questionnaire.” Generally speaking, White females showed the least advanced racial identity development. White female students were less likely to take a critical stance towards their schooling and life experiences and tended to offer simple, decontextualized answers to questions. For

example, one White female respondent discussed the positive aspects of her own schooling experiences at North Mecklenburg, while simultaneously expressing somewhat prejudiced views. In talking about different schools, she states,

I know that some are better than others, as far as reputation. I mean, I went to West Charlotte in high school because that is where they had a pool and I was on the swim team and that is where we would have our meets. I mean, we would find these disgusting things in the filters... and the pool.... You know... it is high school. But, I would say that places such as... I guess I can just say that places like Myers Park and Providence seem to take a little bit more pride in their school that say a West Charlotte or an Independence, but then again, yeah, that is just my impression.

It is important to note that in 1997, Myers Park and Providence were, like North Mecklenburg, predominantly White, whereas West Charlotte was desegregated and located in a predominantly Black neighborhood with a strong racial identity. In her mind, it seems race served as a proxy for quality, even though in 1996-1997, West Charlotte and Independence had high student achievement and strong schooling outcomes which equaled or surpassed North Mecklenburg (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Such comments serve as evidence of a White racial identity which is not cognizant of the systemic reality of race and privilege, and which equates economically depressed areas and/or diverse schools with not having “pride.”

While White female respondents were not developed in their racial identity development and did not show evidence they had moved beyond the contact stage, the White males were quite insightful on the impact that their experiences had on their own

development. One White male from North Mecklenburg told of numerous bad experiences involving non-White individuals and then explained that he worked in a White workplace, did not have friends who were not White, placed his children in an all White private school, and generally had no interest in diverse experiences and did not see diversity as a goal in any way. In this way, using Cross' (1971, 1991, 1995, 2001) theory is more helpful than Helms (1986, 1993). This graduate is clearly fixed in the immersion/emersion stage and will most likely remain there indefinitely. In contrast, Alan, a White male graduate of Independence, expressed the general sentiment of the interviews. He stated, "Diversity showed me that I didn't have to be normal... and it gave me the confidence to... be myself."

#### *Sensitivities to the Complexities of Race & Class*

Though the selection bias may have influenced these results, many interviewees of all backgrounds showed heightened sensitivity to the complexities of race and class in our dynamic social structure. It is important to note that beyond the graduate of North Mecklenburg who attended East Mecklenburg for two years and the graduate who has made his career in the Army, very few North Mecklenburg graduates displayed advanced racial identity development and awareness of systems of privilege based on race and class. This could mean that such information just never emerged naturally through interviews.

Many graduates reflected on their own experiences in contrast with the experiences of their classmates, particularly those classmates with behavior issues and those in the lower academic tracks. Josh, a White male graduate from Garinger, said, "I remembered there were like some class clowns, too – probably some of their issues, I

mean, thinking back on it now, may have had to deal with learning disabilities.” Josh clearly makes the connection between behavior and coping mechanisms for learning issues and inappropriate instruction. Rodrigo, a Latino graduate of Garinger, talked about behavior issues in class and how the staff handled the issues in a way that was not constructive for the student. He said,

They are sent out of the classroom. They get an out-of-school suspension – now taking them out of the class and putting them in a punishment. Did that help? Did that make things better? Those guys were put on a path.”

Rodrigo was a television producer in Charlotte for several years and talked at length about reporting on classmates from Garinger who were arrested and charged for various crimes. He realized that those students he came across with police records were those students who were in the lowest academic tracks and who were sent out of school for behavior issues, many of which were fairly minor, like skipping school (In many schools, the punishment for skipping class is an out-of-school suspension) (see Ferguson, 2000).

Denzel, a Black male graduate of Independence, took a more proactive approach to address the inequities of education. He is currently working at a non-profit in Columbus, OH, that serves the schools in the district by providing sessions on drug/alcohol awareness, setting up mentor programs, and providing safe and productive afterschool programs. In talking about his work compared to more lucrative options, he emphasized the positive impact he was having. He said, “So I’m glad to be big brother Denzel to a lot of young, African-American minority males who just need positive role models.”

Perhaps the most contextualized conversation regarding race and class came from Jay, a White male graduate of Garinger. He spoke about a range of topics and though he has no formal training, throughout the conversation he perfectly described sociological terms such as cultural and social capital and voluntary immigrant status. He talked about the socio-political forces that brought Vietnamese students to the East side of Charlotte and therefore to Garinger in the 80s and 90s (populations were brought to Charlotte by local non-profit agencies following the Vietnam War). He described witnessing the impact of the crack epidemic on East Charlotte in the 80s and 90s and the gentrification of the Plaza/Midwood area in the past fifteen years. In all, his lived experiences and his reflection on such experiences give him powerful insights into the processes of the contemporary social world, particularly in regards to race and class. In talking about the development and perpetuation of racial stereotypes in his own family, he states:

I mean they've gotten better with every generation; I mean growing up in the South in the 20s and the 30s, there is a very big separation between generations regarding racism and equity... My great-grandmother's generation was very into dropping racial slurs and slang, but my grandfather's generation would interact with someone who is Black and would not think bad about them because they are Black. My mother doesn't really have racial tendencies, but will occasionally say something that surprises you. Nothing too offensive, but just something from that generation, but I think that my generation just because of the exposure and just because of the, like, busing and desegregation happening in her generation, I just don't really notice it.

Jay clearly sees his family as part of a progression of tolerance, with a constant evolution towards open-mindedness and understanding of diversity. Similarly, Neal a Black male graduate of Garinger, talks about the impact of desegregation on society from a more global viewpoint. He stated:

I think desegregation was a proactive measure, the simplest way to truly integrate society. Because truly, the attitudes and assessments of races that have developed over time is starting to become a generation. One generation teaches another generation. And the one way to actually reverse some of the bad things that had occurred, you start with the younger population. And I think that was an easier way to – because once a kid gets to a certain age, it’s kind of hard for them to change. So, just to kind of reverse that early on, I think it helped with the integration of our country.”

Neal and Jay clearly embody the hypothesized effect of desegregation as reducing intergenerational prejudices and stereotypes, one from a micro view of his own family and one from a macro view of all schools having the ability to impact the integration of the country as a whole. While such perceptions are the result of many life experiences, undoubtedly, as they claim, their time in desegregated schools contributed to such views. Their experiences in school clearly developed an awareness of race and an appreciation of diverse schools.

### *Diverse Schools*

With a few noted exceptions, graduates of Garinger and Independence were positive about their experiences in diverse schools, and while not as positive, graduates of North Mecklenburg also described some benefits. Steve, a White male graduate of



Independence summed up the general sentiment. He said, “It didn’t feel like us versus them.” Graduates, at least those from Independence and Garinger, felt that people from different backgrounds got along. Lori, a Black female graduate of Independence, said,

It’s like bringing two separate worlds together and there is always going to be some kind of clashing. But, I think it was good for both sides. Because... what you did... you showed both sides that, in this world, you’re going to have to learn how to interact and you might as well do it now... You hear things about another race... It’s like you need to find out... if these stereotypes are true or not.

Lori saw her experiences as being important for getting along with others and testing out stereotypes. Similarly, Denzel saw his experiences as being important for successfully navigating interracial interactions in the future. He said,

As an African-American male I can say that there have been Caucasians who have been completely respectful and so down-to-earth and very understanding and open their home up to you and so forth. I had some classmates who... would not say one word to you, who were Caucasian, you know what I’m saying? So, I had the opportunity to have both of those experiences at a younger age, versus, I don’t know, if I’m 29 and I’m seeing that for the first time.

In the same way, Avery, a Black male graduate of Garinger, spoke at length about his experience in a private school for four years, being one of few Blacks in a school. He said, “So, that’s been huge. In my career, and being able to – because it’s not the first time that I’ve been in a very, very few African-American environment. So I think it helps me deal with people a lot better.” Avery also talked about the balance he developed in his personal identity by being the minority for four years, then returning to Garinger and

gaining confidence as a member of the majority. The contrast of his schooling experiences has allowed him to be somewhat bi-cultural and able to traverse social boundaries. He described this as a significant advantage in his professional career.

Ravi, an Indian graduate of Independence described the professional advantages he has experienced being comfortable in a variety of social settings. He currently lives and works in Atlanta, a diverse city with many non-White business owners. He credits his experience at Independence with giving him the confidence and comfort in working with individuals of all different backgrounds. He states,

Because I work in finance, so the local people that I meet, they are from all different backgrounds in life. And coming from that background, I think, has made it a lot easier for me to, like on a social or on a business level, interact.

Many graduates credit their diverse experiences with their own personal development. Blakely, a White female graduate of Independence, said, “It certainly helped me become the person I am today.” Graduates also talked about interacting with peers who did not have experiences with many different cultures. Ken, a multiracial male from Independence, said,

There were kids that I met at college, and you could tell there was a difference...I mean my cousins went to an all White school in NY... they make comments, I don't think they mean anything by it, but they make stereotypical comments for no reason sometime.

Such experiences were particularly frequent when interviewees went to college and into the military. Many graduates described interacting with individuals who were

not comfortable with people from backgrounds different than their own. Tomas, a Latino graduate of Garinger, said,

I never realized that there were some people who didn't have my experience [in diverse schools]. I guess I was naïve because I remember when I went to UNCC, I could tell when they were around minorities. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness. People are people, guys. Come on, what's going on?"

Respondents also talked about the importance of diverse experiences in the modern workplace. Jess, a graduate of Independence, is an international consultant. In fact, her interview was conducted on the phone while she was working in Puerto Rico. She was remarking upon the type of individual her company hires. She said,

I see this a lot in my younger colleagues. They are open-minded, well-traveled, have a diverse set of interests, and I think a lot of that has to do with the diverse group of people they have been around and a diverse education. I see them as having a head start in life.

Perhaps most poignantly, graduates talked about the importance of diverse schools for their own children. Every graduate from Independence and Garinger and the majority of graduates from North Mecklenburg said that diverse schools would be or are currently a priority for their own child(ren). Alyssa, a Black female graduate of Garinger, succinctly said, "It is important that any child of mine has a realistic view of the world and to have a realistic view of the world you have to know that people are not like you." Graduates are clear in recognizing the positive benefits of their own experiences, yet simultaneously, graduates spoke of the unintended consequences—the double-edged sword of their schooling experiences.

### The Double-Edged Sword: The “Cost and Benefit” of Desegregated Schools

The dual-nature of the experiences of graduates from all schools emerged through the in-depth interviews and results of the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ). Graduates of Garinger seemed to experience the highest “costs” and notable “benefits” of desegregated schooling. While graduates experienced positive social benefits, presumably the effect of high levels of interracial contact, they simultaneously endured what has been described as an academic climate rampant with low expectations and no rigor. This was particularly apparent when graduates went to college and struggled through their first year. Garinger graduates also tolerated inadequate facilities compared to other schools in the district, feelings of inferiority based on the widely disseminated negative perception of their school, as well as little supplementary financial support from the community and/or PTA. Garinger graduates did seem to develop positive relationships with staff members, and they generally experienced less tension in the school environment than students from Independence and North Mecklenburg. The long-term outcomes for Garinger graduates are positive, with high rates of educational attainment, evidence of a developed racial identity in the majority of respondents, and evidence that the majority of respondents work and live in diverse settings.

The graduates of Independence experienced the most positive benefits of all three schools, both socially and academically. Although there was evidence of racial tension, graduates reported a positive social climate within an academically supportive and rigorous environment. Students got along and had high levels of academic achievement with strong teachers and positive relationships with staff members. Respondents from Independence experienced an environment that supported diversity of thought and a wide

range of behavior. Students reported high levels of acceptance. Long-term outcomes indicate that, like Garinger, graduates have high levels of educational attainment and that they broke the “segregation cycle” described by perpetuation theory. Generally, after high school, graduates went on to lead somewhat integrated lives, and they describe high rates of interracial friendships and diverse environments in which they have chosen to live and work.

In 1996-1997, North Mecklenburg was seen as a “good school” by the general public and had a strong academic reputation. This is most likely due to the public conception of predominantly White schools as a “good” school. However, in comparison to Independence and Garinger, graduates of North Mecklenburg have less positive outcomes. Those students in advanced tracks presumably benefitted from a high level of academic rigor, yet their long-term outcomes show the lowest educational attainment of the three school sites. Of twelve graduates, nine of whom were in the advanced track, four did not graduate from college and no respondent held an advanced degree. In comparison to graduates of Garinger and Independence, graduates of North Mecklenburg are more likely to live and work in racially homogenous areas and have friendships with individuals of similar backgrounds. In addition, the interviews indicated that the interracial contact graduates experienced at North Mecklenburg possibly led to the development of stereotypes and prejudice, rather than helping decrease such beliefs.

In all, each school experienced definitive costs and benefits from desegregation efforts. For most graduates, particularly from Garinger and Independence, the benefits of desegregation efforts seem to outweigh the costs. While the double-edged sword of desegregation had negative effects, the students who attended Garinger and Independence

exhibit clear benefits from their schooling experiences over a decade later, particularly in comparison to graduates from North Mecklenburg. Interview and survey data seem to suggest that graduates of North Mecklenburg, the least racially balanced school, received few clear benefits from desegregation efforts, and arguably, such efforts may have had somewhat negative effects. In this way, which edge of the sword students experience seems dependent on racial composition, and this study lends credence to the idea that there is a ‘tipping point’ for racial composition in schools (see Brown-Jeffy, 2006). In terms of racial composition, perhaps the critical breaking point between effective and ineffective lies between 22% Black (the composition of North Mecklenburg) and 36% Black (the composition of Independence). Or perhaps the negative school climate of North Mecklenburg trumped any positive effect of diversity. Based on the limitations of my sample, I cannot draw such conclusions.

*The False Dichotomy of “Excellence” versus “Equity”*

Throughout the interviews, I heard what I have termed “anti-CMS” viewpoints. Graduates of North Mecklenburg criticized CMS for offering a poor quality education, in schools not viewed as “excellent,” while graduates of Garinger and Independence criticized CMS for having racially isolated schools, which were therefore not “equitable.” Graduates of Independence were most likely to discuss the possibility of a school being equitable and excellent. Graduates from Independence frequently talked about seeking out such schools for their children, whereas graduates of Garinger and North Mecklenburg were more likely to avoid CMS altogether (go to private or charter schools) or place their child in their assigned school with the knowledge the school was not ideal. For example, one graduate from Independence discussed her children going to magnet

schools throughout the city. She discussed her selection criteria for the schools as being based on academic performance and school level diversity. She strove for a balance between the two because both were important to her in educating her children.

Several graduates expressed extreme disgust with CMS. Perhaps the most extreme was David, a white male graduate of North Mecklenburg. He said, “My number one goal I’ve saved my money for is to put my children in private school because I do not believe in the public school system in Charlotte at all.” Kelly, a student from North Mecklenburg who had several negative experiences there, wasn’t sure she wanted her children in diverse schools. She stated, “I am not sure of that right now. It scares me a little bit...”

Alan, a White male graduate of Independence, criticized CMS for the lack of emphasis on diversity, but he was more moderate in his criticism, stating, “We [he and his fiancé] feel it’s a real tragedy that Charlotte lost that special character. We’re not sure how to do it [have kids in diverse schools] but we both feel like that was an important part of socialization in the South.” Kailey, a multiracial graduate of Garinger, talked about her attempt to put her children in diverse schools in Charlotte and declared, “Desegregated schools don’t exist in Charlotte anymore.” Alyssa, a Black Female graduate of Garinger, expressed frustration over the current state of schools in Charlotte, stating, “We have to do something if something is going to be different. If we don’t want to keep saying the CMS is bullshit and we don’t care about what is going on...because they don’t care about us [Blacks].” Clearly, personal experiences have shaped the perceptions of graduates in their framing of desegregated or diverse schools as positive, negative, or unattainable.

*Diverse Schools in the Future?*

Graduates from North Mecklenburg noted that they thought diverse schools were important, yet during the interviews, no graduates discussed theories as to why schools in CMS are not presently diverse. In contrast, graduates of Garinger and Independence remarked upon the fact that Charlotte, like many cities, has housing patterns that are racially segregated. Nicole said, “Charlotte is a very segregated city.” When asked about the role of desegregated schools, another graduate stated, “Well, it’s a step in the right direction, but part of the problem is that you have to get people to desegregate where they live.” Another graduate declared, “We have a segregated society that requires us to be desegregated.” Neal, a Black male graduate of Garinger who is currently a lawyer, stated, “Desegregation was a great attempt,” and he went on to discuss desegregation efforts that while admirable, did not fulfill their goal. Some graduates were skeptical of desegregation efforts, especially in Charlotte. Rodrigo talked about the difficulty of having diverse schools, because of the need for and the importance of broad community support. He said,

Desegregated schools in Charlotte? It would be hard. It would take everyone being on the same page. And it would take people, maybe, saying “OK, fine. I’m going to have to give this up for the greater good.”

Rodrigo expressed the sentiment of many graduates that to have desegregated schools you had to sacrifice something else. In reflecting on his own experience, Jeff, a Black male graduate of Independence, said, “So while I say I benefitted from a diverse crowd, I didn’t benefit from a financially backed crowd.” Erica, a graduate of North Mecklenburg, states, “Do I want my child to be exposed to different types of people? Absolutely. But I



will not sacrifice the quality of their education just so they can be in a diverse school.” In this way, graduates of desegregated schools often described desegregated schools as schools without financial capital or a commitment to academic excellence, and therefore while they are able to offer a clear benefit – diversity – they cannot offer academic excellence or resources.

It is clear, then, that the double-edged sword of schooling experiences has shaped adult perceptions. Garinger graduates often express the sentiment that such schools are not possible. Graduates of North Mecklenburg indicate that although they value diversity, they focus on academic achievement above all other factors when it comes to selecting a school for their child. Graduates of Independence are the most likely to see diverse schools as ideal sites for academic and social development and are the most likely to seek out such schools for their children.

The various data points across interviews, historical documents, 1997 survey data, and the DAQ seem to support the notion that Garinger had a deficient academic program while North Mecklenburg provided a poor social climate. Perhaps this explains some of the negative statements regarding desegregated schools. In the majority of interviews, graduates simultaneously praised the concept and outcomes of desegregated schools, while they were also very critical of the unintended consequences of such schools. Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, said, “I do think it makes you a more well-rounded person when it’s done right. It just wasn’t done right.” Tameka indicated that her high school experience was very positive, yet her elementary and middle school experiences were not. In this way, Tameka distinguishes between desegregation done well and desegregation done poorly—both of which have different outcomes. It is

important to note that Tameka was a student at Independence, a school that, by all accounts, seemed to have “done” desegregation better than Garinger or North Mecklenburg—but still this was not enough to give her a positive view of her experiences.

Mandy, a black female graduate of Independence, contrasted desegregation with neighborhood schools. In particular, she talked about the importance of neighborhood schools but the danger of those schools in economically disadvantaged areas. She states,

When you have neighborhood schools, the neighborhood actually takes care of those schools... but when a school is far away, people don't really take ownership... But at the same time, there are kids that are stuck in a school, and those schools may not be up to par. It's not a win-win situation.”

Mandy concluded that not all sides benefit. Tameka, a Black female graduate of Independence, talked about her own experience as the resident of a large, predominantly Black neighborhood. She discussed the somewhat negative effect of the desegregation plan on her own neighborhood when students were bused to a predominantly White school located in an upper middle-class White neighborhood. She said,

There were too many minorities at Briarwood [Elementary], so they bused us over to Cotswold elementary. And Briarwood was in my neighborhood. My mom was always up there. The teachers were from my neighborhood. The teachers went to school with my mom and knew the kids. We had a lot of pride in Briarwood. But, Cotswold had more books. It had more family activities. The classes were harder. It was okay for me. I was in AG classes and I did well in school. I had two parents

at home and a mom who pushed me. But, some students from low SES families did not adapt well. It was really hard on them.

In Tameka's life, as in the lives of many graduates of desegregated schools, desegregation was a double-edged sword—a tool utilized for the common good but it cut both ways, one positive and one negative. Being moved to a school outside of her community arguably harmed Tameka, albeit at the same time she experienced many academic and social benefits.

Avery describes this same duality in his life. By attending a White private school for four years, then transitioning to a predominantly Black school, he often felt like he did not belong in either location. While he reaped tremendous short-term and long-term benefits from being in a broad range of schools, he has struggled with finding his own place in the world. He recounted,

So, there's this guy named Al, and Al lived a couple of blocks over from me. And Al was, he was a little bit of rough, but we, like my first year there [at Garinger] I was in a standard English class, right, so it was anybody could be in that class, right? So we were in class and so I was like trying to make friends and I was like, "Hey Al, I realized you live over here." He's like "Oh, where do you live?" I told him and he didn't believe me. He laughed because he didn't believe – he probably never believed that I lived just a few blocks from him. So, I look back on that and I thought that my whole private school experience – I felt different because I looked different. But after being there four years, someone who I grew up in the same neighborhood as me didn't believe I was living in the neighborhood.

While Avery's experiences were somewhat unusual, many graduates expressed both positive and negative outcomes—desegregation's double-edged sword.

### Answering Research Questions

The yearbook analysis, combined with the 1997 dataset and the DAQ demonstrates that the schools have much in common, despite differences in school culture, geographical location, and racial composition. However, a singular answer to the overarching research question, How do graduates describe and make sense of their schooling experiences? is not possible from the narratives provided from interviews with graduates from all schools. A similar picture of educational experience emerged; however, individuals create meaning from their lived experiences in multiple ways, and graduates had dramatically different experiences based on their own identities and within the contexts of their personal lives and school environments. The evidence from the multiple sources of data illuminates answers to some of the more specifically targeted sub questions, and they shed light on the particular effects of desegregation in graduates' lives.

#### 1) *Were there differences in long-term outcomes of graduates among schools studied?*

Yes, distinct differences emerged through the DAQ as well as the interviews.

As addressed in the literature review, there are hundreds of studies documenting the positive effects of desegregated schools. While most of these studies focus on short-term outcomes (such as academic achievement), there is ample evidence regarding long-term outcomes to show that the long-term effects of desegregation could outweigh the importance of short-term effects (Wells et al., 2009). Reported long-term benefits of students in desegregated schools include higher educational attainment, higher

occupational aspirations and expectations, higher occupational attainment, improved adult social networks, greater comfort with individuals from different racial/ethnic groups, improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race relations, increased sense of civic engagement, increased capacity to work in integrated environments with positive experiences, and increased interaction with other racial groups (such as living and working in diverse environments) (Welner, 2006; Wells & Crain, 1994). Even though the sample was small and self-selected, the findings from this study are consistent with the literature on long-term outcomes for graduates of desegregated schools.

Graduates of Independence exhibited more long-term benefits from their schooling experiences than graduates of Garinger or North Mecklenburg did. Students from Independence were more likely to have a 4-year degree, have a graduate degree, live in a diverse area, work in a diverse environment, have diverse friends, and be active in their community than graduates of Garinger or North Mecklenburg see Table 5.20. However, Garinger had more consistent positive long-term outcomes than North Mecklenburg.

Table 5.20

*Simplified Long-Term Outcomes from In-Depth Interviews*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>4-year degree</i>	<i>Graduate Degree</i>	<i>Live in Diverse Area</i>	<i>Workplace Diverse</i>	<i>Diverse Friends</i>	<i>Active in Community</i>
Garinger High School N=12	75%	25%	75%	42%*	67%	67%
Independence High School N=12	100%	50%	100%	92%	100%	83%
North Mecklenburg High School N=12	58%	0%	58%	58%	50%	50%

\* Three non-White graduates were currently the only people of color in their workplace

2) *Were graduates aware that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were under a court-mandated desegregation plan during their years of schooling?*

The majority of students did not know that CMS operated under a court-mandated desegregation order during their years of schooling, see Table 5.21. Of the 13 students who were aware of the mandate, 12 had family members that were a part of desegregation efforts in the late 1970s and/or had a background in history or law. However, many students who knew of the desegregation mandate were not familiar with the name of the court case associated with the mandate, *Swann*. Students of color were more likely to be familiar with the mandate or court cases than White students. The majority of graduates were somewhat familiar with *Brown* (1954) but not familiar with *Swann* (1971). Students from Independence and Garinger referenced specific teachers who covered the court cases in class, while graduates from North Mecklenburg was the least aware and often expressed confusion over the term “desegregation” (see Appendix D for the interview protocol).

Table 5.21

*Knowledge Regarding Brown (1954) & Swann (1971)*

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Knew of Court Mandate</i>	<i>Familiar with Brown</i>	<i>Familiar with Swann</i>
Garinger High School N=12	58%	50%	17%
Independence High School N=12	42%	67%	50%
North Mecklenburg High School N=12	8%	50%	0%

3) *Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school?*

All students from Independence saw themselves as part of a desegregated school, compared to 2 students from Garinger and 9 students from North Mecklenburg. According to the original *Swann* decision, North Mecklenburg and Garinger would *not* be considered desegregated; yet, the majority of students from North Mecklenburg viewed themselves as being part of a desegregated school. The three students from North Mecklenburg who said they were in a segregated school were students of color. This result stands in contrast to Garinger, where the majority of students considered themselves part of a segregated school. Furthermore, students from Independence more often stated that they benefited from diverse schools, that diverse schools are important, and that they remain positive about CMS. Graduates of Garinger and North Mecklenburg were less likely to say they benefited *academically* from their schooling experiences, yet 100% of Garinger graduates said they benefited *socially* from their schooling experiences. Garinger graduates were also the most positive regarding CMS, while graduates of North Mecklenburg were the least positive (see Table 5.22).

Table 5.22

General Perceptions Regarding Desegregated Schools

<i>School Site</i>	<i>Attended desegregated school</i>	<i>Benefitted Academically</i>	<i>Benefitted Socially</i>	<i>Diverse Schools Are Important</i>	<i>Positive about CMS</i>
Garinger High School N=12	17%	33%	100%	100%	75%
Independence High School N=12	100%	92%	92%	100%	67%
North Mecklenburg High School N=12	75%	42%	50%	92%	25%

4) *Did the racial composition and organizational structure of the school affect interracial contact and racial identity development?*

Yes. Out of 36 interviews, 36 interviewees discussed tracking (utilizing many different terms) and all 36 discussed some aspect of identity development. I analyzed racial identity development in a binary fashion, based on comments by the graduates. Individuals either exhibited some evidence of acknowledging the social significance of race and SES, or they did not. According to Cross' theory, graduates not acknowledging the social significance of race and SES would be in the "pre-encounter stage," while according to Helms' theory, graduates would be in the "contact stage."

Students from Garinger and Independence exhibited more advanced racial identity development (were more likely *not* to be in the "pre-encounter" or "contact stage"), while the majority of students interviewed from North Mecklenburg were in the beginning stage of racial identity development, regardless of their own race or ethnicity. One North Mecklenburg graduate openly admitted his prejudices towards individuals of other races and ethnicities. Across all school sites, White females were the most likely to be in the "contact phase" of their racial development. The only White female of the six in the sample who was not in the contact phase was married to a Black man, and she discussed the realization that race "mattered" when she started dating her husband more than ten years ago and her family reacted negatively.

5) *Did experiences in desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults?*

Yes, experiences lead to the development of greater sensitivities to the complexities of race and class, particularly graduates of Independence and Garinger. Graduates repeatedly expressed the importance of their schooling experiences in being



able to better understand individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of their race/ethnicity.

While all high schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were somewhat diverse and operating under court-mandated desegregation order in 1996-1997, in-depth interviews revealed stark differences in how graduates from different racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds from different schools describe and make sense of their schooling experiences. Many themes that emerged from the interviews were anticipated and were part of the interview protocol, such as knowledge of the court mandate and interracial friendships. However, many of the unanticipated themes were surprisingly consistent across interviews, such as the role of cultural flexibility, the use of strategies to ensure admittance into particular schools, consistent perceptions of schools, and the consistent negative experience in junior high/middle school, among many others.

### Summary

What do we know about the perceptions of graduates from three different CMS high schools with varying racial compositions, specifically, their perceptions of desegregation schooling? While there undoubtedly were similarities between their experiences, graduates also had disparate opportunities and experiences depending upon the school they attended. There appear to be differences in long-term outcomes among interviewees from the three schools studied, with those from Independence and Garinger having the most positive long-term outcomes and North Mecklenburg exhibiting less positive outcomes. The majority of graduates interviewed were not aware of the court-ordered desegregation mandate, and those that were familiar had a background in history, law, and/or had a family member that attended CMS in the 70s. The majority of students

from North Mecklenburg and Independence saw themselves as graduates of a desegregated school (even though North Mecklenburg was not desegregated), while graduates of Garinger were more likely to say their school was segregated.

The racial composition of the school appears to affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development, with Independence and Garinger having the most opportunities for interracial contact and the most evidence of racial identity development, regardless of race/ethnicity. Overall, graduates of CMS exhibited evidence of a heightened sensitivity to race, class, and privilege in our society, although again, graduates of Garinger and Independence showed more evidence of this than did graduates of North Mecklenburg. Interviews with CMS graduates from 1995-1998 provided evidence that desegregation efforts in Charlotte, NC, were positive and meaningful, though they often had unintended as well as intended consequences.

## Chapter 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

“The question for us was how the children at the bottom of America’s social ladder could use their schools to develop rather than stunt their intellectual potential, how to provide at public expense for the least advantaged what the most advantaged bought privately for their own children.”

--Deborah Meier, Explaining the success of Central Park East Secondary School,  
in *The Power of their Ideas*, 2002, p. 19

Schools in large cities throughout the nation, schools such as Central Park East Secondary School in Harlem, provide students a high quality, rigorous academic education in an enriching, nurturing environment. Schools such as this have eradicated the achievement gap and provided all students with the opportunity to be successful in life, regardless of the advantages or disadvantages of their ascribed characteristics.

Theoretically, the goal of public education is to develop self-actualized, productive citizens who become active participants in our democratic society regardless of their personal or larger school community demographics. Empirically, however, in schools throughout the nation, academic success is most often predicted not by effort of the individual student, but by the demographics of the larger school community. Schools with concentrations of poor students of color typically provide an inadequate education. Equity-minded educational reforms have been utilized to counter the negative effects of the historical legacies of racism and classism that plague our democracy; yet, the effectiveness of such reforms is often doubted.

One of the most controversial equity-minded school reform efforts has been the desegregation of schools. Desegregation efforts came into the forefront of America’s consciousness when *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruled that separate schools

were inherently unequal. Battles through the courts led the way for school districts around the United States to figure out how to create diverse schools in highly segregated cities. Charlotte, NC, was placed in the national spotlight with the *Swann* decision that said school districts could use busing, if necessary, to integrate schools. From 1971-2002, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) existed under a court-ordered desegregation plan that was considered one of the most effective in the nation. Under this plan, Charlotte saw strong economic development, and CMS became a model urban school district. While short-term academic outcomes of Charlotte's desegregation plan were positive, little is known about the graduates who presumably benefitted from these wide scale community-based efforts.

While the annals of social science literature are filled with commentary and research regarding the benefits, failures, and outcomes of desegregated schooling, the majority of these studies are quantitative in nature, relying on short-term academic outcomes like test scores or grades as a measure of effectiveness. Such studies usually compare students in desegregated schools versus segregated schools, and draw conclusions based on indicators of success, such as end-of-grade test scores. Few studies delve into the complexities of schooling with qualitative research methods, and even fewer use the voices of graduates to tell the story of desegregation.

This study begins to fill this lacuna in the existing research by presenting a collective case study using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to delve into the experiences and perceptions of desegregated schooling. Survey data from 1997, yearbook analysis, DAQ survey data, and in-depth interviews coalesce to tell the stories of the graduates of three high schools in CMS from the late 1990s. These graduates

attended CMS schools from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and while the district was under a court-ordered desegregation plan, these schools had varying racial compositions at this time. Independence High School was the most racially diverse school in the district, Garinger High School was the most racially isolated Black school, and North Mecklenburg High School was the most racially isolated White school. This population of high school graduates has a unique yet unheard perspective regarding desegregation reform efforts.

Results from the DAQ survey and in-depth interviews indicate that experiences varied widely among the three schools. Graduates experienced a metaphorical ‘double-edged sword’ in which the racial composition of the school seemed to affect almost every aspect of schooling, either positively or negatively. In comparison to graduates of North Mecklenburg and Garinger, graduates of Independence had the most consistently positive short- and long-term academic and social benefits from their schooling experiences. Graduates of North Mecklenburg seemed to benefit academically and suffer socially; whereas graduates of Garinger seemed to benefit socially and suffer academically. Interestingly, the majority of interviewees were not aware that they attended schools under a court-ordered desegregation plan.

The final chapter of this dissertation will, first, provide an overview of the literature regarding graduates of desegregated schools and the methodology utilized for this collective case study. Next, it will overview the results and discuss the dual nature—the double-edged sword—of graduate experiences based on the racial composition of their school. Lastly, it will discuss policy implications, limitations of the study, future

research considerations, and the study's contribution to the social science literature on educational reform efforts, school level racial composition, and long-term outcomes of diverse schooling.

### Desegregated Schooling

Research on racial composition of schools and educational outcomes is generally in agreement—integrated schools benefit all students. However, the term “integrated” refers to schooling experiences that involve high quality interracial interactions and access to “high status academic and social positions” for *all* students, regardless of their race, SES, or language proficiency (Henderson et al., 1981). This is a high standard against which to measure a school, and the majority of diverse schools are merely *desegregated* rather than integrated, though the literature on diverse schools rarely distinguishes between the two. Defining terms is just one of many methodological issues that afflicts this topic; others include conflating race and SES, terms that are connected by not interchangeable; tracking, a practice that resegregates even desegregated schools; and the utilization of quality research.

Schools are often desegregated at the school level then resegregated at the classroom level. This is commonly referred to as ability grouping, second generation segregation, or tracking (Meier et al., 1989). Such school level organizational features were often developed as a compromise during the implementation of mandated desegregation plans (Oakes, 2005). Critics of desegregation were concerned that the academic rigor of a school would be negatively impacted (Welner, 1999). Such fears were allayed by the creation of advanced academic tracks (Gaillard, 2006). Such structures were quickly used to sort students, with the high level classes being

predominantly White and the low level classes being predominantly students of color (Mickelson, 2001; Oakes, 2005). Mickelson (2001) established that such tracks were widely utilized throughout CMS, and while the policy seemed innocuous and based on ability more so than student demographics, discriminatory sorting mechanisms prevailed. Even when controlled for similar ability, effort, background, and other factors, Blacks were consistently placed in a less strenuous academic track.

Because tracking is commonplace, it presents challenges for accurately describing and evaluating desegregation in schools. First, instead of examining schools holistically, scholars must analyze the racial composition of individual classes. While dismantling data to illuminate the often hidden patterns of student placement in academic classes is possible, such information is difficult to acquire. For this reason, research often uses school level racial composition instead of classroom racial composition, and as a result researchers can draw erroneous conclusions regarding desegregation. Secondly, students are nested in classes and in schools that exist within a larger school district. Sophisticated statistical models are needed to account for the nesting or hierarchical structure of data; otherwise, researchers make serious errors in data analysis. Sampling and statistical techniques to address these methodological issues have begun to be widely utilized in school composition research only in the past two decades; hence, in comparison to research from the 1970s and 1980s, research from the 1990s to present is generally more rigorous and of higher quality.

Since 2001, as a response to the mandates of NCLB and comparable state-level reforms like North Carolina's accountability mandate, the ABCs, a large amount of data from schools all over the country is available to educational researchers. As a result,

researchers are studying entire populations, versus samples of students. These data sets are far superior to earlier studies that used single district data and thus were not generalizable to all schools. In addition to using better data sets, researchers have developed an array of indicators for complex variables. For example, instead of relying on free/reduced lunch status as an indicator of SES, some researchers are combining the effects of mother and father's highest educational attainment, their occupational attainment, free/reduced lunch status, and mean income for a student's zip code to determine a more accurate description of a student's SES and neighborhood context.

In general, the development of research questions and studies regarding outcomes of diverse schooling have become more nuanced and refined in the past two decades, and thus, by using more sophisticated statistical tools and higher quality data, the studies are typically better designed. For this reason the majority of studies presented in this study's review of the literature are from the period since the 1990s to present. Yet, for any science to look to the future, it must first look to the past. Several studies from past decades are important in developing the theoretical base for much of the research on desegregation today.

*The Report on the Equality of Educational Opportunity*, often referred to as the Coleman Report, was released in 1966, two years after the Civil Rights Act and one year after the Voting Rights Act. The Coleman Report generally concluded that schools were important, but families were the most important predictor of a child's academic success. This report had a dramatic impact on public policy and educational research, the effects of which can still be felt today. However, when modern statistical techniques were utilized to conduct a reanalysis of Coleman's data, the main conclusion of the Coleman



Report was proven incorrect. Borman & Dowling (2010) indicate that in terms of educational outcomes, school effect is more important than family effect.

This development regarding Coleman's research demonstrates the challenges of outdated literature on schooling outcomes. Limited theoretical perspectives is one of the reasons modern research focuses more on the nuanced complexities inherent in studying schooling, particularly in studying long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling. Such research draws on three main theories, contact theory, perpetuation theory, and network theory. Contact theory says that contact is a necessary, but an insufficient condition for the reduction of racial prejudice (Allport, 1954). Building off contact theory, perpetuation theory assumes that greater interracial contact gradually leads to a decline in segregation (Braddock, 1980), thus positive interracial contact has multiple benefits, including the reduction of segregation, the reduction of prejudicial views, and the development of social networks, often described as "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1983). Network theory, on the other hand, is a more structural argument that suggests poor students and students of color are disadvantaged by the lack of access to informal networks that provide advantages in navigating public institutions and employment. Clearly, from a theoretical perspective, there are many advantages to diverse schools; however, it is unclear what implications the research based on these theories indicate.

The research on desegregated schools is typically divided into two sets of categories, academic or non-academic, or short-term versus long-term. Research on the short-term effects of desegregated schooling is fairly consistent in saying that desegregated schooling leads to improved academic performance (Boozer, Krueger & Wolkon, 1992; Borman et al., 2004; Crain & Mahard, 1983; Cook et al., 1984;

Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Schofield, 1995, 2001; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2006; Mickelson, 2003; Mickelson & Bottia, 2010a, 2010b; Trent, 1997). Research on the long-term effects of desegregated schools indicates that graduates benefit from a number of factors:

- (1) Greater levels of interracial contact and more positive intergroup attitudes and greater comfort with peers from different racial/ethnic groups (Black, 2002; Duncan et al., 2003; Jackson & Crane, 1986; Kurlaender & Yun, 2007; Pettigrew, 2004; Schofield, 1995; Trent, 1991; Wells et al., 2004, 2009);
- (2) More tolerant and inclusive viewpoints about individuals from different racial groups (Eaton, 1996; Ellison & Powers, 1994; Hawley, 2007; Killen, Crystal, & Ruck, 2007; Killen & McKown, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Wells, 1995; Wells et al., 2009; Wood & Sonleitner, 1996);
- (3) Increased promotion of college or enrollment in college (Braddock & McPartland, 1983; Boozer et al., 1992; Crain & Mahard, 1983; Hallinan & Williams, 1989; Kurlaender & Yun, 2005; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000; Schofield, 1995);
- (4) An increased sense of civic engagement (Gurin et al., 2002; Kurlander & Yun, 2001, 2007; Ma & Kurlander, 2005; Wells & Crain, 1994);
- (5) Greater likelihood of working in diverse environments (Braddock et al., 1994; Braddock, Dawkins, & Trent, 1994; Braddock & McPartland, 1989; Duncan et al., 2003; Gurin et al. 2002; Kurlaender & Yun, 2001; Schofield, 1995; Stearns, 2010; Trent, 1997; Wells, 2005);

(6) Increased interaction with other racial groups in the future (Braddock & McPartland, 1989; Crain, 1984; Kurlaender & Yun, 2001; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Orfield, M. & Luce, 2005; Schofield, 1991; Schofield, 1995; Wells and Crain, 1994).

In contrast, research on the long-term effects of segregated schools indicates that graduates from schools with Black and Hispanic students tend to have more negative outcomes when compared to desegregated schools. These outcomes include the following:

- (1) Lower graduation rates (Swanson, 2004, Balfanz & Legters, 2004);
- (2) Lower academic performance (Armor, 2006; Borman & Dowling, 2010; Borman et al., 2004; Brown-Jeffy, 2006, 2009; Harris, 2006; Mickelson, 2001, 2006; Southworth, 2008);
- (3) Frequent teacher turnover (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004, 2005; Jackson, 2009; and Loeb et al., 2005.);
- (4) Less qualified and less experienced teachers (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Freeman et al., 2005; Jackson, 2009; Lankford et al., 2002);
- (5) Fewer educational resources (Carey, 2004; Picus, 1994);
- (6) Schools more often located in high poverty, high crime areas (Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smrekar, & Taylor, 2006);
- (7) Graduates continue to live and work in segregated communities (Braddock, 1980; Braddock & McPortland, 1983, 1989).

While the outcomes of desegregated schools are significant, the most important role of a *desegregated* school is to prevent the damaging effects that occur when a child attends a

racially *segregated* school. Additionally, desegregated schools are important not only to improve academic achievement but also to promote social cohesion among diverse members of the society.

Long-term outcomes of desegregated schools indicate that students benefit socially in multiple ways, particularly in regards to interacting with individuals from a different racial/ethnic background. Such interaction is not only important for developing relationships, but also for the development of personal identity. Limited research indicates that desegregated schools serve as positive mediators of racial identity for White students and students of color, while racially isolated schools could inhibit personal identity development of all students (Carter, 2005, 2010; Tatum, 1992). In this way, racial identity development can be seen as the mechanism positively affected by desegregated schools that leads students to increased positive intergroup attitudes.

Racial identity development is a complex process, and schools play a critical role. Due to segregated housing patterns and segregated houses of prayer, schools are the only opportunity many students have for interracial contact. In the United States Students are in school for up to 8 hours a day, 180 days a year. The sheer quantity of time that students spend in school deeply impacts their development of the self. During the most critical years in the developmental period, when identity markers are deeply consequential, many students “find meanings in how classrooms and school activities are organized and the degrees to which they are encouraged to interact with one another both socially and academically” (Carter, 2010, 21). In this way, a positive schooling environment inclusive of all students leads to the development of a positive self-identity, regardless of race.

Racial identity development is also a fluid process, with individuals often moving forward and backwards in awareness. This was described by Cross (1971, 1991, 1995, 2001) and Helms (1986,1993) who found that racial identity development is somewhat different for Black and White students. Regardless of your race or ethnicity, a progression of awareness regarding race takes several stages. The first stage, “contact” for Whites and “pre-encounter” for Blacks generally says that the individual does not acknowledge race, either by using a Eurocentric perspective that negates the importance of Afrocentricity or through the use of a color-blind ideology. Many Whites, particularly those that live, work, and attend schools in segregated environments, never move beyond the contact stage. In contrast, Black students typically move to the second stage in their teens. The second stage for Blacks is called “encounter” and refers to an individual having an encounter that allows the individual to identify himself or herself as Black. Most commonly, this is a negative experience. From encounter, Blacks begin to dismantle their previous “unraced” identity and create meaning of what it means to be Black. Presumably, this creation of a Black identity is more positive in an environment that views Blacks in a more affirmative way. Therefore, in comparison to racially isolated schools, desegregated schools could provide Black students with a more positive identity.

The second stage of identity development for Whites, on the other hand, is referred to as “disintegration,” and refers to the awareness of the pervasive nature of racism, even though the individual is not yet comfortable acknowledging their White identity. In the next stage, referred to as “reintegration,” a White individual identifies racism, identifies as White, but is unable to take action to counter or address the effects of racism. This lack of action often turns to fear, anger, or apathy.

The last stage of racial identity development, “autonomy” for Whites and “commitment” for Blacks, is characterized by an individual acknowledging the systemic impact of race in society, the limitations of a Eurocentric view of the world, and the oppressive “racial smog” (Tatum, 2008) that often, in an unconscious manner, subdues every member of society. Such individuals, whether White or Black, are able to take action to counter racism and consciously act in a non-oppressive manner.

Theoretically, desegregated schools facilitate positive racial identity development in several ways. For Black students, desegregated environments often include experiences where their identity as a Black person is seen as positive. In contrast, in a majority White school, students could experience being Black as not highly valued or actively devalued, especially if Blacks are tracked into lower classes. For both White and Black students, desegregated schooling environments provide interracial contact that often creates cognitive dissonance between racial stereotypes and racial experiences. Such cognitive dissonance allows students to critically analyze the role of race in society and actively disregard the use of a color-blind ideology or the blind acceptance of the myth of the meritocracy, i.e. the belief that success is only based on ability and effort, rather than systems of privilege generally benefiting White people. Such awareness in turn leads to more tolerant and inclusive viewpoints of diverse people. In this way, positive racial identity development benefits individuals and the greater community by reducing interracial conflict, promoting cross-racial understandings, and ultimately decreasing systemic racism and prejudice (Tatum, 1992).

Students that have an advanced racial identity development, meaning they are aware of the role that race plays in modern life and consciously act in with a non-

oppressive manner, are often described as being “bi-cultural” (Darden, 1991) or “culturally flexible” (Carter, 2005, 2010). Culturally flexible individuals are able to traverse social and symbolic boundaries, and embrace multiple identities. Such individuals can maintain a positive identity as a member of several identity groups simultaneously, thereby reducing internal conflicts and negative psychological impact and providing benefits from the “personal and emotional growth” that accompanies a multicultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p.401). Studies of “bicultural” students demonstrate that they produce more positive academic, social, and psychological outcomes, compared to their “monocultural” peers (Carter, 2010, 2005; Darden, 1991; LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Desegregated schools are central to the development of culturally flexible students because they provide an opportunity for students to navigate separate social and cultural spheres. Additionally, a host of individual and psychological factors can determine cultural flexibility, including self-concept, attitudes, and values (Carter, 2005; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Obviously, self-views, including racial identity development, are important in becoming culturally flexible, but the link between self-views and academic success, participation, willingness to move across boundaries, and long-term outcomes as adults has not been extensively studied. Carter (2010) was one of the first to examine associations between self-esteem, academic success, extracurricular placement and cultural flexibility for Black students, and she determined that Black students in racially diverse schools scored higher on the cultural flexibility scale than those in majority-White schools.

This discussion regarding racial identity development and cultural flexibility is

largely dependent on theory, for theory predicts, and many studies suggest, that desegregated schools increase interracial contact and increased contact leads to positive racial identity development as well as the development of cultural flexibility for some students. Yet, “the consequences of intergroup experiences are very much dependent on the structure of the contact situation” (Carter, 2010). Decades of research have shown that schools are complex cultural sites with extreme variation between classrooms and individuals. Researchers have also shown that desegregated schools have more positive academic and social outcomes than racially segregated schools. Furthermore, due to the role of desegregated schools in promoting advanced racial identity development and cultural flexibility, such schools are beneficial for ALL students, not merely those who are at-risk of being given a substandard education. In particular, desegregated schools benefit White students and students of color by promoting community cohesiveness. However, diverse schools becoming less common in communities throughout the United States, including Charlotte, NC.

Nationally, schools are resegregating at an alarming rate. In 2006, 2.4 million students were educated in hypersegregated schools where the student population is 99-100% non-White (Orfield & Lee, 2006). Although segregation is often considered a problem that afflicts Black and Latino students, White students remain the most racially isolated. A typical White public school student attends a school that is nearly 80% White, however, White students comprise less than 60% of public school students in the United States (Orfield, 2007).

Since 1999 in the wake of the initial declaration of unitary status, schools in Charlotte have become increasingly segregated. Following Supreme Court’s upholding of



CMS's unitary status in 2001, Charlotte instituted a neighborhood school-based choice enrollment plan. In 2001-2002, one year before the choice plan went into effect, 7 schools in the area were 90+% non-White. In 2006-2007, just four years later, 32 elementary schools were 90%+ non-White. CMS contends that the district remains committed to equity. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 it rescinded the policy creating an Equity Committee that was charged with presenting an annual report outlining policy recommendations.

Presently, CMS counters the socioeconomic segregation of schools with various equity-minded reforms, including magnet schools, differentiated funding structures, strategic staffing initiatives, and personnel support for low-performing high poverty schools. While such district-based initiatives seem to be somewhat effective in slightly improving end-of-grade test scores for some schools, the quality of schooling in CMS is generally indicative of the racial and socioeconomic composition of such schools—the higher the poverty, the lower the academic performance.

### The Study

Schooling is a complex process; therefore, it would be difficult to adequately understand perceptions of graduates who attended desegregated schools utilizing one data source. For this reason, through the lens of critical theory, I present a collective case study on the graduates of three Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools from 1995-1998 by weaving together both qualitative and quantitative information, including several methods: (1) archival data from a survey administered to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in 1997 (referred to as the 1997 survey); (2) survey responses from the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ); (3) document analysis of yearbooks; and (4) in-depth interviews.

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence that develop into converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2003). Moreover, triangulation of data promotes accuracy in developing conclusions.

#### Critical Theory as Theoretical Framework

Theories can be used not only to understand social phenomenon—individuals, situations, and structures—but also to change them (Anyon, 2009). This study investigated the experiences of graduates of desegregated schools through the lens of critical theory. Critical theory was used as a map or a guide to the social sphere, and as such did not determine how I, as the researcher, saw the topic, but instead assisted in formulating the questions and strategies for exploring the perceptions of desegregated schooling from the voices of graduates from the late 1990s in CMS.

Critical theorists assert that research is based on interpretations and therefore not considered a value-free exercise (Denzin, 1994; Jardine, 1998). To utilize critical theory, researchers must develop a “consciousness of oneself as a product of power-driven sociohistorical forces” (Kincheloe & McLaran, 2002, p. 96), and operate with an awareness of this hegemonic ideology (Lemke, 1995). As a critical researcher, I acknowledge that my vision of reality is socially constructed by dominant ideological practices and discourses that are difficult to perceive. Such discourses often unknowingly shape the way in which I construct meaning, including the analyses of this study. For this reason, this study was designed to incorporate multiple streams of data to inform results and conclusions. In addition, I provided a subjectivity statement as well as a personal forward to explain my own personal history and how my lived experiences intersect with this research.

The lens of critical theory most often involves the integration of multiple disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, cultural studies, literary theory, history, political science, and sociology in order to better understand and expose the structures and processes that undergird and perpetuate social inequality and oppression (Payne & Barbera, 2010). For this reason, the literature review for this study spans many disciplines and attempts to provide ample educational, sociopolitical, psychological, sociological and historical background to better understand the nuances and complexities inherent in schooling experiences I analyze in this study.

Critical theory is concerned with issues of power; matters of race, class, gender; ideologies; discourses; culture, institutions and how these forces interact to construct a social system (Anyon, 2009; Giroux, 1983, 1988; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Critical theory questions and challenges assumptions that flow from these forces (Giroux, 1983, 1988). The design of the study incorporated a loose interview protocol in which respondents could determine their own meaning and importance of their schooling experiences. Furthermore, critical theory does not seek only to understand or explain social phenomenon, but rather it strives to critique and change society as a whole (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). This study was designed to understand CMS graduates' perceptions of their schooling experiences with the intention that this understanding will lead to an awareness of how their perceptions could impact their roles as community members in advocating for diverse schools. In this way, the research was designed to understand a population, so that population could possibly be mobilized as a force for change.

While critical theorists acknowledge that schools play a major role in reproducing current patterns of social stratification (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), critical theorists such as Giroux (1988) and hooks (2003) contest this deterministic perspective and view schools as venues of hope that can become sites of resistance and democratic possibility. This study was designed, conceptualized, and analyzed within this paradigm of belief that schools can “become institutions where forms of knowledge, values, and social relations are taught for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment rather than subjugation” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.94). The interviews present valuable narratives of graduates which illuminate this possibility within diverse schools, and the role that racial composition plays in critical empowerment. Based on the results of this study, the interview data suggests that desegregated schools and classrooms, such as Independence, and the advanced classes at Garinger, promote empowerment of individuals more so than racially isolated schools and classrooms, such as those found at North Mecklenburg and the racially isolated lower tracks at Garinger.

Critical theory also contends that human agency provides individuals with a powerful tool for change (Giroux, 1983; 1988; hooks, 2003; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Critical theorists “understand a much more subtle, ambiguous, and situationally specific form of domination that refuses the propaganda model’s assumption that people are passive, easily manipulated victims” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.98). This study framed the experiences of graduates not as acts committed by schools to students but instead as experiences shaped by the graduates themselves as they have navigated their lives. As demonstrated by the in-depth interviews, the graduates of CMS from the late 1990s exerted their own personal agency in their schooling experiences. Possibly, this

sense of personal agency can be continued. As the general population of graduates of desegregated schools can now be empowered as adults and parents of school-age or soon-to-be school-age children, this population has the potential to be a powerful source of change for the future of America's schools.

### Research Questions

The overarching research question of this study is: How do graduates of Independence High School, Garinger High School, and North Mecklenburg High School from 1995-1998 describe and make sense of their schooling experiences, particularly in regards to interracial contact, racial identity development and diverse understandings of greater society? My subsidiary questions and the data sources employed to answer the questions (see in parentheses) include the following:

- (1) Were there differences in long-term outcomes of graduates between the three schools? (DAQ, Interviews)
- (2) Were graduates aware that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were under a court-ordered desegregation plan during their years of schooling? Did graduates see themselves as part of a segregated or desegregated school? (Interviews)
- (3) Did the racial composition and organizational structure of schools affect opportunities for interracial contact and racial identity development? (DAQ, interviews, yearbook analysis)
- (4) Did experiences in desegregated schooling lead students to develop a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults? (DAQ, interviews)

## Design

These questions were answered with the help of a diverse set of methods that I will now discuss in more detail. The archival dataset used in this study was originally collected in 1997 by Roslyn Mickelson. She administered a survey to a random sample of 12<sup>th</sup> grade English classes in all CMS high schools. The survey (see Appendix A) produced over 200 variables, thus providing a rich context used to paint a picture of the student body of each selected school in 1997. I used simple crosstab comparisons of key variables in order to explore the differences and similarities between North Mecklenburg High School, Garinger High School, and Independence High School. Drawing on the work of Clotfelter (2002, 2004), I also analyzed yearbooks from each site to identify general trends regarding interracial contact in non-academic settings. The analysis is simplistic, and consists of counting the number of White and non-White students and staff members pictured in the yearbook. The emphasis is on interracial contact in extracurricular activities.

I also used the DAQ to assess CMS graduates' attitudes toward their schooling experiences. The DAQ is a 70-question survey originally designed by The Civil Rights Project (2001) to administer to high school students in a classroom setting. I modified the survey to use it with graduates in an Internet format and administered it using an online survey site ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Graduates accessed the link, filled out the survey, and noted whether they would be interested in participating in a phone interview to discuss their schooling experiences. Respondents that indicated they would agree to be interviewed were later contacted.

For consistency of research and purposeful sampling of diverse respondents, each school site included 12 interviews – six male, six female; four White, four Black, and four non-White and non-Black (including Latino/a, Asian, and multiracial) respondents. Interviews were conducted over the phone and followed a general interview protocol with 30 questions (see Appendix D). Interviews lasted from 19 minutes to 128 minutes, with the average time being 50 minutes.

The prime challenge in conducting this study was the difficulty in accessing graduates. Prior studies of graduates used existing databases to contact respondents; these databases were usually created for class reunions. The three schools identified for this study, however, did not have reunions, and existing databases of graduates were not available. To access graduates, I utilized a combination of loose personal and professional networks and Facebook, a social networking website. The most common method of reaching graduates was using the school page function of Facebook. In the search function, one can identify the name of the high school and the year of the graduating class and a list of all graduates fitting those criteria will be produced. Using the yearbooks and lists of graduates from this search, I then sent Facebook messages with the link to the modified DAQ survey. I also posted the survey link on school websites and school Facebook pages. Using these various techniques, 192 graduates from 11 different high schools completed the survey. The responses from the three school sites were filtered out and compiled.

Due to the unconventional sampling procedures, the non-random sample, and small sample size, the results of the DAQ data were not suitable for advanced statistical procedures. Consequently, descriptive statistics were used to compare responses between

the three target schools. The descriptive comparisons between schools served as important context for the interviews, and were invaluable in understanding the processes described during the interview process. Generally, interviewees were contacted following the completion of the DAQ survey with only one exception: of the 36 interviews, 35 completed the DAQ.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, checked for accuracy, read numerous times, and then analyzed in several ways. Instead of using data analysis software, I coded all transcripts manually. I used the following procedure: (1) I created a spreadsheet with 42 data points for each respondent; (2) Once the spreadsheet was completed for each school site, specific themes began to emerge; (3) Data points were then reorganized by grouping respondents by race, class, gender, and language proficiency (several respondents were non-native English speakers); and (4) After looking for themes in these spreadsheets, I returned to the transcripts and identified key words and developed a list of emerging themes grouped into broad categories. These categories were the most powerful themes that developed from the data and in combination with the other data sources, particularly the DAQ, they became the main findings of the study. Results then emerged from data from the various sources that were triangulated.

## Results

The yearbook analysis, archival dataset, DAQ, and interviews described school sites that provided a dramatically different social, academic, and racial context for student learning and interracial contact. Overall, the collective case study revealed substantial differences related to school racial composition among the perceptions of graduates regarding their schooling experiences.



*School Sites in 1997*

In 1997, Garinger, located on the East side of Charlotte within a racially diverse, yet socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood, received little financial support from local businesses or the PTA. It was 63% Black in 1996-1997. Even though students there felt less safe than at Independence or North Mecklenburg, the yearbook analysis, DAQ, and interviews described high rates of interracial contact and a racially diverse staff. Some respondents reported racial tension; however, the majority of graduates described the social climate of the school as comfortable, yet academically inadequate. The higher-level academic tracks were fairly diverse; yet, the lower academic tracks were predominantly African-American.

The demographics of Independence approximated the demographics of Charlotte in 1996-1997. The student body was 57% White and 35% Black, and the staff was predominantly White. Independence was located on the Southeast side of Charlotte on the edge of Mecklenburg County in Mint Hill, NC, an area generally considered suburban and middle-class in 1996-1997. Students had high levels of interracial contact in classes and in a wide variety of extracurricular activities. While some graduates reported racial tension, the school climate was generally supportive of differences and was often described as harmonious by the respondents. Independence was known for a strong athletics program; a strong academic program, including International Baccalaureate; and the school received generous community support from local businesses and the PTA.

North Mecklenburg, on the other hand, was located on the Northern edge of the county in Huntersville, NC, an area generally considered rural and middle to upper-middle class. In 1997, there was a tremendous amount of economic development in the

Northern part of the county, and North Mecklenburg was above its capacity (the respondents commonly referred to it as over-crowded). In 1996-1997 North Mecklenburg was racially isolated White, with only 22% of the student population being Black. Interviews revealed stark differences between students based on their socioeconomic status. Archival data suggests that the overall SES of North Mecklenburg was higher than Independence and Garinger. However, interview data also suggests that there was a large discrepancy between students in different economic brackets. Interracial contact was not common, and half of the pictured extracurricular activities were racially segregated White. While students said they felt safe at North Mecklenburg, the school had higher levels of reported racial tension than the other school sites, and respondents talked at length about the negative school climate surrounding race. The staff was predominantly White and the graduates noted that the topic of race was mostly avoided by staff members and students. Like other schools, tracking was widespread, and higher-level tracks usually had only token representation of non-White students. Nevertheless, North Mecklenburg had the highest percentage of students identified as gifted and the highest percentage of students enrolled in college preparatory classes of the three high schools involved in this study; however, advanced classes were predominantly White (often with no Black students or token representation) while lower level classes had a disproportionate amount of Black students.

### *Teacher Quality*

The archival dataset indicates that the teacher quality among the schools was fairly similar, yet there were some differences in academic indicators. Independence and North Mecklenburg had average math and verbal SAT scores around 500, while

Garinger's average was 60 points lower. Garinger and Independence had 51% of the student body enrolled in college preparatory classes, compared to 65% of North Mecklenburg. Garinger had the lowest number of certified gifted students (14%), with less than half the percentage of North Mecklenburg (31%).

#### *External Support*

There were also differences in economic indicators. The total amounts raised by PTA were dramatically different, with Garinger raising \$7781—a fraction of what Independence (\$39403) and North Mecklenburg (\$34198) raised in the same year. While educational attainment levels for parents were similar between schools, 80% of students at North Mecklenburg lived with two parents, compared to 53% of students at Garinger. When compared to graduates of North Mecklenburg and Independence, students at Garinger were less likely to receive a newspaper, have a computer at home, or take private lessons for dance, music, or art. Students at all schools had similar self-reported levels of effort and educational aspirations. Few generalizations can be made based on this descriptive data; however, overall, students from North Mecklenburg and Independence appeared to have benefitted from more general financial and academic advantages than students who attended Garinger.

#### *Diversity Assessment Questionnaire Results*

Due to a small, self-selected sample, results from the DAQ are not generalizable to the general school population of each school site, Garinger's sample size was 32, Independence N=21, North Mecklenburg N=25; however, interesting patterns did emerge. Among all school sites, the majority of students had bus rides of less than 30 minutes, with many students not riding the bus at all. In addition, graduates of all schools

reported racial tension between groups of students, however the highest levels of racial tension were associated with North Mecklenburg, the racially isolated White school.

Overall, the findings from the DAQ indicate that the respondents from the three selected schools had positive outcomes in terms of several non-academic long-term outcomes of desegregated schooling. Those include greater comfort with individuals from different racial/ethnic groups, improvement of outlooks and viewpoints concerning race relations, increased sense of civic engagement, increased capacity to work in integrated environments with positive experiences, and increased interaction with other racial groups (such as living and working in diverse environments).

#### *Answers to Research Sub Questions*

Collectively, graduates described their schooling experiences positively, while simultaneously acknowledging the positive and negative aspects of their schooling—an awareness I describe as a metaphoric double-edged sword. Independence had diverse classrooms and extracurricular activities, therefore fostering higher rates of interracial contact than the other two school sites. Garinger had high levels of interracial contact in most extracurricular activities; yet, except for the advanced track, classrooms at Garinger were segregated. In contrast, the advanced track at North Mecklenburg had token non-White representation, while the regular track was predominantly Black. North Mecklenburg also had highly segregated extracurricular activities.

#### *Long-term Outcomes*

The data suggest that the most racially desegregated school, Independence, had the most favorable outcomes in regard to long-term non-academic outcomes, with Garinger, the racially isolated Black school, having the second most favorable outcomes.

When compared to North Mecklenburg, graduates of Garinger and Independence were more likely to have interracial friendships and work and live in diverse environments. North Mecklenburg, the racially isolated White school, did not seem to exhibit favorable outcomes, with over 60% of graduates specifying that their high school experience did not increase their sense of civic engagement, improve their outlook regarding race, nor increase their comfort in working with individuals who are from different backgrounds than themselves.

#### *Knowledge of Desegregation Mandate*

Arguably, the most surprising finding of this study given the district's historic role in U.S. desegregation history, is that the majority of respondents did not know that CMS was under a court-ordered desegregation plan during the years they attended schools. Students from Garinger were far more likely to know about the mandate than students from North Mecklenburg. From all school sites, of the 13 graduates that were aware of the mandate, 12 had family members that were a part of desegregation efforts in the late 1970s and/or had a background in history or law. Many students who knew of the desegregation mandate were not familiar with the name of the court case associated with the mandate, *Swann*. Students of color were more likely to be familiar with the mandate or court cases than White students. The majority of graduates were somewhat familiar with *Brown* (1954) but not familiar with *Swann* (1971). Students from Independence and Garinger referenced specific teachers that covered the court cases in class, while graduates from North Mecklenburg were the least aware and often expressed confusion over the term "desegregation."

In 1997, of the three school sites, Independence was the only school that fit the definition of desegregation as stated by *Swann* (1971). When asked whether they attended desegregated schools, all graduates of Independence said “yes”; however, 9 graduates (or 75%) from North Mecklenburg said, “yes,” even though the school was not desegregated. The three students from North Mecklenburg who said they were in a segregated school were students of color. While Garinger was diverse, and would be considered desegregated today, based on the 1997 demographics of CMS, this was not the case. Only 2 graduates said Garinger was desegregated, a White female and a Black male.

#### *Interracial Contact and Racial Identity Development*

The racial composition and organizational structure of the school affected interracial contact and racial identity development. Every interviewee, regardless of the school they attended, discussed tracking (utilizing many different terms) in all levels of their schooling—elementary, middle, and high school. In addition, all respondents indicated some aspect of their racial identity development through the interview process. Racial identity development was analyzed in a binary fashion. Individuals either exhibited some evidence of acknowledging the social significance of race and SES, or they did not. In this way, according to Cross’ theory, graduates exhibiting no evidence of advanced identity development would be in the “pre-encounter stage,” while according to Helms’ theory, graduates would be in the “contact stage.” Students from Garinger and Independence exhibited more advanced racial identity development (were more likely to *not* be in the “pre-encounter” or “contact stage”), while the majority of students interviewed from North Mecklenburg were in the beginning stage of racial identity

development, regardless of their race or ethnicity. One North Mecklenburg graduate openly admitting his prejudices towards individuals of other races and ethnicities.

Data from interviews indicates that in comparison to graduates of North Mecklenburg, students at Independence and Garinger exhibited a more advanced racial identity development and more evidence of being culturally flexible. Across all school sites, White females were the most likely to be in the “contact phase” of their racial development while Black females typically showed the most advanced racial identity development.

#### *Sensitivities to the Complexities of Race and Class*

Based on the findings from the in-depth interviews, graduates of Independence and Garinger developed a greater sensitivity to the complexities of race and social class as adults, particularly when compared to the generally unaware graduates of North Mecklenburg. Interestingly, across all school sites, White females were the least likely to demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of race and class in America, and were more likely to use a color-blind ideology than male or non-White respondents.

Overall, as a group, graduates of Independence and Garinger were more likely to exhibit nuanced understanding of issues regarding race and class. These graduates repeatedly expressed the importance of their schooling experiences in being able to more effectively communicate with individuals regardless of their race/ethnicity. Graduates of Independence and Garinger stressed the importance of their schooling experiences in preparing them to interact effectively and comfortably in diverse environments, particularly in the workplace.

*Findings from In-Depth Interviews*

In 1997, all CMS high schools operated under a court-mandated desegregation order that supposedly maintained generally equal racial compositions; however, based on the demographics of the schools in this study, the desegregation plan was clearly not implemented as the court order originally intended. In-depth interviews reveal stark differences in how graduates from different racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds from different schools describe and make sense of their schooling experiences. Many themes were part of the interview protocol and were expected to emerge during interviews, such as knowledge of the court mandate and interracial friendships. However, many themes were unanticipated, yet surprisingly consistent across interviews, such as the development of cultural flexibility, the use of strategies to ensure admittance into particular schools, perceptions of schools, and the negative experience of junior high/middle school, among many others. These themes are briefly described as follows:

- (1) *We were under a court mandate?* Students were not aware of the court mandate and generally unable to articulate a definition of desegregation.
- (2) *Busing:* Students discussed busing, and directly linked the concept of busing to desegregation; yet, many students chose not to ride the bus for various reasons, and if they did ride, their ride was less than 30 minutes.
- (3) *Diversity as Black and White:* Graduates demonstrated common conception of diversity as Black and White while little to no emphasis was placed on language, religion, ability, or sexual preference. Non-White and non-Black students talked



about the challenges of attending schools, particularly at the elementary level, where they might be the only “other” in their class.

- (4) *Dealing with Differences:* All graduates discussed the general trend of avoiding discussions in school around issues of culture, race, and class. The only exceptions to this came from rare staff members that facilitated discussions at Independence and Garinger.
- (5) *Elementary School versus Middle School:* The majority of graduates described elementary schools as peaceful and harmonious and middle school/junior high as hotbeds of conflict.
- (6) *School Strategies: Maneuvers, Magnets, Private Schools, and Homeschooling:* 26 out of 36 respondents described using some sort of schooling strategy to avoid attending a specific school in CMS from 1984-1998. Strategies varied depending on the SES of the family. All families used magnet programs as a first resort. If the lottery attempt was not successful, students with higher SES were more likely to move or enroll in private schools, while working class families were more likely to use alternative addresses or homeschool students.
- (7) *School Reputations versus School Realities:* Across all grade levels, schools that were located in predominantly White, middle class neighborhoods were considered “better” schools than those located in majority non-White, economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. This perception corresponded to public opinions that were often inaccurate.

- (8) *Interracial Contact*: Students at Independence and Garinger seemed to have frequent, organic, interracial contact, whereas students at North Mecklenburg were racially isolated in academic tracks and extracurricular activities.
- (9) *Tracking*: Tracking was widespread at all three school sites and dramatically affected the academic and social development of students.
- (10) *Academic Preparation*: Students at Independence and North Mecklenburg received a more rigorous academic program than students at Garinger. Among all school levels, graduates indicated that predominantly Black schools offered less rigorous academic opportunities.
- (11) *Racial Identity Development*: Presumably due to increased interracial contact, graduates of Independence and Garinger demonstrated more advanced racial identity development than graduates of North Mecklenburg.
- (12) *Sensitivities to the complexities of Race and Class*: Graduates of Garinger and Independence were more likely to criticize the use of a color-blind ideology and the adherence to the myth of meritocracy.
- (13) *Diverse Schools*: 35 out of 36 respondents stated that diverse schools were important. Graduates of Garinger and Independence were more critical of the district's role in providing diverse schools, whereas graduates of North Mecklenburg generally accepted the neighborhood school concept, regardless of the effect of having neighborhood schools in a city with stark residential segregation. Graduates of Garinger and Independence actively sought diverse schools for their children.

### Discussion: The Double-Edged Sword of Schooling Experiences

Graduates from Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg High Schools described experiences that are akin to a metaphoric double-edged sword. This metaphor describes a situation with both positive and negative consequences. It is also a tool that can be used for dual purposes—to help or to harm. Such were the experiences of the 32 interviewees with CMS desegregation.

#### *Racial Composition*

The primary finding is that when it comes to the outcomes of desegregation efforts, racial composition is critical. Garinger was 63% Black in 1996-1997, Independence was 36% Black, while North Mecklenburg was 22% Black. In all indicators, the most racially diverse school, Independence, had the most positive outcomes. North Mecklenburg, the most racially homogenous school, had the least favorable outcomes. Garinger had favorable social outcomes with negative academic outcomes.

To discuss the general finding, school racial composition is the lens through which all other findings are refracted. Racial composition has a mediating effect on the processes in the schools that ultimately determine long-term outcomes. School racial composition seemed to effect a myriad areas of graduates' lives, including the following: busing, school level resources, academic rigor, perceived teacher quality, interracial contact and group relations, school climate, and long-term outcomes.

The topic of busing is often identified as a necessary tool for schooling. Students and parents would prefer to have a school within walking distance of every residential area, but this is not the way Charlotte, NC, was planned. As such, busing was considered

necessary but it was also seen as an often negative aspect of schooling experiences, providing an example to the metaphorical double-edged sword.

Ironically, busing is often criticized as a tool to create diverse schools. Yet, prior to the 1970s, busing was used as a tool for segregation. In many Southern communities, busses were only provided to White students. When busses began to be used for Black students, usually in the 1960s, they were used to bus students past White schools to poor quality, segregated Black schools. In Charlotte, NC, from 1971-2002, busses were used to transport groups of students from racially isolated neighborhoods to racially desegregated schools. Throughout the district, the burden of busing was most often placed on poor students of color. Busing is the quintessential double-edged sword, for it has been used to both segregate and desegregate Charlotte's schools. Yet when used for desegregation, Black and White students experienced busing differently. The majority of students, White, Black, and other, acknowledged the importance and use of busing as a tool to create a desired effect—diverse schools. Based on the overall design of the desegregation plan, White students were typically bussed out of their neighborhoods for 3-6 years, versus Black students who were bussed out of their neighborhoods for 7-10 years. Black students were more often bussed out of their neighborhoods at a younger age, for farther distances, with longer bus rides. Yet, the small amount of anti-busing discourse in the interviews came from White students.

Educational equity has long been framed as an issue of financial resources. School districts fund schools based on per pupil enrollment. Additional funding support is also provided by donations of local businesses, individuals, and the PTA. The lack of advertisements in the Garinger yearbook along with the lack of money raised by the PTA,

indicated that Garinger did not receive adequate financial community support. Respondents from Garinger frequently mentioned the inferior school facility they experienced. They described bathrooms with no doors, not enough textbooks for all students in a classroom, and a general lack of technology in the school building. One graduate went so far as to describe Garinger as “being like that Westside High place in the movie *Stand and Deliver*.” In contrast, these issues never emerged during interviews with graduates of Independence and North Mecklenburg. School level resources were perceived by Garinger graduates as inadequate, whereas graduates of Independence and North Mecklenburg never mentioned a lack of resources.

Academic achievement is the number one goal for schools, yet the school’s ability to prepare students academically appeared to be affected by the racial composition of the school. Independence had rigorous academic programs by all measures, including high academic achievement based on standardized testing, advanced course offerings, and most importantly, graduates that were college ready. Graduates of Independence had the highest rate of undergraduate and graduate level completion and consistently described being prepared for college. North Mecklenburg had the lowest percentage of students with college degrees (with no respondent holding an advanced degree), however, the five students who attended college report being prepared academically their freshman year. Garinger felt the negative impact of racial composition on all indicators of academic achievement. The majority of students described classes with low expectations for student participation and quality of work. Furthermore, graduates of Garinger repeatedly described reaching college and being wholly unprepared for college level work, and struggling through their first semesters. The racial composition of Independence seemed

to benefit graduates academically, whereas graduates of North Mecklenburg and Garinger were negatively affected in different ways. Garinger grads were more likely to attend college and be unprepared for college, whereas North Mecklenburg students (particularly students of color) were less likely to attend college, however those that did attend, were somewhat successful.

While the number of teachers with more than three years experience and the number of teachers with advanced degrees were similar across all school sites. The perceived quality of teachers and instruction was dissimilar. Again, racial composition seemed to mediate perceived teacher quality, with students from Independence having the more accomplished teachers and teachers from Garinger being less rigorous. There were “bright spots,” teachers who were devoted to high levels of teaching and learning for students at Garinger, but the general consensus was that teachers at Garinger were not adequate. Graduates of Independence repeatedly described a culture of teaching and learning in which teachers took pride in demanding high expectations and students were pushed to high levels of achievement. North Mecklenburg students did not refer to teachers that were excellent or abysmal; instead, graduates remarked upon the overall competency of the teaching staff.

Schools had dramatically different rates of interracial contact. Independence was the most diverse school, and had the highest rates of interracial contact in extracurricular activities. Out of over 65 student organizations pictured in the yearbook, only seven were racially isolated. Students from Independence were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and these activities were more likely to include substantial interracial contact. Students at Garinger and North Mecklenburg High were less likely to

participate in extracurricular activities, and when students did participate, these activities had fewer opportunities for interracial contact. In this way, racial composition at the school level became a clear predictor for opportunities for racial contact. Since interracial contact is a theoretical prerequisite for the reduction of prejudice, lowered opportunities for meaningful interracial contact has a negative impact on interracial group relations.

Differing racial compositions of schools also seemed to have an effect on the overall school culture, particularly in developing an environment that valued diversity of thought, culture, and experiences. Adult respondents from Independence and Garinger reported greater levels of acceptance and interracial contact and friendship, and more developed racial identity development, while reporting less tension and racial conflict than graduates of North Mecklenburg. Respondents from Independence described a school culture that encouraged discussion regarding differences and a general openness to other cultures. For example, after a conflict involving a White student and a Black student in the citywide press, the school organized a community forum for students to talk openly about issues of race, racism, and tolerance.

In contrast, students from North Mecklenburg reported several racist acts of violence and vandalism that were not addressed by the school staff, and instead were dealt with as disciplinary issues rather than larger school climate issues indicative of prejudicial belief systems held by students. Some Black students reportedly responded to this hostility by using various defense mechanisms, and graduates of North Mecklenburg described openly hostile and clearly oppositional behavior directed towards students and staff members.

In contrast, the racial composition and actions of students and staff members at Independence facilitated a positive social climate for students of all races and backgrounds. Graduates of Garinger also described a positive social climate and the general feeling that students of different races and backgrounds “got along.” Conversely, graduates of North Mecklenburg, regardless of backgrounds appear to be negatively impacted by the racial composition of the school, and it, in turn, affected the school climate. Black students reportedly experienced discriminatory organizational practices (such as different punishments given to White students versus Black students) and attended classes that were predominantly racially segregated non-White.

School level racial composition appears to have affected graduates’ experiences in school. However, results also indicate the school level composition affected long-term outcomes in different ways. Graduates of Independence and Garinger had higher levels of educational and occupational attainment, increased college completion, greater proclivity to work and live in diverse settings and have interracial friendships, and reported higher levels of civic engagement than graduates of North Mecklenburg. In addition, graduates of Independence and Garinger reported feeling prepared and successful in working in diverse work environments, whereas graduates from North Mecklenburg were not as prepared to thrive in a diverse work setting and some graduates expressed discomfort in working under a supervisor from a different race or ethnic background. Generally, graduates of North Mecklenburg appear to lead more racially isolated lives than graduates of Garinger and Independence.

In sum, findings suggest that diversity is important, but it must be handled with utmost care to prevent unintended negative consequence. This study suggests that the



racial composition of a school has enduring effects for graduates, with diverse schools having more positive outcomes than racially isolated schools. Yet, diversity has to be managed carefully. Garinger was racially isolated Black, and students suffered from endemic low expectations and a lack of resources. Similarly, minority populations of students must be handled with care in a racially isolated environment, and teachers must develop cultural competencies to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds. Diversity at North Mecklenburg was not acknowledged, and as a result, students there, Black, White, and other, experienced a school climate that was not conducive to teaching and learning and had negative effects on interracial group relations. Instead of students from North Mecklenburg benefiting from its somewhat diverse student body, racial prejudices and stereotypes seemed to be perpetuated. Educators at North Mecklenburg reportedly overlooked racial issues and dealt with racial conflict as a disciplinary issue rather than as an issue of deeply held belief systems that were often reinforced by discriminatory practices of the school and oppositional behavior of students. For these different reasons, racial composition was a double-edged sword, a tremendous benefit to graduates of Independence, with negative consequences for graduates of North Mecklenburg and Garinger.

#### *It Was Worth It*

The secondary finding is that “it was worth it,” but graduates did not know what “it” was. Graduates were generally unable to explain the term desegregation, and the majority of graduates were not aware of the court-ordered desegregation plan in place during their years of schooling, and as such, were generally not aware of the politics surrounding such plans. Graduates saw their schooling experiences as “just the way it

was,” and their experiences were generally positive. Graduates, particularly from Independence and Garinger, affirmed that they benefited in multiple ways from being educated in diverse schools. However, if graduates of desegregated schools are to be mobilized as a political force for creating a grassroots movement for diverse schools, as Gary Orfield’s recommendation cited in the opening quote of this dissertation suggests, graduates must first know they were *in* desegregated schools. For many Charlotteans in the 80s and 90s, including the majority of respondents for this study, desegregation efforts were an uncontested, normalized part of public life. As such, students educated during this time did not know they were educated in desegregated schools, and this could possibly be one reason in the present day that they are not mobilized to demand diverse schools for their own children.

Additionally, graduates who were attended schools similar to North Mecklenburg, schools that were racially isolated with negative schooling outcomes, yet sometimes viewed as desegregated, could have a negating effect on mobilizing the graduates of desegregated schools. Graduates of North Mecklenburg considered their school to be desegregated (when it was not) and many graduates had negative schooling experiences, which lead them to not be supportive of desegregation as a reform effort. Herein lies the paradox. Educational reformers intent on using the graduates of desegregated schooling to inform public policy would need to mobilize the graduates who, (1) know they attended desegregated schools and (2) like graduates of Independence and Garinger, have positive perceptions of their schooling experiences.

Graduates of Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg see diverse schools as important. However, graduates acknowledged that diverse schools were rare

and while they benefitted from diverse schools, as parents (or future parents), they were not sure how to go about balancing the dual goals of academic excellence and a diverse student body. Many graduates, particularly graduates of Garinger and North Mecklenburg, perceived equity and excellence as opposing goals that were mutually exclusive. Consequently, many graduates have resigned to have their children in merely adequate, racially homogenous schools. While Independence seemingly attained the delicate balance of equity and excellence in 1997, such schools continue to be exceptions rather than the rule.

### Policy Implications

In the post-*Brown* era, too often, public conversations regarding the purpose of schooling have generally been framed in binary fashion: schools can either strive to achieve the social goal of integration *or* the academic goal of high student achievement. However, this study, as well as many others, demonstrates this is a false choice. Many of the most successful schools in CMS are those that are the most diverse. While this study is small in scope and uses a self-selected sample and a qualitative analysis, the results are consistent with quantitative studies utilizing large populations. Since NCLB (2001), school districts are required to maintain individual student level achievement data. Southworth (2008) used a statewide population in NC and Harris (2006) used a national sample with over 18 million students to come to the same conclusion—students learn more in diverse schools. The testimonies of graduates speak to the essential role of diverse schools in not only high academic achievement, but perhaps more importantly, the shaping of racial views and undermining generational prejudice. Carefully desegregated schools will help individuals rethink historical relationships between racial

groups, and therefore, they hold tremendous transformative power for a community and the nation. For these reasons, creating and maintaining diverse schools should be a community priority.

### Limitations

The collective case study utilized several data sources to present a holistic picture of the graduates of 1995-1998 from Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg. Although the case study triangulates data to provide a richer, more reliable context and description of the experiences of graduates, there are several limitations to this study. First, the population of graduates from Garinger, Independence, and North Mecklenburg is difficult to access and presented challenges in acquiring a representative sample. The 32 interviewees were self-selected thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to all CMS graduates. Second, the sample is not representative of all graduates of the three high schools. Instead, it mainly includes students who were in the high academic tracks in the three schools. In addition, the fact that respondents were primarily college graduates with access to the Internet indicated a bias of including more educated, middle-class participants in the study.

### Future Research Questions Raised By Study

The results from this study are somewhat intriguing, but not generalizable. In general, more information is needed regarding this population. Ideally, a random sample from a graduating class would be recruited to adequately address the sampling issues inherent in researching this population.

Additionally, more information is needed regarding the role of diverse schools in promoting positive racial identity development. This is a topic virtually absent from the

literature regarding school level racial composition; yet such research could illuminate the complex processes that go into positive identity development for all students, particularly students of color. More information is also needed regarding the knowledge of graduates and their awareness of desegregation efforts. If the population of graduates of desegregated schools is to be mobilized on a national scale, educational reformers must know more about the graduates of desegregated schools and their perceptions of their schooling experiences.

### Significance of Study

The bulk of the research on school level racial composition deals with quantitative analyses of the short-term effects of desegregation, or most recently, broad statistical analyses of outcomes for entire populations of students, comparing and contrasting students in schools with varying racial compositions. Such research is important, yet often it is based on one indicator, such as a standardized test score, to determine the effectiveness of a school. Schooling is more than a test score. Furthermore, researchers have rarely used the voices of the graduates who actually attended desegregated schools to discover their contextualized experiences, perceptions, and long-term life outcomes.

This study uses the voices of 32 graduates of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to tell of their experiences. The majority of these graduates attended CMS from K-12<sup>th</sup> grade, meaning that all thirteen years of their education was within a school system operating under a desegregation plan that was widely considered successful. As such, graduates have a unique, and previously unheard perspective on desegregated schools. In addition, this study compares and contrasts the roles of schools with varying levels of

racial composition on graduates' perceptions and experiences. Such a study has not been conducted previously, and therefore fills a lacuna in the existing literature.

### Conclusions

Public schools occupy a distinctive place in American society. Schools are the only institutions that have an obligation to serve all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status. Schools exist to serve the children of our nation, yet too often, schools fail individual children and entire communities. Instead of providing students with the skills needed to be productive and caring citizens, many schools merely replicate the racial and socio-economic dividing line of power and privilege each day by providing unequal opportunities to quality teachers, curriculum, and resources. These unequal opportunities are most often decided along lines of race and class, and until race and class cease to be predictive for the quality of education a child receives in our nation's public schools, we will continue to be a country divided by those who have access to a quality education and those who do not. In Charlotte, as in cities across the nation, schools are starkly inequitable and differ dramatically based on the race and socioeconomic status of the student body. Numerous schools in CMS are 99% non-White and tragically low-performing. Yet, schools in Charlotte have not always been this way.

While the desegregation efforts of the 70s, 80s, and 90s were not perfect, children of all races and economic backgrounds had the opportunity to attend a diverse school that would promote high academic achievement and positive long-term outcomes. The study suggests that to the degree a high school was desegregated, it was more successful

academically and socially. To be sure, even at Independence, the desegregation experience was a mixed one, with many benefits and some liabilities.

This study uses the voices of graduates from the not-so-distant past to tell of their experiences in desegregated schooling. The results of this study are consistent with the preponderance of evidence that suggests diverse schools are better schools—academically and socially. Perhaps more importantly, the collective voices of the graduates have clearly said that desegregation efforts improved their lives, and “it was worth it.”

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16. Whom have you lived with most of your life?  
 a. two parents    b. mom    c. other relative    d. dad    e. guardian/foster parents
17. What kind of work does your father (male guardian) normally do? That is, what is his job called? If he is currently unemployed, what was his last job?  
 [example: plumber, teacher, manager, doctor, nurse, bus driver, police officer, minister, secretary]  
 \_\_\_PUT YOUR ANSWER IN WRITE-IN AREA# 2
18. What kind of work does your mother (female guardian) normally do? That is, what is her job called? If she is currently unemployed, what was her last job?  
 [example: plumber, teacher, manager, doctor nurse, bus driver, police officer, minister, secretary]  
 \_\_\_PUT YOUR ANSWER IN WRITE-IN AREA#3

*Personal attitudes toward education and opportunity*

*Instructions: We are interested in your personal views about education and opportunity. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:*

a. strongly disagree    b. disagree    c. neutral    d. agree    e. strongly agree

19. Most of my friends at home think school is a complete waste of time. a b c d e
20. Based on their experiences, my parents say people like us are not always paid or promoted according to our education. a b c d e
21. All I need to learn for my future is to read, write, and make change. a b c d e
22. Although my parents tell me to get a good education in order to get a good job, they face barriers to job success. a b c d e
23. In my family, people with a good education always have good jobs. a b c d e
24. I know people who flip burgers for a living even though they finished school. a b c d e
25. Doing well in school doesn't really matter because employers don't look at grades when they hire you. a b c d e
26. Because my friends don't think it's cool, I don't try as hard as I can in school. a b c d e
27. My friends at home believe that too much education makes a person give up his or her real identity. a b c d e
28. I know people who make good money and haven't finished high school. a b c d e

*Please let us know if these statements below describe your family*

a. Yes    b. No    c. Not Sure

29. My parents/guardians sometimes help me with homework. a b c
30. We have a daily newspaper in our home. a b c
31. We have a computer in our home. a b c
32. One of my parents/guardians attended back-to-school night this year. a b c
33. My parents/guardians make important school decisions with me. a b c
34. During the past three years, I've taken music, dance, or art lessons after school. a b c



*Please tell us a little about your school experiences. Choose the answer that best describes them.*

35. What grades do you usually get?  
 a. I'm not doing too well    b. Mostly Ds    c. Mostly Cs    d. Mostly Bs    e. Mostly As
36. How much effort do you put into your schoolwork?  
 a. I don't try at all    b. I do just enough to get by    c. I give an average amount of effort    d. I try pretty hard, but not as hard as I can    e. I work as hard as I can
37. How many hours per week do you usually work in a paid job (not counting household chores)?  
 a. 0    b. 1-5    c. 6-10    d. 11-19    e. 20 or more
38. How many of your friends are from a racial group different from yours?  
 a. none    b. one    c. two    d. three    e. four or more

*When you are not at school or at a paid job, how many hours per day do you spend doing the activities listed below?*

- a. less than 1 hour    b. 1 hour    c. 2 hours    d. 3 hours    e. 4 or more hours

39. Watching TV    a b c d e  
 40. Playing sports or exercising    a b c d e  
 41. Doing chores/working around the house    a b c d e  
 42. Socializing with friends (including talking on phone)    a b c d e  
 43. Doing homework or studying    a b c d e

**Immediately after high school, how many of your close friends plan to go to**

- |                                   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 or more |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 44. The military                  | a | b | c | d | e         |
| 45. A 4- year college             | a | b | c | d | e         |
| 46. Become a homemaker            | a | b | c | d | e         |
| 47. A 2- year college (like CPCC) | a | b | c | d | e         |
| 48. A trade school                | a | b | c | d | e         |
| 49. Work full time                | a | b | c | d | e         |

*Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:*

- a. strongly disagree    b. disagree    c. neutral    d. agree    e. strongly agree

50. When teachers give homework, my friends never think of doing it.    a b c d e  
 51. My school peers put pressure on me to get good grades.    a b c d e  
 52. I need help with my homework.    a b c d e  
 53. Most of my friends at school think education is very important for their future.    a b c d e  
 54. At this school, it is not cool to be smart.    a b c d e

*Please tell us about your future goals and plans:*

55. How far do you want to go in school?

high school diploma a	technical certificate b	community college (like CPCC) c	4 yr degree (like UNCC) d	law degree, MBA medical degree, Ph.D e
-----------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	--

56. How far do you expect you will go in school?

high school diploma a	technical certificate b	community college (like CPCC) c	4 yr degree (like UNCC) d	law degree, MBA medical degree, Ph.D e
-----------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	--

57. What work (career or occupation) do you expect you will do?

[example: plumber, teacher, manager, doctor, nurse, bus driver, police officer, minister, astronaut, secretary]

\_\_\_\_ PUT YOUR ANSWER IN WRITE-IN AREA# 4

We are interested in your views about your education and work. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a. strongly disagree   b. disagree   c. neutral   d. agree   e. strongly agree

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 58. My courses prepare me for what I'll need in life to be successful.                          | a b c d e |
| 59. Getting a job depends on how well you do in school.   | a b c d e |
| 60. Even if I don't work hard in school, I can make future plans come true.                     | a b c d e |
| 61. What I don't learn in school, I can always pick up later.                                   | a b c d e |
| 62. Students with bad grades often get good jobs after high school.                             | a b c d e |
| 63. Even without a good education, it is likely that I will end up with the kind of job I want. | a b c d e |

How much did these people help you make your plans for after high school ?

a. a lot   b. some   c. a little   d. not at all

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 64. Your favorite vocational teacher  | a b c d |
| 65. Your favorite academic teacher  | a b c d |
| 66. Your guidance counselor   | a b c d |
| 67. Your Industry Education Coordinator   | a b c d |
| 68. How much information have you received about possible careers?  |         |
| a. a lot   b. some   c. a little   d. none   e. don't know  |         |
| 69. How well do you know your own abilities and how they relate to a career?                                      |         |
| a. a lot   b. some   c. a little   d. none   e. don't know  |         |
| 70. Do you know the steps (courses, work-based education, etc.) to take for the career area you might be best at? |         |
| a. yes   b. no   c. not sure   d. don't know  |         |

*Thank You !*



**Section 2: Your School and Classes**

- 11) How many students in your **SCHOOL** are from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 12) Which best describes your **ENGLISH** class: (If you have more than one, pick the one that is required by your school.)
- Basic
  - College Preparatory
  - Honors or AP
  - A Mix of Levels
  - Don't Know
- 13) How many students in your **ENGLISH** class are from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 14) In your **ENGLISH** class, how often do you read about the experiences of many **different** cultures and racial and ethnic groups?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
- 15) During classroom discussions in your **ENGLISH** class how often are racial issues discussed and explored?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
- If you are not currently taking a SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY class skip to question #10.**
- 16) Which best describes your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class: (If you have more than one social studies class, pick the one that is required by your school.)
- Basic
  - College Preparatory
  - Honors or AP
  - A Mix of Levels
  - Don't Know
- 17) How many students in your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class are from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 18) During classroom discussions in your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class how often are racial issues discussed and explored?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
  - I am not taking a social studies class

- 19) To what extent do you believe that these discussions have changed your understanding of different points of view?
- Not at all
  - A little
  - Quite a bit
  - A lot

**If you are not currently taking a MATH class skip to question #12.**

- 20) Which best describes your **MATH** class: (If you have more than one, pick the one that is required by your school.)
- Basic
  - College Preparatory
  - Honors or AP
  - A Mix of Levels
  - Don't Know
- 21) How many students in your **MATH** class are from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 22) How would you rate your grades this year?
- Mostly A's
  - Mostly B's
  - Mostly C's
  - Mostly D's
- 23) Mostly F's Have you ever taken the PSAT, SAT, ACT or any other college admissions exam?
- Yes
  - No
- 24) Which best describes your current **FOREIGN LANGUAGE** class?
- First Year
  - Second Year
  - Third Year
  - Fourth Year or AP
  - I am not taking a foreign language class
- 25) To what extent have your **teachers** encouraged you to attend college?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged Nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- 26) To what extent have your **counselors** encouraged you to attend college?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged Nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- 27) How much information about college admissions have your **teachers** given you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications)
- A lot
  - Some
  - A Little
  - None
- 28) How much information about college admissions have your **counselors** given you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications)
- A lot
  - Some
  - A Little
  - None

29) To what extent have your **teachers** encouraged you to take Honors and/or AP classes?  
 a) Strongly Encouraged      b) Somewhat Encouraged      c) Neither Encouraged nor Discouraged      d) Somewhat Discouraged      e) Strongly Discouraged

30) To what extent have your **counselors** encouraged you to take Honors and/or AP classes?  
 a) Strongly Encouraged      b) Somewhat Encouraged      c) Neither Encouraged nor Discouraged      d) Somewhat Discouraged      e) Strongly Discouraged

### Section 3: Your Classroom

**Please choose the letter that best indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.**

- 31) If I try hard I can do well in school.  
 a) strongly agree      b) somewhat agree      c) neither agree nor disagree      d) somewhat disagree      e) strongly disagree
- 32) My teachers administer punishment fairly.  
 a) strongly agree      b) somewhat agree      c) neither agree nor disagree      d) somewhat disagree      e) strongly disagree
- 33) At least one of my teachers takes a special interest in me.  
 a) strongly agree      b) somewhat agree      c) neither agree nor disagree      d) somewhat disagree      e) strongly disagree
- 34) My teachers encourage me to work with students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.  
 a) strongly agree      b) somewhat agree      c) neither agree nor disagree      d) somewhat disagree      e) strongly disagree
- 35) After high school, how prepared do you feel to work in a job setting where people are of a different racial or ethnic background than you are?  
 a) Very Prepared  
 b) Somewhat Prepared  
 c) Somewhat Unprepared  
 d) Very Unprepared
- 36) How do you believe your school experiences will affect your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups?  
 a) Helped a lot  
 b) Helped somewhat  
 c) Had no effect  
 d) Did not help  
 e) Hurt my ability
- 37) How comfortable would you be with a work supervisor who was of a different racial or ethnic background than you?  
 a) Very comfortable  
 b) Somewhat comfortable  
 c) Somewhat uncomfortable  
 d) Very uncomfortable

Please indicate how comfortable are you with each of the following in your classes:

	a) Very Comfortable	b) Comfortable	c) Uncomfortable	d) Very Uncomfortable	e) Does Not Apply
38) discussing controversial issues related to race					
39) working with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in group projects					
40) learning about the differences between people from other racial and ethnic groups					
41) working with students from other language backgrounds					
42) working with students from different countries					
43) debating current social and political issues					

44) How much tension exists in your school between students of different racial or ethnic groups?

- a) None
- b) Very little
- c) Some
- d) Quite a bit
- e) A lot

**Section 4: Your Interests and Future Goals**

45) How likely are you to go to a college that has students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

- a) Very likely
- b) Likely
- c) Unlikely
- d) Very unlikely
- e) I do not plan to attend college

46) How likely do you think it is that you will work with people of racial and ethnic backgrounds different from your own?

- a) Very likely
- b) Likely
- c) Unlikely
- d) Very unlikely

**Please tell us how interested you are in the following:**

	a)Very Interested	b) Interested	c)Somewhat Interested	d)Not Interested
47) taking a foreign language after high school				
48) taking an honors or AP mathematics course				
49) taking an honors or AP English course				
50) going to a community college				
51) going to a four-year college				
52) taking a computer science course				
53) taking a course focusing on other cultures after high school				
54) traveling outside the United States				
55) attending a racially/ethnically diverse college campus				
56) living in a racially/ethnically diverse neighborhood when you are an adult				
57) working in a racially/ ethnically diverse setting when you are an adult				

58) How do you believe your school experiences will impact your ability to understand members of other races and ethnic groups?

- a) Helped a lot
- b) Helped somewhat
- c) Had no effect
- d) Did not help
- e) Hurt my ability



**Section 5: Your School and Your Community**

**NOTE: In this section, we are interested in how your experiences in high school have influenced your interest in your community and the world. We understand that your family and friends may have also had a great impact in these areas, but, for this survey, we ask that you focus on the impact of your school on these topics.**

**In the following items indicate to what extent classroom or extracurricular activities offered through your high school changed your interest in:**

	a) Greatly Increased	b) Somewhat Increased	c) No Effect	d) Somewhat Decreased	e) Greatly Decreased
59) current events					
60) reading about what is happening in other parts of the world					
61) volunteering in your community					
62) joining a multi-cultural club					
63) participating in elections					
64) staying informed about current issues facing your community and country					
65) taking leadership roles in your school					
66) living in a racially/ethnically diverse setting when you are an adult					
67) working to improve relations between people from different backgrounds					
68) running for public office some time in the future					
69) taking leadership roles in your community					
70) voting for a Senator or President from a minority racial/ethnic group					

APPENDIX C: Revised Diversity Assessment Questionnaire  
 Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ), Designed for High School Graduates  
**ALL RESPONSES ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.**  
**In this study, we define racial and ethnic minority groups as African American/ Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latino (Hispanic), and Native American.**

**Section 1: Tell Us About Yourself:**

- 1) What is your email address? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is your phone number? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Were you born in this country?                      a) yes                      b) no
- 4) What is your race/ethnicity (You may choose up to 2 categories)?
  - a) African American or Black
  - b) Asian American
  - c) Hispanic/Latino
  - d) White
  - e) Other/Multi-Racial
- 5) Are you:                      a) male    b) female
- 6) What year did you graduate from high school? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) What is the main language that you speak at home?
  - a) English
  - b) Spanish
  - c) Chinese
  - d) Other Asian
  - e) Other, \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) How many languages do you speak fluently?
  - a) 1                      b) 2                      c) 3                      d) more than 3
- 9) How many people in your home **NEIGHBORHOOD** are from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own?
  - a) A few
  - b) Quite a few, but less than half
  - c) About half
  - d) Most
- 10) Please indicate your Mother or female guardian's highest level of education (Choose only one):
  - a) Some high school
  - b) High school graduate
  - c) Some College (less than 4 years)
  - d) College graduate (with Bachelors degree)
  - e) Graduate degree, (such as a masters, law, M.D., Ph.D.)
- 11) Please indicate your Father or male guardian's highest level of education (Choose only one):
  - a) Some high school
  - b) High school graduate
  - c) Some College (less than 4 years)
  - d) College graduate (with Bachelors degree)
  - e) Graduate degree, (such as a masters, law, M.D., Ph.D.)

12) Please indicate your highest level of education (Choose only one):

- a) Some high school
- b) High school graduate
- c) Some College (less than 4 years)
- d) College graduate (with Bachelors degree)
- f) Graduate degree, (such as a masters, law, M.D., Ph.D.

If you answered c), d), or f), Please list the colleges you attended: \_\_\_\_\_

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13) Are you married or have a significant life partner? a) yes b) no

If yes, what race/ethnicity are they?

- a) African American or Black
- a) Asian American
- b) Hispanic/Latino
- c) White
- d) Other/Multi-Racial

14) Do you have children? a) yes b) no

If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

15) Where do you live now? (city, state) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 2: Reflecting Back on your High School Experience**

1) Please indicate how long you were in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools:

- a) From K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (all years of schooling)
- b) More than 8 years
- c) More than 4 years
- d) 3 years or less
- e) other: \_\_\_\_\_

2) How many students in your **SCHOOL** were from racial or ethnic groups that were **different** from your own:

- a) A few
- b) Quite a few, but less than half
- c) About half
- d) Most

3) Which best describes your **ENGLISH** class from your senior year of high school:

- a) Basic
- b) College Preparatory
- c) Honors, AP (Advanced Placement) or IB (International Baccalaureate)
- d) A Mix of Levels
- e) Don't Know

4) How many students in your **ENGLISH** class were from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:

- a) A few
- b) Quite a few, but less than half
- c) About half
- d) Most

- 5) In your **ENGLISH** class, how often did you read about the experiences of **different** cultures and racial and ethnic groups?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
- 6) During classroom discussions in your **ENGLISH** class how often were racial issues discussed and explored?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
- 7) Which best describes your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class your junior or senior year of high school:
- Basic
  - College Preparatory
  - Honors, AP (Advanced Placement) or IB (International Baccalaureate)
  - A Mix of Levels
  - Don't Know
- 8) How many students in your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class were from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 9) During classroom discussions in your **SOCIAL STUDIES or HISTORY** class how often were racial issues discussed and explored?
- At least 3 Times a Month
  - Once or Twice a Month
  - Less than Once a Month
  - Never
- 10) To what extent do you believe that these discussions have changed your understanding of different points of view?
- Not at all
  - A little
  - Quite a bit
  - A lot
- 11) Which best describes your **MATH** class your junior or senior year of high school:
- Basic
  - College Preparatory
  - Honors, AP (Advanced Placement) or IB (International Baccalaureate)
  - A Mix of Levels
  - Don't Know

- 12) How many students in your **MATH** class were from racial or ethnic groups that are **different** from your own:
- A few
  - Quite a few, but less than half
  - About half
  - Most
- 13) How would you rate your grades your senior year of high school?
- Mostly A's
  - Mostly B's
  - Mostly C's
  - Mostly D's
  - Mostly F's
- 14) Did you take SAT or any other college admissions exam?
- Yes
  - No
- 15) To what extent did your **teachers** encourage you to attend college?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged Nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- 16) To what extent did your **counselors** encourage you to attend college?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged Nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- 17) How much information about college admissions did your **teachers** give you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications)
- A lot
  - Some
  - A Little
  - None
- 18) How much information about college admissions did your **counselors** give you? (such as SAT, ACT, financial aid, college fairs, college applications)
- A lot
  - Some
  - A Little
  - None
- 19) To what extent did your **teachers** encourage you to take Honors and/or AP classes?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- 20) To what extent did your **counselors** encourage you to take Honors and/or AP classes?
- |                     |                     |                                    |                      |                      |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| a)                  | b)                  | c)                                 | d)                   | e)                   |
| Strongly Encouraged | Somewhat Encouraged | Neither Encouraged nor Discouraged | Somewhat Discouraged | Strongly Discouraged |
- Please choose the letter that best indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.**
- 21) If I tried hard I did well in school.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |

- 22) My teachers administered punishment fairly.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 23) At least one of my teachers took a special interest in me.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 24) My teachers encouraged me to work with students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 25) I felt safe at school.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 26) I had friends who were a different race/ethnicity than me.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 27) My 5 closest friends from high school were the same race/ethnicity as me.
- |                |                |                            |                   |                   |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| a)             | b)             | c)                         | d)                | e)                |
| strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
- 28) How much tension existed in your school between students of different racial or ethnic groups?
- None
  - Very little
  - Some
  - Quite a bit
  - A lot

### **Section 3: Life Following High School and Future Goals**

- 29) How do you believe your school experiences affected your ability to work with members of other races and ethnic groups?
- Helped a lot
  - Helped somewhat
  - Had no effect
  - Did not help
  - Hurt my ability
- 30) After high school, how prepared did you feel to work in a job setting where people are of a different racial or ethnic background than you are?
- Very prepared
  - Somewhat prepared
  - Somewhat unprepared
  - Not prepared

31) How comfortable are you with a work supervisor who is of a different racial or ethnic background than you?

- a) Very comfortable
- b) Somewhat comfortable
- c) Somewhat uncomfortable
- d) Very uncomfortable
- e) not applicable

32) How do you believe your school experiences impacted your ability to understand members of other races and ethnic groups?

- a) Helped a lot
- b) Helped somewhat
- c) Had no effect
- d) Did not help
- e) Hurt my ability

33) Please indicate how comfortable you are with each of the following as an adult:

	a) Very Comfortable	b) Comfortable	c) Uncomfortable	d) Very Uncomfortable	e) Does Not Apply
a) discussing controversial issues related to race					
b) working with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds					
c) learning about the differences between people from other racial and ethnic groups					
d) working with people from other language backgrounds					
e) working with people from different countries					
f) debating current social and political issues					

34) Please tell us how interested you are in the following:

	a) Very Interested	b) Interested	c) Somewhat Interested	d) Not Interested
a) traveling outside the United States				
b) working in a racially/ethnically diverse setting				
c) living in a racially/ethnically diverse neighborhood				
d) having your children attend racially diverse schools				

**Section 4: Your School and Your Community**

**NOTE: In this section, we are interested in how your experiences in high school have influenced your interest in your community and the world. We understand that your family and friends may have also had a great impact in these areas, but, for this survey, we ask that you focus on the impact of your school on these topics.**

**35) In the following items indicate to what extent classroom or extracurricular activities offered through your high school changed your interest in:**

	a) Greatly Increased	b) Somewhat Increased	c) No Effect	d) Somewhat Decreased	e) Greatly Decreased
a) current events					
b) reading about what is happening in other parts of the world					
c) volunteering in your community					
d) joining a multi-cultural club					
e) participating in elections					
f) staying informed about current issues facing your community and country					
g) taking leadership roles in your school					
h) living in a racially/ethnically diverse setting when you are an adult					
i) working to improve relations between people from different backgrounds					
j) running for public office some time in the future					
k) taking leadership roles in your community					
l) voting for a Senator or President from a minority racial/ethnic group					



## APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol

## Overview

Introduce self: name; student at UNCC School of Education

- 1) I'm interested in your schooling experiences. There are no wrong answers to the questions; I am just interested in your thoughts, feelings, and memories.
- 2) Review basic rights as participant, confidentiality, can quit at any time, sign informed consent form
- 3) Is it okay for this interview to be recorded?

## Establishing Rapport:

- 4) Tell me about yourself.
- 5) What schools did you attend from Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade? Tell me a little bit about the schools.
- 6) Did you attend college? Where?

## Detailed Schooling Experiences and Memories:

- 7) Do you remember any family discussions concerning where you were going to school?
- 8) Did all students live near the schools you attended? If not, how did they get there?
- 9) Tell me about your close friends in elementary school.
- 10) Describe the racial make-up of an elementary classroom, maybe third grade?
- 11) Do you have any specific memories dealing with race in your elementary years?
- 12) Describe the racial make-up of a class in junior high.
- 13) Do you have any specific memories dealing with race in your junior high?
- 14) What about high school? How would you describe your high school in regards to race?

## Knowledge Concerning Desegregation:

- 15) When you think of the term desegregated schools, what comes to mind?

- 16) What do you know about desegregated schools in Charlotte? Did you know that CMS schools were desegregated by court order and mandated a racial mix of 60% white and 40% African American during the years you attended school K-12th grade? If yes, how/when did you find out?
- 17) Have you ever heard of the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case? Do you know what it was about?
- 18) Have you ever heard of the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System* court case? Do you know what it is about?

Feelings Concerning Desegregation:

- 19) Do you feel you benefited socially from desegregated schools? If so, how? If not, why do you think you didn't?
- 20) Do you feel you benefited academically from desegregated schools? If so, how? If not, why do you think you didn't?
- 21) How do you think your experience might have been different at a segregated school?

Present-Day Experiences:

- 22) What is the approximate racial make-up of your neighborhood?
- 23) What is the approximate racial make-up of your workplace?
- 24) Think of your five closest friends now. What race are they?
- 25) Do you think desegregated schools are important? Why?
- 26) If you have children OR when your children are of school age, would you like them to be in a diverse school? How much of a priority will this be for you?

## APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Form

**Informed Consent for Graduate Perceptions of Desegregated Schooling***Project Title and Purpose*

This project is a research study entitled “Graduate Perceptions of Desegregated Schooling.” It consists of a survey and possible interview designed to understand how graduates of the class of 1997 were affected by their schooling experiences.

*Investigator*

The study is being conducted by Amy Hawn Nelson, a UNC-Charlotte doctoral student, under the direction of Dr. Rosemary Traoré, Assistant Professor of Urban Uducation in UNCC’s College of Education.

*Eligibility*

You may participate in this project if you are a member of the graduating class of 1995-1998, and you attended Independence High School, Garinger High School, or North Mecklenburg High School. You may not participate in this project if you are not a graduate of the class of 1995-1998 from one of the above-mentioned schools.

*Overall Description of Participation*

Participation in the study involves completing an online survey and possibly phone, audio-recorded interview with a researcher. The questions are mostly about your thoughts, feelings, and memories of your K-12 schooling experiences, with a few questions about your present social and professional environments. There are no right or wrong answers. Your honesty, to the best of your knowledge, is all that is asked.

*Length of Participation*

The survey will take about 15 – 20 minutes to complete. The one-time interview typically lasts 60-90 minutes.

*Risks and Benefits of Participation*

There are no apparent risks, with the exception of the varying emotions and feelings that reflection on past experiences can bring to the surface. The discussion of race can initially be uncomfortable to discuss. However, it is my hope that the questions will allow you to reflect on your own experiences to better understand your own identity development process. I also hope that this project will lead to a greater understanding of the short- and long-term effects of desegregated schooling.

*Volunteer Statement*

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started.

*Confidentiality Statement*

**Any information about your participation, including your identity, is completely confidential. The following steps will be taken to ensure this confidentiality: All data collected will be secured in a locked file cabinet or secure computers with passwords to which only the researcher has access. All interviewees will be assigned pseudonyms (fake names) to ensure confidentiality.**

*Statement of Fair Treatment and Respect*

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Research Compliance Office (704-687-3309) if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the actual project or study, please contact Amy Hawn (704-616-0796, [alhawn@uncc.edu](mailto:alhawn@uncc.edu)).

*Approval Date*

This form was approved for use on *October, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009* for use for one year.

**Participant Consent**

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I also agree to the audio recording of the interview. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name (PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## APPENDIX F: IRB Approval



UNC CHARLOTTE

## Compliance Office / Office of Research Services

9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001  
 t/ 704.687.3311 f/ 704.687.2292 www.research.uncc.edu/comp/complian.cfm

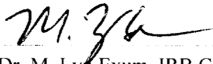
## Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects

*Certificate of Approval*

<b>Protocol #</b>	<b>09-07-17</b>		
<b>Protocol Type:</b>	<b>Expedited</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Graduate Perceptions of Desegregated Schooling</b>		
<b>Initial Approval:</b>	<b>10/20/2009</b>		
<b>Investigator</b>	<b>Ms. Amy</b>	<b>Hawn</b>	<b>Middle, Secondary, K12 Educ</b>
<b>Co-investigator</b>	<b>Dr. Rosemary</b>	<b>Traore</b>	<b>Middle, Secondary, K12 Educ</b>

After careful review, the protocol listed above was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects. This approval will expire one year from the date of this letter. In order to continue conducting research under this protocol after one year, the "Annual Protocol Renewal Form" must be submitted to the IRB. This form can be obtained from the Office of Research Services web page. ([www.research.uncc.edu/comp/human.cfm](http://www.research.uncc.edu/comp/human.cfm)).

Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to promptly inform the committee of any changes in the proposed research prior to implementing the changes, and of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to subjects or others. Amendment and Event Reporting forms are available on our web page at <http://www.research.uncc.edu/Comp/human.cfm>.

  
 Dr. M. Lynn Exum, IRB Chair

*10-27-09*  
 Date

