

ROYSTER, JR., ALBERT L., Ed.D. *The Plight of the African American Student: A Study of the Schooling Experiences of African American Professionals in Public Education and how their Schooling Experiences Impacted their Careers and Subsequent Lives.* (2017)  
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The purpose of this study was to conduct research on the early history of segregation and desegregation, which directly impacted how African Americans were educated—or not educated—in American history. My focus was geared toward investigating several aspects within the historical educational experiences of African American students. Two time periods were examined. The first time period chronicled the schooling experiences of African Americans who attended segregated, or both segregated and desegregated schools, after the *Brown* decision of 1954. The second time period chronicled the schooling experiences of African Americans who attended only desegregated schools.

Although research has been done on segregation and desegregation, this study focused on the schooling experiences of African Americans. Themes were analyzed to see if African American's career outcomes were affected by the available educational opportunities during these time periods.

Narrative research was used to collect the participants' life experiences within the two specific time periods. Eleven African American participants were interviewed. Restorying was used to make sense of those experiences as they related to the topic being researched. The questions given to the participants were aimed at gathering personal accounts of the challenges and struggles African Americans faced, and currently face, in education in our country.

Several themes emerged from analyzing the narratives of the participants. These themes pertained to unequal facilities of African American schools compared to white facilities; a shared sense of community among African American students, families, and communities; high regard for education in African American families and communities; hostile environments created by whites in response to the desegregation of schools by African American students; and the ongoing discrimination of African American students; and the ongoing impact of the positive experiences in segregated schooling on their subsequent lives.

THE PLIGHT OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT: A STUDY OF THE  
SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS  
IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AND HOW THEIR SCHOOLING  
EXPERIENCES IMPACTED THEIR CAREERS  
AND SUBSEQUENT LIVES

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my parents,  
Al Royster Sr. and Linda Royster.  
Being an only child, you two have always been my biggest supporters and cheerleaders.  
Without you, I would not be the man I am today.  
Thank you for keeping me grounded and putting God first.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Albert L. Royster, Jr., has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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As I traveled through the journey of creating a dissertation I could be proud of and seeing the end result, the following Bible verse comes to mind: “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, The New King James Version). Without God in Christ, this work would not be possible.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Forget what hurt you in the past, but never forget what it taught you.

—Shannon L. Alder

As a young, African American male and a lifelong learner who has been in the field of education for over 10 years, I have experienced a wide variety of events in reference to being educated and educating youth.

While in high school and college, I attended schools that had student populations which were predominantly white. Many times during these experiences, I was looked at by my white peers as not being “black” because I was the only African American in Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Many of my black peers would share the same sentiments as my white peers because of the classes I took and the way my white peers interacted with me. Growing up, this often put me in unusual situations because it made me feel different in terms of trying to be accepted by my white and black peers.

As an educator, I was on the opposite end of the spectrum. As a teacher and administrator, I spent a majority of my career where the student population was predominantly Black and Hispanic. I noticed African American students were faced with academic challenges as they were behind several grade levels. Also, high numbers of African American students were identified as Exceptional Children (EC). In contrast, there were only a small number of African American students in Academically or

Intellectually Gifted (AIG) and Advance Placement (AP) classes. Even though I taught in predominantly minority-based schools, I was many times the only African American educator on the staff. As both a student and later an educator, I noticed a majority of African American students were significantly behind in terms of educational opportunities. In addition, there were few African American educators instructing these students.

Both my experiences as a high school student and as an educator made me ponder why African American students struggle in certain educational environments. Many times, African American's educational environments are byproducts of their home and community make-up. Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, and Russ (2004) discuss that schools that are located in low SES areas are faced with a plethora of socioeconomic problems. These problems can consist of low expectations in terms of educational accomplishments, students who excel moving out of the area, mental and physical health problems, and high unemployment. To further handicap low SES schools, they also encounter burdens such retaining quality staff, high staff turnover, limited physical resources, poor home/community relationships, and increased student behavior problems. These aforementioned factors tie into examining if the educational experiences of African American students in different school demographic settings impacted their educational opportunities.

I have witnessed a vicious cycle of African Americans following the pattern of not furthering their education, staying within their neighborhoods or environments, and living a life of poverty and possible crime. Having witnessed this cycle many times, I see

students later in life following the same patterns of their peers and family members. This cycle can perhaps be partially attributed to the ever-growing Achievement Gap that exists in education. The Achievement Gap is described as when one group, specifically white students, outperforms another group of students, in this case African American students. Typically, achievement scores are used to measure the disparity (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2012). Hucks (2011) indicates that quantitative measures have identified low test scores, high drop-out rates, and crime and incarceration data that indicate that African Americans, especially males, are unsuccessful in school and within society. From the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, African American students make up the bottom ranks of achievement in all levels of school. As Hucks (2011) indicates, this brings to mind the question of why African Americans have been unsuccessful academically. Herring (2013) reports that the dropout rate for African Americans slightly improved between 1975 and 1990 but decreased 13% between the years of 1990 and 1997. African Americans are disproportionately underperforming academically in all schooling levels. Nationally, African American males specifically achieve the lowest academically and have the greatest number of special education identifications, dropouts, non-promotions, expulsions, and suspensions. Herring goes on to cite the National Center for Education Report (2009) which notes that the achievement gap between white and black students has only slightly decreased in recent years. In North Carolina, only 44% of African American students were at or above grade level as compared to 77% of White students during the 2008–2009 school year. This trend is continuing as the Education Equality

Index (EEI) reports that North Carolina has the fastest growing achievement gap in the nation, increasing by 20% between 2011 and 2014. Also, North Carolina's achievement gap is larger than the surrounding states of South Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. Both cities of Raleigh and Durham have larger achievement gaps than 90% of the major cities in the U.S. (Education Equality Index, 2016).

Given this dire situation, my qualitative study focused on African American students' schooling experiences in the post-*Brown* era until 2001. I examined the trials and tribulations that African American students fought through to see how injustices and other educational experiences impacted their educational opportunities. Furthermore, I studied how their educational opportunities (or the lack thereof) impacted their ability to subsequently earn a living and become successful in society.

### **Problem Statement**

As an educator, I have worked on numerous levels of education. Starting out as a teacher assistant in an elementary school, teaching all content subjects in middle school, serving as an assistant principal in a high school, leading a middle school as a principal, and recently being a principal of a high school with approximately one thousand students, I have encountered many facets of student race, gender, and Socioeconomic Status (SES). With most of my educational career taking place in low SES, high minority schools, I have always wondered why students of color struggle so much. The problems minority students and their families encounter seem to reach across their educational and everyday life experiences. The various problems of minority students, whether social or educational, have a deeper root that goes back to the earliest times of American history.

With the struggles minority students encounter today, I cannot fathom the trials and tribulations which African American endured in earlier times in American history.

One of the main physiological characteristics that set any given person apart from another person is race. Many times, when people use the term “race,” they tend to affix a biological meaning to the term. Race, referring to skin color, was first used by Francois Bernier, a French physician, to categorize humans. Furthermore, “race,” as a biological meaning, or racial grouping, began in 1735 by Carolus Linnaeu. The classification by Linnaeu, which was based on Bernier, is the basis on which the United States has founded many of its racial policies. The creation of “racial grouping” was initially intended to lower and humiliate those who were not classified as European (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). Racial grouping has contributed to the many experiences African Americans have encountered throughout history.

Race has had an impact on the history of educational experiences involving African Americans. Before education can be talked about, American history dictates the notion that minorities, specifically Blacks, were not considered by many as human beings. Rashid (2011) quotes W. E. B. DuBois in *The Social Theory of W. E. B. DuBois* on his view of the treatment of Blacks in America.

Despite desperate efforts to rewrite and distort this history, a few of us must recall that in 1776, when three million white Americans proclaimed the equality of all men, they were at that very moment holding five hundred thousand black folk in slavery and classifying them not even as animals but as real estate. (p. 593)

The above quote sums up how most Americans viewed African Americans early in American history. This mindset of White Americans encompassed an overall

experience that Blacks experienced throughout their early existence in our history. This mindset has carried on in different forms as history has progressed.

African Americans have historically been discriminated against in education in many ways. The resistance to African Americans receiving equal education has caused a distinct disadvantage in terms of educational opportunities for African Americans who still feel these repercussions today.

It began with African Americans not being allowed to read and write from the period of slavery to soon thereafter. African Americans were given the right to citizenship in 1868 and the right to vote in 1870 but these amendments had loopholes to prevent African Americans from taking advantage of these rights. In addition, African Americans were subject to unequal and inadequate school facilities as well as being deprived of education with legislation to block desegregation efforts. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which stated separate public schools for White and African American students were unconstitutional, was a monumental decision which proved to be aggressive, controversial, and necessary. The *Brown* decision was intended to advance educational outcomes by increasing educational opportunities for African American children. Even with this intent, the *Brown* decision was slow to be implemented with courts finally desegregating schools into the late 1960s in many locations in the South. There was massive resistance by many White people across the country to desegregate African American children into all White public schools. This decision ultimately would shape the social and educational experiences of African Americans in a dramatic way.

My qualitative research study consisted of conducting interviews of African Americans who attended school during the post-*Brown* era until 2001. In conducting these interviews perspectives, reactions, and opinions of their schooling experiences were gathered and compared to one another. As the researcher, I took my schooling experiences and related them to the schooling experiences of the participants. As I compiled this data, I examined if their career choices, along with my own, were affected.

### **Research Questions**

All children, regardless of their race or gender, should have the opportunity to receive a quality education within our U.S. public school system. African American students have been at a disadvantage when it comes to education since the 1800s. My study investigated the schooling experiences of African Americans from the late 1960s until 2001. My research questions were:

1. What were the schooling experiences of African American students in the post-*Brown* era to 2001?
  - a. What were the schooling experiences of African American students who attended segregated schools?<sup>1</sup>
  - b. What were the schooling experiences of African American students who attended desegregated schools?
2. How have the schooling experiences of African American students during the aforementioned time period impacted their careers and subsequent lives?

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<sup>1</sup> This denotes African Americans who attended both segregated and desegregated schools

The purpose of my study was to gather perspectives from African Americans, including myself as a participant, on their schooling experiences in various time periods from the post-*Brown* decision to 2001 and to examine if these experiences impacted their career and subsequent lives. Two time periods were studied.

The first period examined schooling experiences of African American students after the 1954 *Brown* decision until the mid to late 1970s when full desegregation of Blacks and Whites together in schools was finally achieved. During the years right after the 1954 *Brown* decision, many African Americans experienced ridicule, humiliation, and mental and physical harm simply because of the color of their skin and wanting to have a quality education. During the 1970s the superficial acceptance of African American students in predominantly historical white schools began.

The next time period focused on the schooling experiences of African Americans from the 1980s to the 2000s, which examined full desegregation. During the 1980s, actual acceptance of African American students in predominantly white schools was more prevalent.

Since the 2000s, conditions seem to point to a slow movement back toward school segregation in the form of neighborhood segregation where families are choosing to live in places of similar SES. Two Supreme Court cases, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, are relevant to this context.

In the case *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, one of the Seattle School Districts developed a student assignment plan based upon

race. The objective of the plan was to make sure racial balance of each school was achieved within certain perimeters. The school district would take into account students' race when assigning them to a school. As a result, some students were not allowed to attend certain schools based upon their race (Fineman, 2015). Similarly in *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky had been desegregated by court order. The school system put in a policy in place that did not allow any school to have black students make up less than 15% or more than 50% of its total student population. As a result, student assignments were based upon race because certain schools could not accommodate certain students (Siegel, 2006).

In both cases, the plaintiffs argued that student assignment based on race violated the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment (Fineman, 2015). In June of 2007, the Supreme Court passed a decision to affirm that the desegregation of public schools in Seattle and Louisville violated the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment. In both cases, the plans of the school districts were found to be unconstitutional. Chief Justice Roberts's concluding sentence explained the position of the other Justices: "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race" (Fineman, 2015, p. 611).

This type of segregation of schools is seen in other school districts as shown in Florida with the re-segregation of Pinellas County where five, low SES predominantly black elementary schools were labeled as the lowest low-performing schools in Florida. Prior to re-segregation in 2007, these five elementary schools had School Report Grades of C or higher (Yeomans, 2015).

In conclusion, my study investigated the schooling experiences of African Americans over two time periods. There has been research done on the segregation and desegregation within society, specifically education, but this study focused on gathering the experiences of African Americans and comparing those experiences. These experiences were analyzed to see if African American's career outcomes were affected by the available opportunities (or lack thereof).

### **Overview of Subsequent Chapters**

#### **Chapter II**

The review of literature in this research study will give background and context about the research question regarding schooling experiences of African Americans in the post-*Brown* era from 1954 to 2001 and how this mentioned period impacted their careers and subsequent lives.

Portions of the review of literature will chronical the history of segregation, within society. To gain an understanding of how the history of desegregation in public schools came to be, the essence of education itself must be analyzed. Early forms of segregation and the progression towards desegregation in relation to education will be examined. Desegregation, and the movement back to resegregation in public schools are all intricately connected.

Another aspect of the review of literature will examine the schooling experiences of African Americans. Various experiences and events in school in which African Americans had to face the hardships and challenges will be shared.

### **Chapter III**

The qualitative methodology used in this dissertation will be explained in this chapter. The qualitative methods of autoethnography and phenomenological research were used. The phenomenological perspective focused on descriptions of what participants within this research experienced and how it is that they experienced what they experienced. The autoethnographic part of my research focused on my own experiences and analyzes them in the context of the lived experiences of the participants within the study. I examine experiences from the participants and my own experiences to draw personal relationships and conclusions. Interviews and oral history of the participants and my own experiences were analyzed to explain the schooling experiences of African Americans during the post-*Brown* era until 2001 and the impact these experiences had on future educational opportunities and career choices. An explanation is given to offer an understanding of why these participants were chosen and their relevance to specific time periods. Since I, the researcher, am a participant within the data collection, my subjectivity and efforts to promote the trustworthiness of results will be addressed at the conclusion of this chapter.

### **Chapter IV**

African American students' schooling experiences, which include summaries, samples of data, and interview excerpts, are presented in Chapter IV. Eleven African Americans within different time periods of education over a 34-year time period were interviewed. The time periods spanned from the post-*Brown* decision in 1954 until 2001. Five African Americans attended school during the time period from 1967 until 1980.

The other six African Americans, which include me as the researcher, attended school during from 1980 until 2001. Themes derived from the interview data and interpretations are analyzed and shared in this chapter.

### **Chapter V**

The final chapter provides implications of my research and recommendations based on my data and analysis.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Segregation is the adultery of an illicit intercourse between injustice and immorality

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Segregation is that which is forced upon an inferior by a superior. Separation is done voluntarily by two equals.

—Malcolm X

This review of literature will examine the history of segregation in America. It will assess the status of blacks during the early stages in society as being “free” individuals and chronical the struggles of being accepted as equals and given the basic rights that whites enjoyed as American citizens. Specifically, within this recap of segregation and African American’s plight through American history, the scope of education will be looked at in relation to African American’s schooling experiences.

#### **Defining Segregation and Racism**

The concept of “segregation” is generally considered to have a negative association in history. Newby (1982) defines segregation by using the *Modern Dictionary of Sociology* as “voluntary or involuntary separation of residence areas on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic characteristics” (p. 17). Newby uses a quote from Bain’s 1964 *Segregation. In A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* to convey the following idea:

[Segregation] denotes geographical separation and separate use of facilities which is *forced* upon subordinate categories and groups of person by law or custom as “gentleman’s agreement.” This usage applies mainly to ethnic, religious, and racial categories and groups . . . (p. 18)

The idea of separation “forced upon insubordinate categories and groups” explicitly reinforces the mentality that African Americans were looked upon as not equal and therefore, inferior.

Because of the mentality of inferiority whites had of African Americans, separation was the accepted behavior that existed in society. Even though segregation has been portrayed as a negative act in history, some African Americans believed the opposite, especially when it came to education. Sidle Walker (1996) states that segregated schools provided learning environments that promoted support and inspiration which developed the self-efficiency of African American students. In additions, educators held high standards on a daily basis.

### **Historical and Legal Aspects of Segregation and Desegregation in Society and Education**

As American history tells us, African Americans were viewed as a people that were not valued as human beings. One of the early, disparaging court cases in American history that shows the status, or the lack thereof, of African Americans is the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857). The *Dred* decision simply stated that African Americans were not U.S. citizens which deprived them basic rights as a human being (Maltz, 2007). In fact, minorities, specifically blacks, were not considered by many as human beings. This is shown in the U.S. Constitution with the Three-fifths compromise, where slaves counted

as only 3/5 of a person in terms of total population (Pope & Treier, 2011). They were viewed as merely property.

The above mindset of certain people within America ties into the idea of whiteness as property. When you look at the phrase “whiteness as property”, you can break the two words up with distinct meanings. In early America, the definition of “whiteness” referred to the “legal status of a person as slave or free” and whiteness therefore “identified conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits and was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof” (Harris, 1993, p. 1726). James Madison, politician and “Father of the Constitution,” viewed property as “everything to which a man may attach a value and have a right” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 279). Property in many cases was not just exterior items of monetary value but things such as liberties and human rights (Crenshaw, 1995). When one combines the words into the phrase “whiteness as property,” one has a system in which minorities, specifically blacks at the time, had no rights because of their skin color. In fact, blacks were not considered human beings in that sense. As a result, African Americans did not have human or civil rights. If you look at “property” and what it meant during early America, blacks were considered a possession, owned by property owners. Race and property went together hand-in-hand. With blacks being classified as slaves, this meant they were a form of property and therefore controlled and regulated (Crenshaw, 1995). With minorities, specifically blacks, starting off with such a disadvantage, whites gained a distinct advantage. With no human or civil rights, education for African Americans was not only unheard of but forbidden.

The skin color of blacks categorized, defined, and associated them with a particular race. When one is associated with a certain race, certain members of other groups can display acts of racism towards them. Du Bois foretells that “the system of racism/White supremacy would be the problem of the twentieth century” (as cited in Rashid, 2011, p. 591). So what is racism exactly? Ford and Airhihenbuwa (2010) defines racism by using the definition given by Robert Wallace Gilmore, a Civil Rights activist, as “the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability” (p. 1). Racism is not a departure from what is normal in everyday life but something that is deeply rooted within American society. Many times, racism within structures is invisible and therefore, difficult to identify. With the difficulty in identifying racism, racial privilege continues to exist and thrive (Freeman, 2011).

One benefit that is associated with racial privilege, especially for whites, is the concept of white privilege. White privilege is a way of interrupting racial inequalities whites gain as a result of living day to day instead of focusing on the disadvantages the minorities encounter.

Additionally, White privilege is the social power or authority whites have over minorities through the means of unwarranted benefits (Mindrup, Spray, & Lamberghini-West, 2011). Many African Americans were firsthand witnesses to white privilege during their various schooling experiences. In addition, many African Americans still experience white privilege in their present-day lives.

According to theorists such as Wildman (1996), white privilege has a basis deeply embedded in the system of legalized discrimination. Many whites who benefit from white privilege do not acknowledge the systems of privilege they experience. For instance, many people in the U.S. heavily depend on social or financial legacy or birthright from earlier generations. Shapiro (2003) supports this point, saying that many white children are helped by their parents, allowing them to live beyond their revenue. This allows them to obtain major assets such as buying houses and accumulating wealth. This notion is very unlikely for people of color whose ancestors were slaves (Wildman, 1996). This very notion carries over to education and by virtue of where one goes to school to receive their education. This can be further drilled down to one's SES which determines the opportunities to which they are exposed. From Wildman's premise, you can conclude that African American's rate of being exposed to these opportunities is far less than whites. Society is based on property rights, and the meeting point of race and property can be used to understand this inequality in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Many African Americans feel that whites may turn a blind eye to white privilege or be totally oblivious to the fact that it exists.

Siddle Walker and Archung (2003) make the point that after slavery ended, African Americans were thought of as a people who were significantly behind in every aspect to the White race. Manual labor was a point of emphasis and nonacademic training was a focus. Teachers were strategically placed with the purpose of teaching this mind set to African American students. A state of second-class citizenship was used to prepare African Americans for inferior roles in society. Siddle Walker and Archung

(2003) compare the education for African Americans in America prior to the *Brown* decision and thereafter to the Bantu education in South Africa. Bantu education, as stated by Hendrick Voerwoerd in Siddle Walker and Archung's (2003) article, is intended to yield untrained workers among Africans whose exposure to appropriate technical and academic training was limited if not totally obstructed. With these same types of educational ideals in place, the experiences of African Americans students in school during this time had to be challenging and frustrating.

Educational opportunities were scarce for African Americans. Siddle Walker (2000) indicates that in the 1930s America, 200 counties with African American populations of 12.5% or more had no high schools within their communities (p. 259). As African American were not perceived as having worth, Walker discusses the perceived "worth" of African Americans:

Whites refused to allocate appropriate funds for African American education. . . . Whites held the belief that African Americans did not contribute sufficiently to the tax base to be worthy of receiving an equitable share for their schools . . . the value of African American property in the South was only about 8 per cent of the total, even though the students constituted 30 per cent of the South's total school attendance. The classrooms are described as "primitive one-room frame structures, wholly lacking in modern facilities" (Siddle Walker, 2000, p. 259)

In 1935, W. E. B. Du Bois recognized how far behind African Americans were to whites when it came to equal facilities in education. Here is an excerpt from his *Black Reconstruction in America*:

White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and

almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule. (Du Bois, 1935, p. 701)

In the South during that time, North Carolina was considered to be the premier state for education (Siddle Walker, 1996). A commission of African Americans and whites reported to the governor of North Carolina the real state of education in N.C.:

In a great many instances the school buildings now in use for colored children are in a poor state of repair. Generally, many are poorly lighted and heated, and in many instances are too small to give adequate accommodations to the pupils...In many of the classrooms the furniture is antiquated, the blackboards are insufficient in size and badly abused...Very few rural colored schools are equipped with modern single desks. Little to no provision is made for teaching health and sanitation. Laboratories for science and the vocational subjects are few and inadequate. (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 2)

In North Carolina, the lack of resources put into educating African Americans was especially true as per pupil value of school property for blacks was less than one-fifth of the property value for whites. Pupil enrollment allotments were \$217 for white students as compared to \$70 for black students (Siddle Walker, 1996).

Fraser (2010) states that many of the men who created and laid the foundation of the U.S. believed the purpose of education was identifying future leaders. The education of lower class citizens was essential only to eliminate crime and poverty by keeping children off the streets. The two aforementioned ideas convey that education was built upon the premise that only people of the highest social class should be educated. The “lower class citizens” categorized as “not worthy” to receive higher education were exclusively of black descent.

This resonating concept has repercussions that historically have put African Americans at a disadvantage early in our society because they started behind and continue to play “catch-up” in today’s times. The effect of the forbidden or limited opportunities in education for African Americans throughout history is ever so present today with a widening achievement gap between whites and minorities. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) shows that fourth-grade reading scores for whites are at 51% proficiency whereas African Americans reading scores are at 23% proficiency. Standardized testing results from the 2014–2015 American College Test (ACT), which is a standardized college readiness assessment that measures high school achievement and college admissions in the United States, reported that African American students scored 37% lower than whites on English and 31% lower than whites in Reading and Math (Bell, 2016).

The idea of educated blacks was a threat to the fiber of the U.S society in the 1700s and 1800s. In fact, prior to abolition, there was no general public educational system in the South for blacks, except in North Carolina. Before the Civil War, there were signs of developing public school systems for whites, but property owners did not see the importance in being taxed to provide education for the working class, which were blacks (Anderson, 1988).

In 1896, a monumental case appeared within the Federal Court System. In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) the Supreme Court first approved of “de jure segregation,” which is the law mandating racial separation (Golub, 2005). In education, this is important

because the “separate but equal” for facilities was purportedly present but many schools that African American students attended were inadequate in resources.

The case of *Cummings v. Richmond County Board of Education* in 1899 brought about the complaint of three citizens within Georgia that sued the Board of Education of Richmond County because they argued that a \$45,000 tax collected from all citizens was being used for schools within the district. However, the high schools in the district would only allow white students to attend. The plaintiffs were seeking an injunction against the tax collected since African American children could not reap the benefits of the tax money (Connally, 2000).

The *Cummings* and *Plessy* cases both show that African Americans were mistreated in all facets of society, especially public education in regards to resources such as facilities. Also, the separation of African Americans and whites made African Americans seem as “outcasts” who should not be able to interact with whites. In the *Plessy* case, Justice Harlan’s explains in his dissent that *Plessy* was just as malicious as the *Dred* decision:

And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage, and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty. But in the view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved . . . (Golub, 2005, p. 592)

There were several things that led to the notion of fighting segregation within education prior to the landmark *Brown* decision occurring. A group of black educators called the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS) was created in 1903 and fought to address inequalities among African American students. This group's aim was to study problems associated with African American students and find solutions to these problems. Some of the items that the NATCS analyzed were improved schoolhouses, better salaries for teachers, heavy enrollment for teachers, and poorly supported high schools. The NATCS conducted a study on the aforementioned problems and reported detailed discrepancies in expenditures for Black and White schools (Siddle Walker, 2013).

The National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had doubts on how to specifically fight segregation, or Jim Crow laws, within education. In 1922, the American Fund for Public Service, a foundation created to pervasive social reform, was created by an \$800,000 donation from Charles Garland, a Harvard student. From that fund, \$100,000 was given to the NAACP in order to analyze the legal status of African Americans. At that point, the NAACP began to look at the discrimination in public schools (Margold & Joint Committee of the N.A.A.C.P. and the American Fund for Public Service, 1986).

In trying to fight *Plessy* and the separate-but-equal ideal in reference to education with the Supreme Court, the NAACP knew it would be a risky move to pursue this strategy. If they were unsuccessful in attacking *Plessy*, the Supreme Court would support the structure of the Jim Crow laws and that way of life.

A different strategy was created by Nathan Margold, a former assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. In 1930, Margold created the “Margold Report” which urged the NAACP to test the constitutional legitimacy of black schools being underfunded as a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This strategy would contest segregation circuitously by showing that inadequate expenses in spending violated the *Yick Wo* principal (Wiecek, 2006). Mauro (2006) explains the *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886) ruling as a decision handed down in 1866 where it was “the first case where the United States Supreme Court ruled that a law that is race-neutral on its face, but is administered in a prejudicial manner, is an infringement of the Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (p. 237). The Margold Report hoped that it would force school boards and legislators to see that true equalization in segregated schools was an impossible feat.

In 1935, Charles Houston joined the NAACP and refined recommendation from the Margold Report. He was instrumental in winning major cases to pave the way for *Brown* in 1954. Houston successfully argued *Murray v. Maryland* (1936) which led to the desegregation of the University of Maryland’s Law School. Also, in *Gaines v. Canada*, Houston’s argument caused the Supreme Court in ordering the admission of a black student to the University of Missouri’s Law School (Ashenfelter & Yoon, 2006).

The NAACP implored another important tactic in its repertoire against segregation in education. In 1944, the publication of Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* inspired the NAACP and its legal team. *An American Dilemma* provided an examination, and extensive documentation, of racial persecution. The data within *An*

*American Dilemma* provided the NAACP and its legal team with tons of information to fight the foundations on which Jim Crow was built upon.

In 1950, Thurgood Marshall preceded Houston at the NAACP and went on to argue successfully two cases, *Sweatt v. Painter* and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma*, where the Supreme Court contended that black students had to be admitted into graduate and professional schools based upon the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Behnken, 2012).

As a result of the court cases won and strategy of the NAACP, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was born. This case exhibited how the U.S. Supreme Court took legal action in providing African Americans with legal rights in regards to education and “right the wrong” African Americans faced in education. The *Brown* decision was made to desegregate schools and provide desegregation where African American and white students could attend school together. Desegregation is the action of incorporating a racial group into a community with the elimination of laws, regulations, or customs which prohibit members of a specific racial group from using certain facilities (Desegregation, n.d.). The *Brown* case forced the U.S. Federal Courts to oversee desegregation efforts in public education. The Federal Court was charged with supervising this process within public schools by delegating power to district courts. It was assumed that the court system would return control back to school districts once mandates were carried out and school districts achieved “unitary status.” Unitary status refers to a school system that “no longer discriminates between school children on basis

of race and . . . affirmatively removes all vestiges of race discrimination” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 1024).

The *Brown* cases argued using the context of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Law, which stated that “all men are created equal” which was an ideal with which many whites had a hard time coming to grips with. The courts essentially attempted to eliminate “de jure school segregation” which is racial separation that is required by law in the *Brown* decision of 1954. The *Brown* case stated that when children of color do not have the chance to interact with white students in the same setting, then their curriculum experiences are cut short. As a result, children of color must learn to live with white students and their opportunity to do this is being deprived during their school experience. Furthermore, school environment or curriculum cannot be equal when students are segregated based on race. The *Brown* decision was slow to fruition in its intended purpose. With *Brown* being passed in 1954, by 1964, only 1.2% of the Black students in 11 Southern states attended desegregated public schools (Brown & Hunter, 2009).

Another case that was originally heard before *Brown* in 1952 and then revisited in 1954 as a result of *Brown* decision was *Bolling v. Sharpe* (1954). This case was affirmed by *Brown II*. This case was unique because unlike *Brown*, the framework for arguing this case was built upon the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment instead of simple school desegregation. The students’ Fifth Amendment was violated. The Due Process Clause within the Fifth Amendment does not allow the U.S. government to deny anyone life, liberty or property. The background of the case stemmed from a group of parents

petitioning that the newly-opened high school in their area be a desegregated school (Rubin, 2006).

The *Brown II* case, which was heard and decided in 1955, considered arguments by schools wanting clarification on how to desegregate schools. The Supreme Court charged district courts with carrying out desegregation that needed to occur “with all deliberate speed.” This phrase was unclear and did not give urgency to a nation that was not ready for African- American and white students to coexist together in a school environment. This *Brown II* created inconsistency among the district courts.

Desegregation efforts established by the U.S. Supreme Court were resisted heavily across the South. One of the most famous events in the African American Civil Rights Movement was the “Little Rock Nine.” Their story was an important event that came from the *Brown* decision. The NAACP tried to enroll nine African American students in Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Little Rock School Board wanted to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Brown* by implementing a plan that would be put into place in fall of 1957. With this in place, on September 4, 1957, the first day of school, the nine African American students were not allowed to attend Central High School. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus deployed the Arkansas National Guard to block their passage. This type of action reinforced that African American students were viewed or thought of as unequal to their white peers. Here, the governor, who was viewed as the leader and head of state, went against a Federal Court decision. President Eisenhower had to intervene by sending the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division of the United States to help protect the nine African American students (Willie, 2005).

Another such situation occurred in 1959 in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Here the district court ruled that the school district did not have to desegregate immediately. In 1959, another court case emerged which mandated that desegregation occur immediately or the county board of supervisors would cut off funds to the public schools within the district. This stoppage of funds shut down public schools from 1959 to 1964. White students were given money to attend all white private schools and African American students were not educated during those years unless they moved outside the county. As a result, the decision handed down from *Brown II* created frustration among supporters because there were no consistent or definite parameters set (Daniels, 2005).

The notion of *Brown* was looked at by many local district courts as a means of not segregating African American and white students instead of desegregating them. Many whites within the southern states of the U.S. blocked or slowed down segregation with legislation. One important U.S. Supreme court case that dealt with “Freedom of Choice” plans and their inability to desegregate was *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968) that occurred in 1968. One of the main points that came out of this case was that “Freedom of Choice” plans were not unconstitutional, but they were ineffective in trying to desegregate schools with school systems. The decision from the court case concluded that the school board within New Kent County, a county in Eastern Virginia, must create new plans that would aid in desegregating schools within that system. Virginia put together a policy known as massive resistance, which tied other white politicians and leaders organized them where they created new state laws to prevent segregation. The legislative package known as the Stanley Plan was a bundle of 13

statutes approved to help ensure racial segregation continued. One of the tactics within the massive resistance was the closing of public schools. The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors forced all public schools to close when they deliberately withheld money from the schools to operate. The school district was made up of two combined elementary and high schools. Since public schools were closed, the school board provided tuition grants to both Black and White students. No private schools existed for blacks thus making all the private schools segregated. As a result of the board's decision, African American students were without formal education from 1959 to 1963 (Kelly, 2012). Most educators, students, and parents would agree that having a bad teacher for one year is detrimental. In fact, a very poor teacher has the same results of a student missing 40% of the school year (Kristof, 2012). In this particular case, African Americans literally missed five years of school. This is a prime example of African Americans being at a disadvantage when it comes to having the same educational opportunities as whites.

North Carolina followed suite and like most southern states, they tried to delay the *Brown* decision as much as possible. Unlike most states, North Carolina used a more elusive way to delay desegregation. In 1954, Governor William Umstead created a committee known as the "Governors Special Advisory Committee on Education." This committee was headed by Thomas Pearsall, who was former Speaker of the House. This committee decided that desegregation within public school in NC should not be accomplished or even tried. As a result, the General Assembly passed the Pupil Assignment Act of 1955. This act shifted all accountability for pupil assignment and

enrollment from the State Board of Education to individual county and city school boards. In doing this, North Carolina created ambiguous standards to control transfer policies with students. This deterred whites and blacks from attending school together which circumvented desegregation. This trend continued even after Governor Umstead's sudden death.

When Luther Hodges assumed the role of governor in 1954, he continued to block desegregation by facilitating the passing of legislation to avoid desegregation. The North Carolina Advisory Committee on Education also created the Pearsall Committee, named after its chairman Thomas J. Pearsall, which proposed an amendment that sanctioned the General Assembly of NC to create the Pearsall Plan. The Pearsall Plan recognized that school desegregation was unavoidable. Instead of blatantly resisting integration like other southern states, North Carolina came up with a solution to circumvent true desegregation. The Pearsall Plan was intended to gradually desegregate public school within North Carolina by giving individual school systems, which were predominately white, the decision-making power to control the pace of desegregation. During the Pearsall Plan, many school districts continued to be segregated and prohibited the transfer of black students to white schools. In addition, it is also stated that any student not accepted into a private school and assigned to a mixed school could opt out of attending school altogether (Cecelski, 1994). Even though these two events gained headlines and attention, many African Americans across the South experienced similar events of unfairness and discrimination. This was a testament on how passionate whites were to

keep blacks separated and out of adequate schools as well as how passionate blacks were to be included and educated.

The federal government began to put even more pressure on North Carolina, along with other southern states, to expedite segregating schools. In 1965, the U.S. Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare outlining standards for desegregating schools. Part of these standards mandated that school districts with past evidence of school segregation must create a desegregation plan unless they were already following a court-ordered plan. Washington would not support existing programs or provide federal grants if desegregation did not take place. As a result, the North Carolina Attorney General notified each district that they must construct its own voluntary desegregation plans or produce a statement saying that the schools within their district were already desegregated in order to comply with Title VI (Ayscue & Woodward, 2014).

North Carolina, even though slow and resistant to desegregation, was considered a pioneering state in implementing tactics to desegregate schools. An important case that gained U.S. attention in regards to desegregating schools occurred in Charlotte, NC. The case, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1970) is similar to the *Green* case which dealt with “Freedom of Choice.” In this case, busing students to promote desegregation of schools was the main question at hand. The local district court held that busing was a suitable solution to help balance White and African- American students at schools within the district. The busing policy was not based upon student assignment in regards to race but based upon the nearness to the school to the student. After *Brown*,

Charlotte merged school districts from the city and county. Even with the merger, African American students still attended mostly black inner city schools and White students attended white schools located outside the city. The NAACP brought the case on behalf of a student named James Swann, who was six-years old. In 1965, Judge Craven ruled in favor of the Board of Education because the Constitution did not require school systems to increase racial mixing. However, the *Green* case caused the *Swann* case to be filed again. As Judge McMillan ruled upon his first case on the U.S. federal bench, he concluded that busing was the only way in which to desegregate schools and carry out the legal requirements of the Constitution. This case brought in a specialist from Rhode Island to analyze the school boards plan. Judge McMillan eventually proposed a rezoning plan. This plan addressed high school desegregation of students but not elementary. The plan called for African American students in the inner city to be distributed as evenly as possible to white high schools in the outer areas. Eventually the case would make it to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. There, six judges on the bench would rule in favor of the busing plan (Godwin, Leland, Baxter, & Southworth, 2006). In this particular case, segregation was resisted and had to be taken all the way to the Supreme Court in order for students of different races to attend school together. The *Swann* decision that was passed in 1970 essentially did away with neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools, in this context, were shown with a majority of African American students attending inner city schools and White students attending schools in outer areas of the city.

### **Present Day Segregation and Desegregation in Society and Education**

The fight against segregation was a hard and long one. Schools segregated because of race were officially disbanded as result of the *Brown* decision. It took much effort and perseverance to finally uphold the decision and implement it with fidelity. With all that work, public school segregation is more evident today than when Thurgood Marshall, the U.S. Supreme Court's 96th justice and first African American to serve in such a role, wrote his dissent in 1974 (Olgetree, 2007). Many students are forced to attend schools because of their race and SES. SES refers to the combined economic and social work experience of a person or their family's position. SES is usually based upon how much money is made, the educational level of that person, and their occupation. SES is broken down into three categories: low, middle, and high. An individual or family would fall into low, middle, or high based upon their income, educational level, and their profession (Winkleby, Jatulis, Frank, & Fortmann, 1992).

The pre-*Brown* era and segregation up until the 1970s has come full circle today with the move back toward segregated neighborhood schools. According to Siddle Walker and Archung (2003), white and black students attending school together is steadily declining and almost at the same level as it was during the 1970s. In fact, at the peak of desegregation, less than 50% of African American students attended predominantly white schools.

North Carolina and its school districts were front runners in desegregating its schools. After the *Brown* decision in 1954, the 1964 Civil Rights Act pushed school districts within North Carolina to desegregate public schools as federal power began to

grow. Unfortunately, data would suggest that North Carolina has resorted back to segregation in the form of neighborhood schools.

According to a report by Ayscue and Woodward that was produced in 2010, 7 out of 10 black students attended schools made out of a majority of minority students and 2 out of 10 black students attended schools that were significantly segregated. These numbers suggest that black students attending segregated schools made up of minority students has increased over the past 20 years.

In regards to SES, Ayscue and Woodward (2014) state that black students attended schools that had a large student population of low SES students (59.1%), which was greater than the overall numbers of low SES students in the state (50.2%). On the contrary, white students attended schools that had a small student population of low SES students (43.5%) as compared to the previously mentioned overall numbers of low SES students in the state (50.2%).

### **The Impact of Segregation and Socioeconomic Status (SES) on Education**

There is data to suggest that minority students are affected by segregation. In 1967, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights presented a report which stated that when African American students are separated from other students, or white students, their achievement becomes negatively affected. This same concept is evident today with the separation of students due to SES. Feldman (2005) explains that many white parents will leave urban areas or cities with the intent to get their children away from poverty and possible inadequate environment of an urban school. They seek suburban, high performing districts that have a higher quality of education. Feldman (2005) goes on to

discuss that low SES families, mainly consisting of minorities, do not have the financial means to move from these cities. This would suggest that impoverished areas are created and thus equates into inadequate schools. All these factors would go on to suggest that African American schooling experiences can be affected.

The make-up of a school has a lot to do with the make-up of the community or neighborhood it inhabits. A neighborhood's SES has a profound effect on its environment. Sanbonmatsu (2008) uses the concept of John Kain's spatial theory created in 1968 to explain the effect neighborhoods have on their environments. This spatial theory supports that job opportunities for African Americans are much lower than for whites because fewer job opportunities and employment are closer to African American or urban neighborhoods than to White neighborhoods or areas. This concept can affect the quality of schools, either in a negative or positive way, depending on the neighborhood they are in.

The social disorganization theory also lends support to ideas in the previously-stated spatial theory about the educational and employment opportunities that African Americans when living in low SES neighborhoods. The main principle within the theory of social disorganization is that one's residential location matters more than one's individual characteristics, which can consist of gender, race, or age, when it comes down to one becoming involved in illegal activities. Urban neighborhoods are many times isolated from social networks that are needed for the residents within that neighborhood to be successful in society (Warner, Beck, & Ohmer, 2010).

The social disorganization theory can also lend itself to the notion that the make-up of an area has significant influences on the facilities within that area. More specifically, the school within a neighborhood will take on the characteristics of the neighborhood, whether good or bad. Low SES neighborhood can have places known as “no zones,” which refer to communities with “no banks, no grocery stores, no community services, no hospitals” (Goldring, Cohen-Vogel, Smrekar, & Taylor, 2006). With this being said, many of the resources of urban, neighborhoods are located outside the immediate area and/or the resources within the neighborhood are less than adequate. Residents within these communities have high liabilities in the form of high poverty conditions. To relate that to education, school environments will be less favorable with limited resources and educators being reluctant to work in these high stress environments with accountability models putting so much demand on results. These issues are hard to control or solve by the staff or the principal within the school (Anacker, 2010).

On the contrary, neighborhoods that have high property value and are rich in economic resources, consisting of jobs, will have a better overall environment. Having access to assets in a high SES area usually results in numerous opportunities to great education and careers, and less exposure to crime and great law enforcement (Goldring et al., 2006).

District and attendance lines establish schools made up of large numbers of low SES students and known to promote racial isolation. The same concept that the *Swann* and *Greene* cases fought against are resurfacing today. Many times, low SES students are made up of minority students. With the current economic woes in the United States,

low SES areas force poor children to attend a school within their neighborhood while higher SES students attend a school in their neighborhood. When students of poverty dominate any particular school environment, they potentially suffer. These students are exposed to less than ideal home environments. In addition, these students are around peers who have the same environmental challenges as they do. The lack of parental support in the form of supervision, which can be derived from working multiple jobs or simply not at home, educational levels of parent(s), negative peer influences in the form of crime, and financial instability are some of the challenges students deal with on a daily basis. Wells (2007) makes a valid point in reference to school environments located within low SES areas. Many times, schools within low SES areas do not have the necessary resources to meet the needs of students. The resources these schools lack are high quality staff, amount of personnel needed to perform various tasks needed, the ability to generate parental support, autonomy to operate their specific school if what is needed goes outside the realm of central office initiatives, and funds needed to tailor programs specific to the needs of that individual school. When resources are limited, especially in early elementary years, this contributes to students falling behind. Students falling behind can result in behavior problems which further hinder students' learning. All these things "contribute to the way society makes African American men invisible and undermines their interests in learning" (Wells, 2007, p. 3). In essence, the students subjected to these conditions in schools are more likely not to be successful and prepared to further their educational opportunities.

When a minority student from a household that does not have a strong educational foundation is placed with peers who have stronger educational foundations, their achievement is more likely to be enhanced. In addition, low SES students who are around other higher SES students are exposed to better vocabularies and deeper engagement that will improve learning. Low SES students would have more access to better classrooms, more stable school staff in regards to teacher attrition, and better instruction. Wells and Crain (1994) state that lawyers and advocates of the civil rights movements strongly believed that desegregation would ensure that African Americans would have opportunities for social advancement which in turn would enhance their lives. In education, access to obtain degrees from white universities would lead to gainful employment and entry into social networks. Without access to these universities, African Americans would remain an unequal part of society and separate entity. The perspectives of two African American participants within this study who attended and graduated within the last 5 to 10 years will be able to speak to their schooling experiences in a majority white or black school. Their experiences will speak to if the aforementioned data has any validity or merit.

### **Critical Race Theory and Hearing African Americans Voices**

Race, gender, and class have a profound effect on the life experiences of all people. They interconnect all aspects of human life and many times the basis for social problems (Anderson & Collins, 1997).

Segregation within our society was based upon race. In 1980, a concept called Critical Race Theory (CRT) appeared in U.S. law schools out of legal scholarship. This

theory provides a decisive analysis on race and racism from a legal point of view. It is further linked to the injustice toward African Americans, people as property (linkage to slavery), race matters; whiteness as being the norm and colorblindness. CRT was created as a response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to sufficiently speak to the effects of race and racism in the United States legal system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004 p. 26).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) speaks to African Americans being viewed as not equal and therefore, inferior to whites. This theory transfers into the educational world. Walker (2003) references the historical context that African Americans were suited for industrial education. Industrial education was intended to prevent African Americans from obtaining skilled and professional careers. Whites believed blacks should be second class citizens in society and therefore, train for second-class jobs. This is significant in this study as the participants' schooling experiences were examined to determine if their educational opportunities affected their careers and ultimately their subsequent lives.

CRT is an ideal that started in the early 1970s that is derived and crafted from aspects in society that date back to the early 1700s. The below quotation by Professor Brown, a specialist of CRT at Emory Law, talks about the protection of "White Supremacy" and the veracity that minorities are looked upon as secondary in importance:

Although CRT does not employ a single methodology, it seeks to highlight the ways in which the law is not neutral and objective, but designed to support white supremacy and the subordination of people of color. (Brown, 2004)

Brown's quote is a strong and bold idea that indicates racism is still alive and evident. Today, racism does not show its ugly head as blatantly as it did in the 60s and 70s, but it is cloaked in stealth that can be much more dangerous. As Ladson-Billings (1998) quoted, "Expensively kept, economically unsound, a spurious and useless political asset in election campaigns, racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment" (p. 8).

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) propose interesting evidence to give some validity to Brown's quote on CRT. Everyday occurrences are intertwined with required interactions that involve people of all sorts. If any given interaction between one person and another somehow turns negative in nature, one may write it off as circumstances that have nothing to do with the situation, such as discourtesy or lack of concern or interest. On the other hand, when race is the cause of incivility or unconcern, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) refer to this as "microaggression." Microaggression can be defined as short, every day, spoken, behavioral acts, whether deliberate or unintended, that can cause humiliation. These disparaging, pessimistic racial snubs insult people of color (Sue et al., 2007). This type of behaviors just scratches the surface of what CRT discusses.

One of CRT's fundamental beliefs is counter-storytelling, or "naming one's reality." This tenet is defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2013) as the ability to "analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down" (p. 3). CRT is persistent in claiming that the voices and opinions of minorities must be heard in order to comprehend how the power structures of systems within society work. Ladson-

Billings (1998) explains counter-storytelling or “naming one’s own reality” and the three reasons for this:

1. Recognizing much of one’s existence or being is socially constructed
2. Narratives give members of the group a means of protection against mental self-harm
3. Stories from members of the group (minorities) help others outside the group (White) surmount a belief in or assumption of the superiority of their group. (p. 15)

When minorities’ voices are heard, especially experiences with subjugation and racism, counter-storytelling explains that whites may obtain facts and perspectives that they might not have known previously. By bringing in their lived experiences about various social and institutional aspects, minorities can test the prevailing common realism whites use to explain why certain resources are allocated and shared in their favor (Ladson-Billings 1998). The mere fact of one being a minority brings creditability in speaking about issues of racism and inequality.

White privilege is a way of interrupting racial inequalities whites gain as a result of living day to day instead of focusing on the disadvantages the minorities encounter. Additionally, White privilege is the social power or authority whites have over minorities through the means of unwarranted benefits (Mindrup, Spray, & Lamberghini-West, 2011).

### **Oral History and Narratives of African American Schooling Experiences**

African Americans have endured racism and prejudice from the times of slavery, to after the Emancipation Proclamation, throughout the “separate but equal” doctrine, before, during, and after the *Brown* decision, during full desegregation, and up until

present day. Accounts of their experiences have been recorded through narratives and oral history. Oral history is shared by *storying*, which is a method of structuring experiences into stories. Storying helps make sense of unassociated and autonomous events and bring them together. African American ideals, customs, and ceremonies endured during the Middle Passage were preserved in the form of storytelling and folklore (Banks-Wallace, 2002). Storytelling is specifically prevalent with African American and their culture during the slavery era where it was prohibited for them to read or write; with physical consequences given if they were caught doing so. Storytelling was considered very important and essential in African American history. Banks-Wallace (2002) states that “major functions of folklore and storytelling include nurturing a harmonious African American community, sustaining a unique cultural identity, and undergirding the struggle for spiritual and material freedom (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 412). Furthermore, linguistic, resonances, aromas, visions, and touches through storying provided enslaved African Americans to commit to memory the good and bad aspects of this time where they could pass along from generation to generation.

Figure 1 shows the factors influencing storytelling. The cultural values and norms, immediate environment, and historical context all manipulate the creation of a particular story and how it is told.

Oral history, with the aspect of storytelling, was used in passing stories from African American to African American as well as from generation to generation. Oral history was also used in gathering the various schooling experiences of African Americans throughout history.



Figure 1. Factors Influencing Story Creation and Storytelling (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 414).

Through the south, African American students' experiences discrimination in many forms. In North Carolina, some of these experiences were captured through a program called "Oral Histories of the American South." This three-year project, sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill), selected and digitalized over 500 oral history interviews gathered by the "Southern Oral History Program" (SOHP). The SOHP has collected interviews from Southerners that made noteworthy impacts in various areas that are not captured in conventional written sources.

The SOHP has many oral histories from significant events in the south. Specifically, there are oral history interviews of African American students located in North Carolina. As these oral histories are shared, they resonate with how harsh African Americans were treated with blatant racism and hatred. African American's basic rights

as human beings were questioned constantly so their experiences within school were no different.

With the SOHP being based out of UNC-Chapel Hill, there are several accounts of African American schooling experiences across the triad. These accounts come from students who were the first to desegregate Chapel Hill High School in 1967, which was called Guy B. Phillips Junior High.

One account comes from the original class of African American students that desegregated Chapel Hill High School in 1967. Gloria Register Jeter, a student who attended Chapel Hill High School, then Guy B. Phillips Junior High School, was interviewed by Bob Gilgor. She describes her experience of attending orientation before attending Chapel Hill High School. Jeter explains that black students had to come early to orientation. As a result, she missed her summer vacation with her Aunt and Uncle. Jeter describes that black students were looked at as inferior. When it came to personal hygiene, African American students were thought of as not capable of taking care of themselves. Whites assumed that Black students didn't have the presence of mind to complete simple everyday tasks. Jeter explains that African American students were required to wash their face, brush their teeth, and comb their hair before coming to school. Also, staff assumed that Jeter, and other black students, did not know how to use a knife and fork. Jeter was one out of five African American students that were planning to desegregate Chapel Hill High School that was known then as Guy B. Phillips Junior High School. Below are excerpts from Jeter's oral history interview:

**GRJ:** Oh yes, I remember distinctly because I had to miss vacation with my Aunt and Uncle. We went down to the old Chapel Hill High School and met with a teacher, it may have been more than one, but we met with at least one adult who told us, wash your face before you come to school, brush your teeth. Now I'm 12 years old and I know how to wash my face and brush my teeth, how to use a knife and fork. It's not as though we were monkeys from the zoo, but that is how we were treated. And I was angry. That ticked me off . . .

**BG:** Did they discuss integration?

**GRJ:** They didn't need to. They took these 3 or 4 black people, young people, and said "you are special, because you are goin' to integrate this school, and we know that you don't know anything about anything and so we're going to tell you to get up every morning and brush your teeth and comb your hair." I don't know what they were telling the white kids. But I thought that was terrible, I really thought that was terrible, because it showed no sensitivity to who you are. I mean, if you showed up and your face wasn't washed then, yes, okay, we need to tell this person to wash their face, but if you showed up neat and clean, they didn't need to tell, they didn't need to go there. So they made us feel unique even before we got to the school, I mean they didn't have to do that

**BG:** And were there just three of you there?

**GRJ:** There may have been five of us. (Jeter, 2001)

A second account comes from another African American student, Joanne Peerman, who desegregated Chapel Hill High School, then known as Guy B. Phillips Junior High. Joanne Peerman gives two powerful accounts of her schooling experiences in and out of the classroom. The first oral history interview explains how she had a problem with one of her teachers. Peerman's had the same name as another one of her white classmates. Joanne was Peerman's middle name and the name she was accustomed to be called by. Since her white classmate's name was Joanne as well, the teacher within the classroom called Peerman "Martha," which was her first name. Peerman was frustrated as she felt the white teacher had changed her name. Peerman indicated that the

name the teacher called her was not familiar and “rubbed her the wrong way.” She stated that her parents did not even call her Martha. As a result of the frustration throughout the year, she ended up using profanity directed toward the teacher and getting into trouble. This account is powerful as a young child dealing with identity issues caused by a white teacher that felt as if she wasn’t doing anything wrong. Below is the excerpt from the interview with Peerman:

**JP:** Well, I had a problem in that I had the same name as another student in the class, Joanne, so there were two Joannes. And Joanne happens to be my middle name. This particular teacher decided that I should use my first name, that I should use Martha. So she called me Martha the whole school year. And for me to have a first white teacher and for her to change my name, and this “Martha,” which wasn’t familiar to me at all, it just rubbed me wrong. I mean, not even my parents called me Martha, nobody called me Martha. And because there were two Joannes in the class, I was now Martha all day long. I was just miserable—I’m about to cry just thinking about it. So I had trouble with her. I had big trouble with her. I got into my first trouble at school behind this white teacher. I called her a black motherfucker. Because of that—I guess it had pent-up hostilities—I was sent to the principal’s office, Mr. Edmunds, who lived up the street here, who was in my mom and dad’s wedding twenty years previous to that. And he in turn called my mom and dad. And my mom and dad and me and Mr. Edmunds were sitting in the principal’s office. He said he wasn’t going to suspend me. The only thing he wanted me to do—and he thought this would be punishment enough—is to repeat what I had called my teacher in front of my parents. So I had to sit there and say . . . those words. I know that my parents could not believe what was coming out of my mouth. And they were just so embarrassed and so hurt. I said it. And I know it rolled off my tongue a few minutes ago. (Peerman, 2001)

The second account comes from Peerman explaining racism related to the annual parade associated with the Duke-Carolina basketball game. Some of Peerman’s friends at school had indicated that they were excited in participating in the annual parade. The account is so powerful that Peerman best tells the story. The excerpt is below:

**JP:** My youngest childhood memory of racism was going to a parade up town. I remember some friends at school had said, “We’re going to be in the parade, we’re going to be in the parade.” And I was telling Momma that I wanted to be in the parade and they said that they were going to get paid five dollars for being in the parade. She wouldn’t let me participate. We just parked at the other church where we always watched our parades from. When I saw my friends walking down the street with these placards on—apparently they were hired by UNC because the placards front and back said something like “spooky Duke”—it was a Duke-Carolina game, and there were black kids, and I guess they were the “spooks,” and it said “spooky Duke.” And that was racism. I didn’t know either until my mother said, “You see, you wanted to be in the parade, you wanted five dollars. I’m glad I didn’t let you go.” Because I almost cried begging her. I almost begged her, could I be in it. She said no. Something told her not to let me participate in that. When I saw my friends I said, “There they are.” And I read it and it said, “spooky Duke.” I was still waving, I didn’t know. When we got home my mother explained to me what that meant. She said, “That’s the name they call us.” I was just crying. And she was fussing, crying almost. It was just very traumatic. (Peerman, 2001)

The next accounts come from Brenda Tapia. Tapia was one of the first African Americans to desegregate and attend North Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tapia previously attended Torrence-Lytle High School where she was a successful sophomore that was pressured by teachers at Torrence-Lytle to attend North Mecklenburg. Tapia was gifted academically but was discriminated by her fellow classmates and teachers. Below are four different accounts of Tapia’s schooling experiences. The first account reiterates her success at Torrence Lytle and how she felt isolated, alone, and ignored:

**BT:** That experience was traumatizing and in many ways, I still to this day feel the effects of it. But you . . . and you probably can’t imagine as young as you are. Being able to go to a school where everybody that you saw looked exactly like you, where you were treated like a human being, not as something exotic, or something undesirable, or just totally ignored. Ummm . . . and especially for it to happen right after my sophomore year in high school because my sophomore year in high school I was very involved in all the extracurricular activities of the

school. In fact, I was president of almost every organization except student government, which you had to be a senior to be president, so I was vice president of the student government. I was a majorette in the band and I belonged to all the other extracurricular activities at the school. Everyone knew me, teachers and students alike. The tenth-grade year was just the best year of my life, and then the following year, at the end of the tenth grade, near the end of my tenth-grade year being asked by my teachers to volunteer to transfer because they knew that that fall they were going to close the tenth grade at the all black high school that I went to and they would have no choice, they would have to go. But Juniors and Seniors would have an option of going, so they really pushed a lot of us in the top of the Junior and Senior classes to go on and transfer because they knew at that time that the following year, our senior year, the black school would be closed totally so we wouldn't be able to graduate from there, from the high school that we'd started at. They thought it would be better for us if we went on and adjusted to the school by going our junior year. So there were actually six people, uh, from Torrence-Lytle that went with me, none of them were from Davidson, so what that meant was that I would ride the bus every day, 13 miles on an all-black bus, I'd walk into North Meck and because I was, even among the six, one of the only ones who was on a college track everybody else would go one way and I would go another. (Tapia, 2001)

The third accounts by Tapia explain direct discrimination in the classroom against Tapia by her teachers. In all three accounts below, Tapia's teachers discounted her ability as a student and questioned her knowledge and know-how.

**BT:** And I remember I had two classes out of six where I wasn't the only black. In my U.S History class there was one other young man who had transferred with me from Torrence-Lytle, and we were in the history class. Unfortunately, it was United States history so we had to deal with the humiliation of getting to that one page in our U.S history book that dealt with slavery, not even African American history, but slavery in the United States. Half the page is taken up with this picture of black folks in the cotton fields smiling and picking cotton. And naturally, the teacher turns and is like: "Brenda, Tommy, why don't you tell us about the black experience, or why don't you tell us about slavery." I had just finished reading Frederick Douglass's autobiography the summer before she asked that question, and so I started relating to her about slavery from what Frederick Douglass shared in his narrative, and I was interrupted by a North Mecklenburg student who happens to be a professor here at the college who said: "Oh Brenda, that was Northern abolitionist propaganda, slaves were not treated cruelly at all, in fact slaves were a part of the family. And they were taken care

of, and they were loved, and that brutal stuff was just Northern abolitionist propaganda.”

**BT:** I really felt like I was a fly in buttermilk. I would often be the first to raise my hand, the last one to be called on. If I was called on the entire class would stop, everybody would turn and stare at me. Umm, which I’m sure you've probably experienced, as a student even if you do know the material, you know the answer, you can sometimes feel intimidated, especially if you're shy, and I am somewhat shy to offer an answer in class. And so to have everything stop and everybody staring down your throat is even more pressure.

**BT:** I can also remember passing in A papers and having them come back with C's on them and no correction marks and going up asking the teacher: “Could you explain to me what I have done wrong, there are no marks on here and I have a C.” And being told: “Do you want to go to the office,” you know, “Are you challenging my grading?” It’s like: “No, I come from a house where you’re not allowed to bring home anything less than a B, and my mom’s is going to want an explanation, so I need to be able to explain to her what it is I got wrong so I can work on getting it better.” And the teacher was like, “Look, either go to the office or take your seat.” (Tapia, 2001)

One of the participants in this research study used a narrative account through oral history during her interview to explain accounts of the Orangeburg Massacre that took place in 1968 on the campus South Carolina State University. Bass (2003), along with the participant interviewed within this study, explained that on February 9, 1968 at 10:33pm, three African American male students, Samuel Hammond, Delano Middleton, and Henry Smith, were killed and 27 wounded as a result of gun fire by policeman on the South Carolina State University campus.

The incident was sparked by African American students not being permitted to bowl at the only, all white bowling alley in the city. As a result of not being allowed to bowl, conflict rose which initially put nine students and one officer in the hospital for injuries. The violence spilled over to campus two days later when a bon fire was set by

students. As firetrucks came to put out the blaze, state troopers were on the scene. A banister rail was tossed and hit a state trooper in the face, which caused an injury. Within a matter of minutes, 70 officers stretched across the perimeter of the campus. These officers were equipped with pistols, carbines, and riot guns. According to Bass (2003) states riot guns were short-barreled shotguns that are used to, “disperse rioters rather than to inflict serious injury or death” (p. 9). Unfortunately, these weapons were loaded with buckshots that had shells containing 12 pellets of .32 caliber pistol slugs. This ammunition used was the same ammunition used to kill deer.

As students returned to watch the bon fire go out, an officer fired several “warning” rounds into sky, which prompted the other officer to open fire on students. This horrific scene was described as many students being shot in their back, sides, and even on the soles of their feet.

One of the survivors, Robert Lee Davis, told his story through an oral history project. Davis, a football player, was shot during this tragic time. He describes his experience,

**RD:** The sky lit up. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! And students were hollering, yelling, and running. I went into a slope near the front end of the campus, and I kneeled down. I got up to run, and I took one step; that’s all I can remember. I got hit in the back. (Bass, 2003, p. 9)

Davis continues to give emotional accounts of several of his fellow classmate’s stories as they were shot that night and beside him on the floor of the campus infirmary. One account describes how he witnessed his friend and fellow football teammate, Samuel Hammond, die right in front of him from a shot in the back as he was head to head with

him. The second account tells of Henry Smith, a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) student who called his mother to explain one officer held a female black student while the other one beat her with his club. Smith later died that night at the hospital with five separate gunshot wounds. A third emotional count by Davis explains that Delano Middleton, another fellow football player and star basketball player, died after he requested that his mother, who worked on campus as a maid, recite the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalms for the bible. While he was reciting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalms back, he died from a gunshot wound right above his heart.

There are some powerful testimonies and information that portray the difficult hardships of functioning in a segregated society and attending segregated schools. Some narratives and oral history from African American students would suggest an opposite perspective on segregation, especially segregated schools. In Patterson, Mickelson, Hester, and Wyrick's (2011) *Remembering Teachers in a Segregated School: Narratives of Womanist Pedagogy*, these authors conducted research and used oral history on some positive experiences African American students faced in segregated schools. Fifty-five former Douglas students were interviewed with their ages ranging from mid-50s to the oldest of 99 years.

The background of Patterson et al.'s research was rooted in Parsons, Kansas where African Americans attended a school named Douglas that was opened from 1908 to 1958. The small town with a population of 15,000 residents was made up of about 10% African Americans. With Kansas being a free state, many free slaves from Texas and Oklahoma made Parsons their home. Parsons was an attractive site as it housed the

headquarters for the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad. With the growing population, the school board had a new K-8 school built, Douglas, to educate African American students.

As Patterson et al. (2011) conducted their interviews, one thing was consistent. Even though facilities and resources were highly inadequate, class sizes were large, and salaries were low for teachers, black educators provided something for students that were more valuable than any materialistic item. A common theme among the alumni of Douglas was that teachers were “*caring, loving, concerned, and warm . . .*” (Patterson et al., 2011, p. 277). Teachers provided a support system that gave students the tools to be successful in society as well as academically prepared. George Roberts, a city commissioner and Douglas Alumni, explains how teachers at Douglas nurtured self-importance and a solid sense of self confidence:

**GR:** But it was the fact that I think by Douglass having existed and the type of instructors we had there—they were very caring people; they were very interested in your success in life. It gave you some sense of self, some sense of worth and you really were still with this thing of I would say Black Pride really before it was a popular thing in the 60s. We were getting it in the 40s and 50s. (Patterson et al., 2011, p. 279)

Patterson et al. (2011) go on to state that segregated schools had a huge sense of community. Teachers many times taught several generations of students. They were the most educated members of the community and therefore infused their knowledge of required White curriculum and cultural aspects of Black History into their instruction and everyday interactions. Black educators taught African American students how to survive in a White society that had significant constraints and barriers in place. Education was essential for African American student’s survival in society but more importantly,

education would better all African Americans in the long run. This message was constantly communicated to African American students in segregated schools. Carolyn Davis, another Douglas Alumni, talks about how educators conveyed the aforementioned ideals:

**CD:** One of the things that the teachers at Douglass did—they gave us a sense of pride. Even though you leave this building, you're going to be treated inferior, you're going to be treated with degradation, you're going to be treated as if you were really nobody—but you are [somebody] and nobody can ever take that away from you. That was a part of all of your classes. You heard that at some time or another, during the day always—that you are somebody and you can be as smart as you want to be. So it made us feel like they really cared about us. They really wanted us to learn. They really did. (Patterson et al., 2011, pp. 279–280)

As shown above in the oral history given by Davis, the upmost respect was given to these teachers as they were viewed as authority figures with high expectations. Many times, teachers lived education around the clock by visiting parents at their homes as well as communicating in venues outside of school like church, public places of business, etc. Rita Gordon, alumni from Douglass during the 1950s, had this to say about her experience with teachers in a segregated school setting:

**RG:** They made sure that you learned and that if you needed help they would help you out, single you out. Because a lot of times I would have to call my teacher and she would call me back and explain the lesson to me. (Patterson et al., 2011, pp. 277–278)

Donald Carson, a retired naval officer, reiterated the ideal that teaching was a 24-hour job:

**DC:** At Douglass, teachers were teachers 24 hours per day—7 days per week. . . . And it wasn't turned on from 8 to 4. Anytime you saw Mrs. Howard or Mrs. Willis or Mr. Watkins, they were teachers and they were available if you needed help. (Patterson et al., 2011, p. 278)

In the accounts above, African American students expressed different perspectives in living within a segregated society and attending segregated schools. On one hand, African American students faced demoralizing events that made them feel as they were less than human because of the color of the skin. These disturbing events took place in what should be considered a safe haven for children. Sharing these accounts has to make one wonder how these African American students endured their school days. With constant barriers put in their way to deter them in furthering their education, their determination is a true testament to their perseverance. Because of this perseverance, these aforementioned African American students survived these trying times and went on to be successful in their respective careers.

On the other hand, some African American students had positive experiences within their segregated environments. Their testimony of how Black educators help shape and mold their lives is inspiring even through the tough times of segregation within society as a whole. Many African American students turned the negative aspects of inferior and unequal facilities and resources into a positive outcome through the support and strength of Black educators.

Vanessa Siddle Walker is one of the premier voices on segregated schools with over 15 years' worth of research. Her perspective, supported by research, focuses on negating the view that segregated schools were detrimental to African Americans. In

fact, segregated schools provided positive experiences to African American students that attended. Siddle Walker (2000) does indicate that inequality in the form of resources and facilities was a major concern with African American students and educators. However, many segregated schools were beacons of exemplary institutions of learning. These schools provided African American students the complete package of education, character education, and survival skills in a society that did not value African Americans as citizens. Siddle Walker (2000) identifies several segregated schools as premier places that African American students attended. These schools; Dunbar High School in Washington, Booker T. Washington in Atlanta, and Frederick Douglas in Baltimore, were described as:

Inspiring youth, developing talent, maintaining standards meeting national competition, and bringing to ambitious youth every cultural contact. (Siddle Walker, 2000, p. 260)

Siddle Walker (1996) identifies a well know segregated school in North Carolina called the Caswell County Training School (CCTS). Siddle Walker attended CCTS and her mother was a teacher at CCTS. As she accounts coming back to Caswell County to visit, the members of the community that remember CCTS looks at her as a positive product from their institution. Siddle Walker recalls the positive interactions with teachers and students at an early age. In contrast, as she traveled through her educational career, she was bombarded with research on the negative experiences of segregation and reflects:

I internalized the negative messages of the poor segregated schooling of African Americans children and never thought to compare those messages with the shadowy experiences I remembered. (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 9)

Many of the residents of Caswell County shared Siddle Walker's same sentiments in believing the powerful impact of CCTS. This was evident as the community was saddened by the closing of Dillard Junior High, formally CCTS, in 1989. Siddle Walker recalls the accounts of the community:

That summer, talk was in the air about the anticipated closing of Dillard Junior High, the former CCTS. The comments I heard from members of the African American community in informal setting went something like the following: "Mr. Dillard worked so hard for that school"; "It was such a good school"; "I sure do hate to think about them closing it." I was stunned to hear the fondness people expressed as they recalled an era twenty years past. (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 9)

As Siddle Walker captures the many accounts of African Americans that were products of the segregated schools, they are contradictory to the many historical accounts that portrayed segregated schools as inferior with dismissal school experiences for its students.

Chapter II reviewed the past transgressions associated with the segregation of African Americans in society, especially in the educational environment. As the literature explains, African Americans fought to be viewed as equals to whites in every way. This chapter chronicled the many efforts by African Americans to obtain their God given rights as Americans. One of the rights fought for was equal resources in education that their white peers enjoyed on a daily basis. Even though inequality was experienced by African Americans as they were denied certain assets, their segregated schooling

experiences proved to be a successful component of their education. African Americans students and their communities had a deep love for their segregated schools.

Participants' accounts in this research study in the form of interviews and oral history will help to validate and support some of the stories and experiences mentioned in this review of literature.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

We did not hesitate to call our movement an army. But it was a special army, with no supplies but its sincerity, no uniform but its determination, no arsenal except its faith, no currency but its conscience.

— Martin Luther King Jr.

#### Type of Qualitative Study

This research study focused on the schooling experiences of African American students during the post-*Brown* era until 2001 and the impact these experiences had on their educational opportunities and career choices. My research is grounded in qualitative methods using elements of autoethnography, oral history, and phenomenological research.

Patton (1990) describes phenomenology as research that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience. The purpose of phenomenology, as stated by Lichtman (2010), is to describe and understand the essence of those lived experiences generally through the science of interpretation and explanation, which is called Hermeneutics. There are generally two perspectives of phenomenological investigation. One perception is the lived experience from the participants who are living through the phenomenon. The other perception is from the researcher, whose has great interest in the phenomenon. Typically, there is a personal connection between the researcher and what is being deduced.

Creswell (1998) describes the procedures of phenomenological inquiry as summarized below:

1. The researcher attempts to comprehend the philosophical viewpoints and notion of studying how people experience a phenomenon.
2. The researcher creates research questions that probe the meaning of that experience and asks the participants to describe their everyday lived experience.
3. The researcher collects data from the participants who have experienced the phenomenon through interviews.
4. The data are analyzed and information is divided into statements and common themes to create a general description of the experience. This includes textual descriptions and structural experiences. (pp. 22–25)

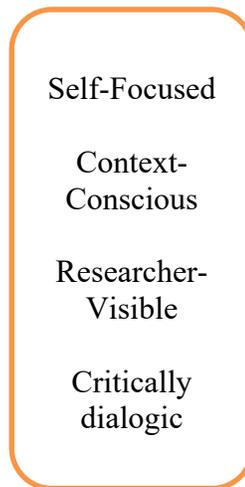


Figure 2. Common Dimensions of Autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 22).

Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez (2013) describe autoethnography as a qualitative research method that focuses on one's self as a subject and concurrently analyzes the lived experiences of the participants within the study. The researcher collaboratively

infuses his or her own experiences along with the experience from the participants to draw personal connections and deductions. This research method allows participants, including the researcher, to find similarities and differences.

Table 2 from Chang et al. (2013) explains that there are four components of autoethnography. These are self-focused, context-conscious, research-visible, and critically dialogic.

Self-focused refers to the researcher playing a dual role of being the researcher as well as a participant within the study. The researcher's own views are under examination as they simultaneously conduct the research.

The next component, research-visible, is where the researcher reveals his or her own intimate ideas and makes them evident and clear to the audience. Within this process, the researcher is essentially questioning his or herself, analyzing personal thought processes, and trying to gain an understanding of what is behind the responses.

The third component of autoethnography is context-conscious where the researcher's experiences and probes are shaped by specific contexts, which can be aspects within the culture of the study itself. The constant comparing and contrasting of the researcher and the study's context gives insight and relevancy to the data collected.

The fourth component of autoethnography is critically dialogic which focuses on the researcher using data collected from the participants, along with autoethnographic data to support or refute conclusions, build upon themes, and gain further insight into the topic at hand.

Human beings are creatures who rely on storytelling to explain and interpret events to people around them as well as to themselves. Their given vocabulary explains their everyday perceptions and experiences, which are used to tell a vivid tale about social and cultural situations.

The method in which data collection in this study was carried out was through interviews using oral history. Grele (2007) defines oral history as a conversational narrative created by the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee and determined by linguistic, social and ideological structures. Oral history collects information about the past from the participants involved in the research. Data collected by oral history about events, people, and decisions is not accessible in written form prior to data collection. Typically, oral history is based upon memory and memory is tool for recording the past. A participant's memory is influenced by the present day as well as by their psyche. As a result of a participant's past experiences, their current values and actions can be shaped.

### **Introduction of Myself as a Researcher and Participant**

As an educator who has worked in education for a majority of my life, I have always wondered why most minority students have struggled in the realm of education. As a fair-skinned African American male with blue/green eyes and curly hair, my distinct features left me early in my childhood to wonder what ethnicity I was. With these unusual features, I often found myself in the middle of trying to "fit in" during my early school years with my African American friends as well as my Caucasian friends. As the only African American male taking advanced courses in middle and high school, this

made the situation even more difficult to handle. Within these advanced classes, many of my Caucasian classmates communicated to me that they did not think of me as “black” but just as “Al.” This particular mindset of my Caucasian friends made me uncomfortable at times, especially when my African American friends questioned my “blackness.”

During my high school experiences attending a predominantly white high school, I had very few African American educators who instructed me. In fact, I only remember one. The one I remember was my English teacher, a female, African American. She is my only recollection of an educator of color who had an impact on my educational experiences. This particular teacher would always push me to do great things and challenge me to be not only good, but great. She always reminded me that I had to be ten times better than anyone else, especially the white students, because I was a student of color. The evidence of her success in combination with the small number of educators of color at my high school sparked an idea in me that something was not quite right. Why weren’t more African Americans in advanced courses? Why weren’t there more African American teachers? On a grander scale, why weren’t there more African Americans in prominent roles within their career fields?

When thinking back to these middle and high school experiences, I often wondered how African American students dealt with the blatant racism that existed in all facets of society, particularly in education, before, during, and after the *Brown* decision that was handed down in 1954.

As I have matriculated into the world of education as a teacher, coach, and administrator, my early educational experiences have taken place in low socioeconomic, heavily minority-populated schools. As a young, lateral entry teacher, my first teaching experience was in a high-priority middle school. The classroom that I took over in late October during the school year had seen two different teachers instruct students with little or no success. These students were perceived as difficult, rowdy, and non-teachable. A vast number of students within this class were African Americans.

As I taught in that middle school for five years, I interacted with these “trouble” African American students and formed relationships. I realized that many African American students struggled in academics and social skills. I discerned by their actions and behaviors that they were not less intelligent than their white counterparts. I started to see that many students did not have the foundations needed at an early age to be successful. Some of these deficiencies were due to their home life. Many of their parents or guardians did not have the means to support them academically and financially due to their own experiences in education. This observation became even clearer as I moved into administration as an assistant principal at the high school directly beside the middle school where I had taught. Some of the students I had taught in middle school were exhibiting the same dysfunctional learned behaviors in high school.

As I ponder the challenges I faced as an African American student, it’s hard to fathom the challenges that African American students before me faced during the post-*Brown* era. Blatant racism, discrimination, and acts of hatred toward African Americans were an everyday occurrence even with the law giving African Americans equal access.

Through listening in conducting this study to the testimonies of the schooling experiences of African American students during various time periods from post-*Brown* until 2001, I gained an understanding of what they went through and how these experiences had an impact on their educational experiences and subsequent lives. In addition, I was able to see how these experiences affected the current state of education for African American students.

### **Key Concepts and Variables**

In researching the school experiences of African American students post-*Brown* until 2001, there are key concepts and variables that need to be defined. Within this section, these key concepts will be defined and their relevance to this particular topic described. Below the key concepts are italicized with the appropriate sources cited:

#### **Autoethnography**

Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang (2013) describe autoethnography as a qualitative research method that focuses on one's self as a subject and concurrently analyzes the lived experiences of other participants within a study. Researchers collaboratively infuse their own experiences along with the experiences from their participants to draw personal connections and deductions. This research method allows participants, including the researcher, to find similarities and differences. This, in combination with, phenomenology, will be the methodology uses in this research study.

#### **Achievement Gap**

Rojas-LeBouef and Slate (2012) define the achievement gap as "the difference between how well low-income and minority children perform on standardized tests as

compared with their peers” (p. 7). One deduction made within the research of Rojas-LeBouef and Slate is that African Americans started off disadvantaged when they were brought to America. With the stringent laws on African Americans being forbidden to read and write, and then later, not given adequate means to further education, an achievement gap developed. Interviews and analysis of African American students who attended school post-*Brown* until 2001 will explore if the premise of a distinct disadvantage for African Americans is valid and thus may be grounds for the current achievement gap.

### **De jure Segregation**

Golub (2005) explains that “de jure segregation” is racial separation “by law,” for example, where separate inferior facilities are provided for minority groups. De Jure segregation is the creation and passage of laws which not only encourage but mandate, that minorities, specifically African Americans, be separated and treated less equally based upon skin color. “De jure segregation” was officially ruled a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteen Amendment of the United States Constitution in the 1954 *Brown* decision, 89 years after the Thirteenth Amendment for the U.S. Constitution was approved officially abolishing slavery in 1865.

### **Desegregation**

Desegregation is the action of incorporating a racial group into a community with the elimination of laws, regulations, or customs which prohibit members of a specific racial group from using certain facilities (Desegregation, n.d.). Desegregation was the force that combated segregation as the courts tried to bring African Americans and

Whites together within society. Public facilities were made to integrate, or combine, services that both African Americans and Whites could use together at the same time. Specifically in this research, the public school system is analyzed where African American and White students slowly began to be educated together in the same schools.

### **Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

The American Psychological Association (2009) defines Socioeconomic Status (SES) as a combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others based on income, education, and occupation.

### **Low Socioeconomic Status**

Dunnivan (2007) defines low Socioeconomic Status (SES) as a status pertaining to those students who are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program, which indicates that the family is within the federal standards of levels of poverty.

Both of these SES terms explain one's financial status in society. The "economic and social position" has significant meaning because for many years, African American facilities were said to have "separate but equal" status as Whites (as delineated in the *Plessy* decision in 1896). The *Plessy* decision was eventually proven to not be true in regards to the facilities and equal treatment of African Americans. Many of my educational experiences put me in contact with low SES areas which contained high minority numbers consisting of African Americans. As the low SES definition above suggests, students who fall into this category are a part of families who fall under the federal government's definition of low poverty. Financial attainment is connected to

one's education and their access to opportunity for employment and advancement within their given career.

### **Pearsall Plan**

Segregation within schools was a hard-fought battle that simply was not accepted by everyone, even after the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the *Brown* decision in 1954. Many people, especially those holding powerful positions, used methods to block segregation, especially in education. Specifically in North Carolina during 1954 to 1965, the Pearsall Plan was born. This plan, initiated by Governor Hodges and headed by Thomas J. Pearsall, decided that racial desegregation would be precarious and not in the best interest of the people of N.C. The committee decided that desegregation could be avoided by taking out any state engrossment. Local school systems should have complete decision making which enacted the Pupil Assignment Act in 1955. Furthermore, this changed the Compulsory School Attendance Law which permitted students to be exempt from attending any school that was desegregated (Cecelski, 1994).

### **Phenomenology**

Patton (1990) describes phenomenological research as descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience. The purpose of phenomenology, as stated by Lichtman (2010), is to describe and understand the essence of those lived experiences generally through the science of interpretation and explanation, which is called Hermeneutics.

## **Racial Grouping**

Ford and Airhihenbuwa (2010) state that Carolus Linnaeu's 1735 research explains racial grouping and was created in order to belittle and degrade those individuals who were not categorized as European. Many of the racial policies created within the U.S. were built upon this concept. Racial grouping influenced many policies in the U.S. resulting in African Americans not being treated fairly or justly throughout history. The premise of being disadvantaged and "behind" in access to opportunities was exacerbated by the concept of racial grouping. This lends further support to the achievement gap that exists today.

## **"Separate but Equal"**

The court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was a milestone U.S. Supreme Court decision that supported state law mandating racial segregation in public facilities and supporting the principle of "separate but equal." The mindset of most white Americans was that blacks and whites should be completely separate from each other with the notion that blacks were inferior and not equal to whites. This thinking transcended over to the concept of "separate but equal" facilities for blacks. However, facilities were far from equal. In society's eyes, blacks were far from equal thus the facilities should fit their "status" within society. Since many whites were economically advantaged and responsible for the construction of these facilities, they were less adequate and not up to par.

### **Segregation**

Segregation is defined as voluntary or involuntary separation of residence areas on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic characteristics (Newby, 1982). In this study, segregation is used in the context of African Americans being separated from Whites in most public venues, specifically schools.

### **Spatial Theory**

The composition of a community has a direct effect and is reflected within the facilities of that community. One of the cornerstones of any community is its school. John Kain's 1968's spatial theory explains that neighborhoods have profound effects on their environments. If a neighborhood has low SES, then the inhabitants within that neighborhood have fewer jobs and opportunities. Specifically with African Americans and the disadvantage they have faced with educational opportunities which directly affect income, their career prospects would be much more limited (Sanbonmatsu, 2008). This becomes a cycle where the lack of jobs and success has a negative effect on the school within the community.

### **Social Disorganization Theory**

Warner, Beck, and Ohmer (2010) build upon Kain's spatial theory by further cementing that educational and employment opportunities are severely limited in a low SES environment, particularly a neighborhood or community. Specifically with social disorganization theory, one's place of inhabitation has a great effect on the likelihood of participating in events or actions associated with the surrounding environment. In the case of low SES areas, which many times consist of urban neighborhoods, people within

that neighborhood are secluded from the social systems that are vital for them to have a chance to be successful in society.

### **Storying**

One of the data collection processes used in this research study will be oral history. An important way to gather oral history is the use of storying. Banks-Wallace (2002) note that this is a method of structuring experiences into stories. Storying helps make sense of unassociated and autonomous events and bring them together. African American ideals, customs, and ceremonies endured during the Middle Passage were preserved in the form of storytelling and folklore. Oral History is important in African American history due to the fact that many African Americans, as slaves, were prohibited and punished by physical consequences for reading and writing.

### **Unitary Status**

This refers to a school system that “no longer discriminates between school children on basis of race and . . . affirmatively removes all vestiges of race discrimination” (Alexander & Alexander, 2012, p. 1024). Unitary status and desegregation efforts were slow to pass as shown 10 years after *Brown* with only 1.2% of the Black students in 11 Southern states attending desegregated public schools (Brown & Hunter, 2009).

### **Research Setting**

The participants interviewed consisted of ten African Americans, with myself, the researcher, serving as the eleventh participant. Participants were students during different time periods that spanned from post-*Brown* decision to 2001, covering a 34-year

time period. Interviews were conducted at the participants' workplaces or at their homes. Letting the participants choose the location of the interview allowed the participants to feel more relaxed. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and 45 minutes to two hours. Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Each recording and transcript was labeled with the date of the interview, a pseudonym for the participant, and the length of the interview. As per the protocols set forth by the Instructional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, interview information was stored and locked in a secure location in my home office. In addition, I followed up with phone conversations with participants to get further clarification on any data about which I was unclear.

### **Research Participants**

The research participants within my study consisted of African Americans within different time periods of education over a 34-year time period beginning from the post-*Brown* decision until 2001. I included myself as a participant. Participants were chosen by specific criteria which included the time period in which they attended school, the racial makeup of the school they attended, their successful career paths in education and management, and their geographical location in reference to me, the researcher.

Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect his or her identity. Pseudonyms that start with the letters A-E are Period 1 participants, while those that start with the letters F-K are Period 2 participants. The specific time periods and types of schools attended by study participants are:

1. Post-*Brown* decision, segregated schools (1967–1975).
2. Post-*Brown* desegregated schools (1982–2001).

The objective of collecting data from these African Americans was to gain the perspectives, feelings, and opinions in reference to their schooling experiences within these time periods in American history. Each participant is described with a narrative. Table 1 gives an overview of each participant who was interviewed.

The *Brown* decision was handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 but many school systems did not desegregate until the late 1960s. The first period involved five participants who attended segregated or both segregated and desegregated schools. Two of the participants attended and graduated from all-black segregated high schools in 1967 and 1969. Three other participants within the same time period first attended segregated all-black schools but later attended desegregated schools from which they would graduate between 1971 and 1975.

The second time period involved six participants who had experiences in desegregated schools only in the 1980's until 2001. Four participants, including myself, attended predominantly white schools. The other two participants attended desegregated schools that were predominantly black. The participants within this study are a unique sample as they are all professionally successful within their given careers. In addition, all the participants are North Carolinians whose school experiences took place in North or South Carolina.

Table 1

## Participant Overview

	<b>Time Period/ Graduation Year</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Type of School Attended</b>
Alice	P1/1967	F	segregated
Blake	P1/1969	M	segregated
Cathy	P1/1971	F	segregated and desegregated
Denice	P1/1971	F	segregated and desegregated
Edward	P1/1975	M	segregated and desegregated
Florence	P2/1982	F	desegregated and predominantly white student population
Grace	P2/1990	F	desegregated and predominantly white student population
Helen	P2/1997	F	desegregated and predominantly black student population
Isabel	P2/1997	F	desegregated and predominantly white student population
Jennifer	P2/2001	F	desegregated and predominantly black student population
Kirk	P2/1992	M	desegregated and predominantly white student population

P1 - Post-Brown, segregated or segregated/desegregated (1967–1975)

P2 – Post-Brown, desegregated (1982 – 2001)

Participants A – E had series of questions specific to their time while in school

Participants F – L had series of questions specific to their time while in school

### Data Collection

My data collection process consisted of oral history in the form of interviews, transcripts, and historical data including school/personal documents and demographic information. I used this data to triangulate information.

Prior to formally collecting my data, I researched the history of education in the U.S. and the desegregation efforts specifically in the Southern states where resistance was greater. In addition, I researched historical court cases and legal information on desegregation efforts in public schools.

All participants were asked a series of questions about their various educational experiences pertaining to their particular time period (See Appendix A). A colleague conducted the interview with me. As the researcher, I collaboratively infused my own experiences along with the experience from the participants to draw personal connections and deductions.

Before each interview, I reviewed the purpose and aim of my study with each participant and used a one-on-one, semi structured interview guide that can be found within the Appendix. Interview questions were developed guided by the research I did on the history of desegregation.

Throughout my research process, I kept an audit trail that detailed steps during my research to ensure thorough and precise records of all the procedures used.

### **Data Analysis**

The procedure for analyzing the interviews included transcribing the interviews and using a systematic coding process. From my oral history transcripts, I used Lichtman's (2010) concept of the "three Cs" which are coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts to analyze my data. I transcribed the interviews individually, which allowed me the opportunity to look for commonalities.

Coding is a process of breaking and marking parts of the data. Within this study, interview transcripts were broken up into segments, portions, and manageable chunks by using descriptive words or categories. This coding process helped reduce the information by clustering the responses of my participants based upon similarities in segregation and desegregation experiences within their educational environments during their particular era. The common trends and themes I generated helped me clarify and answer the questions to address the aspects of my research.

As I conducted my research, I used a priori codes, which are codes developed beforehand and derived from previous literature and experiences. These codes included specific incidents of segregationally related experiences, instances of discrimination, and educational opportunities or lack thereof.

In Vivo codes were developed and built upon as I collected and analyzed data within my research. The inVivo coding ensured that the participants' own words were mirrored as closely as possible. These codes included any similar themes or patterns participants had, which included experiences during segregation, after desegregation, and educational opportunities. Aspects of the literature were taken into consideration as I created these codes but the interview data itself was primarily used in the formation of these codes. This kind of coding allowed the data to speak for itself and it was based solely upon what I saw happening within it. Using both of these types of codes allowed me to capture diverse characteristics of my data.

After identifying this information, I used data reduction, which is the process of organizing data into manageable portions of information. As I examined the transcripts, I

used color-coding to highlight and code the responses of my participants in an organized fashion. In using color-coding, I scanned each transcript to identify any areas in which a code occurred several times. The data were coded by marking similar texts with a code label so that text could be more easily retrieved at a later stage for further comparison and analysis. Coding allowed the data to be analyzed for themes, ideas, and categories, which were also counted. Thus, the reoccurrences of these words helped to draw inferences from similarities and differences in patterns between pairs of cases and to specify and focus on the themes for this study. Seven themes emerged from the interviews: Unequal Facilities, Community, High Regard for Education, Hostile Environments, Challenges with Social Desegregation, Ongoing Discrimination, and the Impact of Intangibles Outweighing that of Facilities. Themes were identified when at least four of the six participants mentioned them during the interview.

Obstacles were identified for each group by using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Lichtman (2010) describes QCA as dealing with comparisons across the cases. This included comparing how participants viewed their educational experiences as well as the associated obstacles.

### **Subjectivity**

As I collected data for this study my perspectives were influenced by my experiences and history as an African American educator who has been in education for over 10 years, mostly in low SES schools with a high concentration of minority students. As a teacher, coach, and administrator, I have seen first-hand how the lack of education

can negatively effective students, especially African Americans. It is a cycle that can keep generations bound in poverty.

As an autoethnographer, I was cognizant of my own self within the framework of my own culture. Within the actual data, it was crucial to recognize subjectivity while coding data from the interviews of the other African American participants within the various time periods. In evaluating my own autoethnographic story in conjunction with incorporating accounts from interviews with the other participants, their schooling experiences, educational opportunities, and subsequent life outcomes were illustrated in a palpable and significant manner. This method affords the reader with true events in which they can forge their individual analysis.

When acknowledging subjectivity in an autoethnographic form of qualitative research, clearly describing the participant and the setting is essential. Serving both as an observer and participant, speaking to my own subjectivity is crucial to comprehend the results within this research. I recognize that some of my schooling experiences as an African American student may not have been the same as other African Americans attending schools which were predominantly white.

As I conversed with the participants within my study and infused my own educational experiences throughout my life, there was an abundance of conversation and positive discussion with them. The data findings from this study address the influence of schooling experiences on the educational opportunities and career outcomes of African Americans in various times periods. Furthermore, the data shed insight on whether the aforementioned items have the same effect on African Americans even though they

attended school in different time periods over a course of 50 years. Even though my specific stance is not rooted upon first-hand experiences of formal segregation, the enactment of the *Brown* decision, early implementation of desegregation, or experiencing the Civil Rights Movement, it must be stated that I can empathize with the participants within the first period, which spanned from the post-*Brown* decision to the late 1970's. My empathy comes from my many interactions and conversations with various fellow African Americans during my life, along with my prior knowledge of the historical plight of African Americans throughout history.

### **Trustworthiness**

Finding a way to connect research and practice is important in meaningfully portraying the findings of data from participants. "Trustworthiness has to do with the confidence with which a given set of findings can be acted upon by practitioners. Trustworthy findings are based on replicated, well-designed, and executed studies with clear specification of suitable contexts and students" (Carnine, 1995, p. 252).

Validation is an important aspect of trustworthiness. As a researcher, I used multiple data sources, including historical events and participants' accounts, to affirm my own personal understandings as an African American student and current educator. In an attempt to keep my subjectivity in check, I solicited the assistance of fellow doctoral students to aid in a system of checks and balances in offering an unbiased view and making sure my data is coherent. I also allow my participant's voice to be heard and resonate clearly.

After conducting my interview with participants, common themes were present within the participants' stories. After collecting and analyzing the data for all the participants, including myself, data saturation occurred. Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles and Grimshaw (2010) describe data saturation as the process when no new or distinct kinds of data appear and the collected data are the same. Repetition across participants in data validated the sample size of eleven participants. Participants' stories and accounts were constant across the board with only slight variations depending on their time period.

I also asked participants to examine my work for accuracy through member checking. Interview transcriptions were shared with participants. This gave them a chance to review their own data where they could reflect and provide additional information if needed. In addition, clarification by that participant was given if needed.

Additionally, data triangulation was used in my research. Lichtman (2010) defines triangulation as the concept of using numerous sources to give validity to the research. Data triangulation specifically is using multiple data sources in data collection. In my research study, interviews, historical documents, public records, and observations, were used to make the research more impartial but at the same time, give soundness to my own personal accounts as a participant.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**REPORTS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

Racial segregation in the South not only separated the races, but it separated the South from the rest of the country.

—Robert Dallek

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the perspectives of African Americans about their schooling experiences in various time periods from the post-*Brown* decision to the 2001 and to determine if these experiences impacted their career and subsequent lives. The first period looked at experiences after the 1954 *Brown* decision until the mid to late 1970's when the desegregation of African Americans and whites together in any particular school was finally achieved. The second time period focused on the time period of the 1980s to today. Several questions guided this study:

1. What were the schooling experiences of African Americans in the post-*Brown* era to 2001?
  - a. What were the schooling experiences of African American students who attended segregated schools?
  - b. What were the schooling experiences of African American students who attended desegregated schools?
2. How have the schooling experiences of African American students during the aforementioned time period impact their careers and subsequent lives?

A total of 11 participants were interviewed for the study. Five of the participants, Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denice, and Edward, attended at least one segregated school from the 1954 *Brown* decision until the mid to late 1970s. Six of the participants, Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk, attended desegregated schools from the 1980s to today. All participants attended primary and secondary schools in North Carolina. The demographic information for each participant follows.

### **Alice**

Alice is a 66-year-old female who is one of eight children. She has five brothers and two sisters. Alice attended segregated, all-black elementary, junior high and high school. Alice's postsecondary education included a Bachelor's in Science, Pre-Med study, and a Master's in Secondary Education. She continued her education by obtaining a Master's in School Administration and a Doctorate Degree in Administration and Finance. Alice also completed post doctorate work at Oxford University in Oxford, England.

Alice's school experiences are based upon attending all-black schools during most of her life. Her perspectives focus on certain racial events that affected her everyday life. Many of her experiences were shaped by monumental stories and events occurring during the unrest of racial tension created with segregation and desegregation in America. These events occurred while she attended high school as well as college.

Similar to many students that went to segregated schools, Alice believes there was a sense of community and family among African-Americans during that time. She recalls

how that sense of community shaped her behavior as explained from her own oral history:

Of course, there was more of a sense of pride from the all-black students and if anything, the respect was there. I didn't dare challenge a teacher or be disrespectful because they would tell my dad. I can remember one time I got put out of class in the ninth grade because I had my head on my desk and my teacher, Mr. Winborn, who is dead now, told me to put my head up. I told him that I didn't feel like it and he told me to get out of his classroom. I pushed my books on the floor and I left out of the classroom. Well Lord, he called my mother and he visited the house and came over. He came over and had apple pie, which my mom baked for him, and coffee. Let's just say that after the visit, I didn't see the sun set for a month because I couldn't go out the house for 30 days.

In addition, Alice explained how invested her teachers were in her education and well-being. Like her teachers, her father shared the same views and was instrumental in making sure she, along with her sisters and brothers, had a plan once they left high school:

Teachers instilled in us to be something. I always think of the phrase, "by the time you reach my age you're either something or you're dead." My father, who finished fifth grade, could barely read, he could barely write his name. His whole thing was that all eight of his children would finish high school. As for his sons, after high school, the best place to go was the military. At that time, the training in the military would guarantee them somewhat of a future. He said, "My sons can go in the military or they can dig a ditch to make a living." But as for my daughters, I'll make sure that they get an education higher than high school because when I lie down and die, I don't want them to ask no man to be their daddy, in other words, he wanted us to be educated and independent.

With desegregation introduced into the public school system after she graduated high school, Alice had mixed opinions in regards to advantages and disadvantages in resources at all-black schools. As she describes:

Of course we didn't have the textbooks and materials in particular. With equipment, I remember we have that old rizzograph machine that turned and turned and turned. The textbooks were falling apart and we never got any new ones. We didn't have the opportunities to do things like the young kids in the white schools, like go to the museum.

As a current educator, Alice explained her perspective on how desegregation, based upon her experience in segregated schools prior to post-secondary, has hurt African-American students leading up to today:

The real disadvantage of integration within a more integrated society, in my opinion, deals with the value of less self-respect for today's black students. In addition, parent of black students are not as well informed as the parents in the past. Pastors and members of the community shy away from telling black parents what may be best for their children. Some members of the black community, especially those in low socio-economic areas, lack the respectability to want more or achieve more based upon their current situation and past experiences.

Alice's schooling experiences reach far beyond her elementary, middle, and high school year. During the later years of high school and college, racial turmoil was prevalent with events that shook the African American community. She explains that her parents, especially her dad, instilled values that would lead her to participate in protests:

My dad and my mom always encouraged us to stand up for what was right and to not give up your value for no reason. That's the way we were raised. I was just barely old enough to do a little protesting because I was just in high school. I was about to graduate and go to college.

Alice explains that she and her friends wanted the same rights as white people had and that many African Americans take that for granted today:

We wanted to go to the movie theatre and be able to sit downstairs and not sit upstairs. There were always obscenities being said if we laughed upstairs. We heard things like, “Look at those niggers up there making all that noise . . .”

Alice further explains how basic rights were violated and her perspective on the injustices she witnessed by the story of the Friendship Nine:

The young men from Friendship Junior College were sort of the spearhead just like the four in Greensboro who couldn't eat at Woolworth, the five and dime. The Friendship Nine was a group of black students who went to jail after staging a sit-in at a segregated McCrory's lunch counter in Rock Hill, South Carolina in 1961. They went in, sat down, and they got arrested. I was one of the people out there carrying a sign and protesting when the Friendship Nine was arrested.

One of Alice's most compelling oral histories had to do with a specific event that happened while she attended college. Even though this story is over 40 years old, it speaks to some of the current events that are taking place today in our society with police actions and racial tension.

In college, I was shot at because of the Orangeburg Massacre in 1968. I attended South Carolina State at the time. Segregation was high during this time. Students tried to demonstrate against racial segregation at the bowling alley. I remember I wanted to go but couldn't because state troopers and the National Guard were on campus. State troopers set up a barricade and prevented us from going off campus. I remember it very well, the girls were asked to stay up on the campus and not to come out of the dormitory. We had a balcony and I lived in Manning Hall on the second floor. We were standing out there and as I bent down to move a chair, I heard a whistle and I heard a loud pop and a bullet landed right over my head. That night, we had 54 wounded and three black males were killed. I'll never forget that we had an old station wagon that was used as an ambulance. It wouldn't crank. That night, we slept on the floor and took our lamps and put them on the floor so it wouldn't be shining up. We actually had someone riding up through campus shooting up in the dormitory while we were in there.

## Blake

Blake is a 64-year-old African American male who attended segregated elementary, junior high, and high schools, which all were in walking distance from his home. He is a graduate of Morehouse College with a Bachelor's Degree, a graduate of Tuskegee University with a Master's Degree, and has a post graduate degree from Fayetteville State University.

Blake's schooling experiences were unique as he attended all black schools throughout all levels of his education. Most of his schooling experiences were positive in terms of influence and interactions.

Blake attended high school during the time of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. One of his oral history accounts explains that the experience of the death of Dr. King would change his life:

When I was a junior in high school, as the band was preparing to go to Washington DC for the Cherry Blossom Parade, Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. Things got so bad that they canceled the parade and the band came home. I was a school leader so the school, along with a few administrators, sent a few of the students to the funeral of Dr. King. I had a chance to view the campus of Morehouse College. During my senior year, there were schools looking for black students to attend their universities. They were encouraging black students to apply. When Morehead College came recruiting at our school, they had no application fee. I had a chance to attend a couple of the white universities but I chose Morehouse College. I took the chance and when I was accepted, my father said that he would pay for my education. That influence of attending a Historically Black College inspired me to continue my graduate studies at Fayetteville State University.

Blake did recall one negative experience. When it came down to it, segregation was segregation and certain aspects came along being black as he explains in his oral history:

Segregation was the law. Because of the law's influence, my lifestyle was dictated by the people who wanted blacks to succeed. I knew that I could only go to certain places. In going to the movies, we had to sit upstairs. Going to the park in the next town over with the church, we could only go to the black park. Going to the bathroom at the movies and almost being attacked by a group of white boys made me more cautious of white people. I also remember when I was in the band in junior high school they did not let us play in the parades because we were better than the white schools. White schools had better equipment than the black schools. We had hand-me-down instruments and uniforms in the middle and high schools. We brought them up to par and we looked good. We were good instrumentally with the music that we had because of the expectations of our parents and community. We were considered to be one of the best in the state.

Blake explains his view points on the differences between segregated and desegregated schools. On segregated schools, he explains:

You would see black teachers at church and in the communities. With the teachers going to the same churches, the ministers knew what we were doing. Education was high among all of the groups in my community and stressed to the point that when we got report cards, everybody would ask how you did. Men, women, and the elders in the community alike stressed education. Parents were the same way in stressing education. We knew in the community that there was a difference between white and black, but that made us perform even better. We knew we had to succeed even if there were things that we could not control at the time. I grew up on a street where there were teachers, cosmetologists, nurses, and tobacco factory workers. Teachers seem to care about you as an individual. It was really good and powerful. Students knew that the teachers had our future in their hands and they knew that they were genuine. I wasn't exposed to white teachers, always black teachers who were a big influence in my life. Education was high among principals and administrators as well. The atmosphere was always focused on education.

Blake did not attend desegregated schools but explains his views and perspective based upon his observations:

Integrated schools were alright but I seem to have mixed feelings about them. Unlike our schools that did not have enough resources and hand me down equipment, integrated school had much more resources. Integration did benefit the black community because it exposed African Americans to many worlds culturally and financially. I do know that some students who went to the white schools under the "Freedom of choice" were called names. My best friend went to a white school.

### **Cathy**

Cathy is an African American female who attended both segregated and desegregated schools. The small rural town, where she grew up, was established by her father's family, which was located two miles away from a white neighborhood. During her elementary and middle school years, she attended schools that were a few hundred feet from her home and across the road from the church that her family attended. She was later bussed to a white school, from which she graduated from in 1971.

Cathy's schooling experiences seemed to highlight some of the racial tension that existed in south, especially smaller towns that were slow to segregate. She explains in her oral history the fond memories of attending elementary school:

We all attended the local black community elementary school built just a few hundred feet from our home and across the road from the church. After the new school was built a ways down the road for the community, we all attended middle school there. Then some of us, including me, went to the county black high school. We happily attended this school and made a lot of friends according to our race. We were completely happy because it was understood that we all stuck with our kind.

Cathy's schooling experiences would change for the worse as desegregation would come into existence and force her to leave the comfort of her all black high school as explained in her oral history:

But things changed . . . In my junior year of high school, desegregation was established. We were told that whatever community school was closest to us we had to attend. This high school closest to me was called "red neck country." After attending this school for a few months and feeling like we did not belong, we heard that the law was not mandatory yet so we chose to go back to our old high school where we had friends and felt at home among our own. At our old high school, we did not have to hear under tones of racial slurs daily.

Cathy quickly found out that desegregation would become mandatory and she would have to leave her all black high school and go back to the very high school she hated her senior year:

But, then my senior year, the law became mandatory and we had to leave our all black high school and go back to the other high school. This is where I graduated from. The high school I was made to go to still seemed segregated because the blacks hung with the blacks and the whites hung with the whites. A few of the boys of different races formed friends with each other but the girls hung with their kind. In the classroom, some teachers complained about our writing style while others really wanted to teach us. Some tried not to be partial but some just could not hide their prejudice ways. Gradually we settled in and made the best of the situation by ignoring those who ignored us. Eventually the fear dissipated somewhat.

Cathy continued her battle with racial tension and discrimination. She explained in her oral history how she and her classmates were viewed.

I think as a black child we all have been discriminated against in some way. Whether it was at the water fountain, in the school lunch line, or just plain walking to class, these are forms of discrimination. There were times when the "n" word was spoken to make you know that they were better than us. Whites

expected to be first in line and did not want us to walk beside them or stand near them. They didn't want us to talk to them at all.

Cathy shared her experiences about extra-curricular events in her high school in relation to what was available to students and what black students participated in:

Some of our boys were allowed to play basketball because the school did not have a football team. In addition, the school had a baseball team, a tennis team and cheerleaders but other than basketball, no blacks took part in these extracurricular activities. The school offered FFA, Beta Club, and Year Book Club. I worked so much on our farm that there was no time for sports or clubs.

Cathy shared a powerful reflection on the adverse effects of desegregation:

In attending a white school is when I realized just how poor we were. We looked like we were poor. I felt out of place for a long time. Not being exposed to them (whites) afforded us not knowing what we were missing.

Cathy did state that with all the bad experiences of racial discrimination and tension, there were some good aspects of desegregation:

My schooling experiences and those of my fellow black classmates during our time at the high school that I graduated from gave us more advantages when it came to equality, learning, and societal experiences. I remember career day was held at the high school that I graduated from and not at my previous all-black school. My career choice came through this job fair.

### **Denice**

Denice is an African American female who attended both segregated and desegregated schools. She was born in 1953 and attended a private kindergarten, which was segregated. Denice attended segregated schools until her tenth-grade year. She

graduated from Winston-Salem State University with her Bachelors in Science. From there, Denice obtained a Masters from North Carolina A&T State University, and finished her education at East Carolina University with her Masters in School Administration.

As an African-American female student, Denice's schooling experiences were telling of how segregation had been depicted among students of color. The oral history which includes a physical description of her elementary school showed how resources and materials were sub-par to that of her white counterparts:

The school that I attended was three levels. In the past, it had been a high school and some of the people that are older had gone there. There was a basement and that's where the cafeteria was. There was a main level and then it was a level upstairs. On that particular level upstairs, we had a library. We had an auditorium and a stage.

Not all of the schooling experiences that Denice encountered were negative. She did indicate that there were some positive aspects in terms of culture and shared values early in her childhood as shared in her oral history:

When I was in elementary school, we had different people to come and do plays at our school. We had chorus to come from the high school, we did a mayday, we wrapped a maypole and that was something that was good. The teachers at my school just cared along with the people in the community. My minister taught Bible at my elementary school. We had different things. We started to have different clubs. Teachers carried us on field trips and they always tried to expose us to different things. If something was in the newspapers, something was going on in the news, they made us aware of it. We studied history. We learned about the past. We found out about our roots and we knew where we came from. They just wanted us to do good. Teachers didn't accept any cutting up, pants hanging down, nothing like that. Never!

As mentioned previously, Denice attended a segregated high school for her first few years of high school and then transitioned into a desegregated high school. Her experiences at the segregated high school were somewhat positive and eye opening. She explains:

When we went to our all-black school, we had sports and the band was phenomenal. That school was nine through twelve. We had parades, cheerleaders, sports, clubs, and a debate team. I can remember when we were in ninth grade, they had an assembly that everybody wanted to attend. We had a gentleman named Cortez Peters that came and spoke. He was over the business school in Washington, DC. That's how he did his recruiting. There were a lot of people that went to his school because of the impression that he gave everyone when he spoke. We had a lot of student teachers that came from A&T and Winston-Salem State, so as black students, we always had people coming in, sharing new ideas and telling us things. More importantly, they looked like us and they made us feel like if they went to school, then we can go to school too.

Denice explained that there were good things going on at the segregated school she attended. The black teachers were instrumental in teaching students the skills they needed to be successful once they left high school:

I think we had a flower garden that someone from the community built right outside where we had the prom at. The decorations were beautiful. We had very talented people. We had artists. We did all kinds of things in art class. Black teachers taught shop, they taught brick laying, they taught auto mechanics. The trades that people needed, they taught them.

Denice transitioned into her desegregated school her junior year along with several classmates who were fellow juniors, as well as several seniors. During her junior year, the ratio was 80% white and 20% black. As Denise transitioned into her desegregated school, members of the black community were on edge. She explains in her

oral history that they had meetings to try and ease the transition into desegregated schools:

School started in August and everybody was scared. It was just a tense time. Now when I was growing up, from eight o'clock to three o'clock, that was the time for school and you wouldn't skip school or be anywhere else. I had better be in school during that time. The first class that integrated was the class of 1970. Our class went in during the year of 1969 and the first class to graduate was the class of 1970, which was kind of like a transition class. We were trying to get in the school and fit in. When we went to school, things were fine as we tried to get through the first year. We went to class and did what we were supposed to do. My graduating class was the class of 1971. We were a little more militant than the first class, so we did not want the 80% to 20% ratio. We had some good teachers, both black and white. We had some bad teachers, also both black and white. We had two principals, one that was black and one that was white. We had two secretaries, one black and one white. We had teachers retire so that allowed black teachers from black schools to come at this school. Nobody lost their jobs when they merged like that.

### **Edward**

Edward is a 58-year-old African American male who attended desegregated schools and moved a lot growing up. He graduated from Winston-Salem State University with a Bachelor's degree in Physical Development and Health and a Master's degree for the University of Phoenix.

Edward and his family initially lived in low income housing and he attended an all-black elementary school for Grades 1 through 4. In the fifth grade, Edward's family moved to the suburbs and he attended an all-white elementary school in fifth and sixth grades. In seventh grade, he and his family moved again and attended a predominantly black middle school. As desegregation began, the middle school that Edward attended, which were eighth and ninth grades, became predominantly white. Finally, he would

move a final time and attend a predominantly black school where he graduated from in 1975.

Edward's elementary school experiences were in all-black schools. Early on, his teachers, who were black, pushed him to be the best he could be. He recalls an experience with one of his teachers:

Mrs. O'Neil made us do things over and over until it was almost perfect. She would say you have to be better than anybody else to make it in this world. We didn't know what she was talking about at that time.

Not all of the experiences Edward faced at an all-black school were positive. As a light skinned, African American, he many times battled with African American students. Edward gives his oral history accounts of conflict among his own race due to his skin color:

When I attended North Elementary I got into a lot of fights because I was light skinned. Many of the students I fought happened because they said that their parents said I was white. All my mother would tell me was that I just as "black as any of them on the inside where it counted." It was years before I understood what she meant.

Edward uses his oral history to reflect on his conflicts with white students while attending desegregated schools because of racist attitudes and comments:

I joined a group of white students when I heard one of them saying, "His daddy beat up a nigger." For the most part, my parents sheltered my family from bigotry until I was in the fifth grade, so we did not know a lot about racial slurs and discrimination. Actually, I did not know what a "nigger" was. One of them said if I opened my mouth again he would show me what "whoopin' a nigger" looked like. I opened my mouth and had the first of many fights because of race. I beat up three of them that day.

When it came to education and experiences in the classroom, Edward had problems of racism among his white teachers with standards of respect, work ethic, and behavior. He explains in his oral history two distinct times in dealing with racist white teachers:

My first experience was in Math class where my teacher, Mrs. Johnson, was asking questions. I answered a question with “yes.” She asked what I had said so I repeated “yes” again. She became angry so I thought somehow I had said “Yeah” so I repeated the word “yes” very distinctly. She became even angrier. A fellow student leaned over and told me I was supposed to say “yes ma’am.” I refused to do so because my parents said it was to be said to people you respected. I was sent to the principal’s office. He was going to paddle me. I told him only my mother spanked me and she said nobody else could hit me. He called her to the school and she confirmed she had said that and me not saying “ma’am” was not a good reason to paddle me. He didn’t paddle me that day.

Edward explains his second experience:

The second experience was when it came to academics; I do remember getting lower grades than some of my white classmates on what I thought was better work. One activity stands out in my mind. We had to write a short story. My story was about a guy lost in the woods and what he did to survive. My teacher accused me of copying it from a book. I guess it was better than she expected so she obviously thought I cheated.

During Edward’s middle school years, he attended two different schools. During his seventh-grade year, he attended a predominantly all-black, inner city school. As the beginning of school desegregation took place in that area, Edward then attended a desegregated school, predominantly white, during his eighth- and ninth-grade years. He explains in his oral history the treatment of black teachers during the beginnings of desegregation:

I remember one of my former seventh-grade teachers, who was black and taught at my former school that was an all-black, was sent to an all-white school. He was a pretty good history teacher. When he came to the integrated school that was all-white, the kids there treated him pretty bad.

Edward shares in his oral history that when he moved again for the final time and attended his high school, that was all-black, he felt a disconnect:

We moved back to the city. After being in a mostly white school for all those years I had a disconnect with the school and culture. I believe the back and forth caused some of this. I must have missed out on something or was just clueless as it seemed like my connection was lost.

Edward did indicate that sports was a positive. Race, on the playing fields, was not an issue; however, places such as the classroom, cafeteria, and other extracurricular activities did have their challenges as he explains in his oral history:

Sports were the one place where everything was on equal footing. The coaches went the extra mile to stress that on the field we were all equal and at the same time, only the best would play. Clubs and other social activities were not so easy to break into. The cafeteria and most classrooms were still separate.

Edward did not see any advantages, in the beginning, to desegregation as his oral history suggests:

Being in the first wave of integration, I didn't see any advantages. We were disrespected openly and underhanded. The food was not as good, and it was not a happy place. The sense of community schools had were now gone. Teachers did not have the same sense of working with the whole child as before. It became a race thing. White teachers either disliked the black teachers or they thought they were going to save the poor disadvantaged black child. The hatred some experienced was tough.

Edward used his oral history to reflect on his early experiences and finally came to see the advantages of desegregation as time passed:

The city integrated the students. I was transferred from my old school to the integrated school. Due to my experience with white kids, the adjustment went well for me. Actually, except for a few bullies that tried to stir things up, there weren't any issues to my knowledge. My high school years went well and my high school was very accepting and all the students got along well. Even interracial dating was mostly accepted by everyone. The advantages of integration were that every child had the ability to get a good equal education. After the initial move, most realized that we were not that different. Because of integration, the difference of people is, for the most part, accepted. My son feels that I am not as accepting as he is and he is correct. He did not go through the hardships that many people my age, and older, did. For example, we had to sit in the balcony of the theater. It was actually the best seat in the house. At the time I did not understand that we couldn't sit on the floor of the theatre. My father would not stop at certain restaurants when we traveled because we would not be served.

### **Florence**

Florence is a 51-year-old African American female who attended all desegregated schools. She was reared in a two-parent household and is the only child of six to attend college. Her grandmother played a significant role in her high school and college education because she provided funding for tuition and educational activities. She reported having just as many white friends as African American friends. Her graduating class of 1982 included 222 students from numerous races. After high school, Florence earned a bachelor from Barber-Scotia College, and two masters, one from North Carolina A&T State University in elementary education and one from Appalachian State University in educational administration.

Florence's schooling experiences are from the latter period of history where she did not experience true segregation in the sense of having to attend an all-black school. Florence, in her experiences, began to explore the "unwritten rules" of how African-American students were viewed and treated. She uses her oral history to explain participating on the cheer and dance team:

In high school, there was an unwritten protocol that only three blacks could cheer or dance on the dance team all which I was a part of. However, sports were open to all. As stated above—knowing that there were a certain number that blacks could be on certain squads upset me but it was an understanding as it had been in place for years. Try-out procedures were different as well. White students were given the routine well ahead of time. The judges automatically knew that they were going to choose three black girls even if more were capable OR better than the white girls. However, in 1980, things begin to change as the school and city had its first black home coming queen.

With the limitations in regards to "unwritten protocol," Florence's experiences within her high school were positive. She believes the result of the *Brown* decision in 1954 ending segregation in public schools benefited the black and white communities. She explains:

The 1954 *Brown* decision allowed me to attend the same school as our white counter parts, which allowed me to get the same education that my white peers received. The white community got to know people of color and was able to make up their own minds about African Americans instead of learning from others who may have a bad outlook or experience. Knowing more white people, learning about other cultures, and learning to get along with others races as they learned from each other was good.

As an African American student, Florence did not feel that differently about being a student in a school that was heavily populated by white students with a small number of

minority students. In fact, she believed it benefited both the black and white communities:

I sometimes wished that that there were more blacks, just so I had someone to identify with. It didn't stop me from doing what I wanted to do or from my mother and grandmother enrolling me and my brothers and sisters into extra-circular activities outside of school. I think that both communities benefited from the mixture of population in schools.

When it came to educational opportunities, Florence felt that African-American students had ways in which they could further their education. In her oral history, she mentioned that expectations were high for students of color and low socio-economic status students:

There were funds set aside to help students who want to participate in sports and attend trips. Money was always a struggle with some families but education was held to a high standard for all attending school. Students in the upper class were just expected to attend college but once blacks/low socioeconomic class made our wishes known, we were given the information to apply for financial help to go off to college. A lot of the local churches also played an important part in making sure the low socioeconomic students attend college.

In contrary to some viewpoints of previous participants interviewed in this study, Florence feels that segregation was a detriment and desegregation was a success:

In terms of totally segregated schools, African Americans who are not exposed to other things outside of their neighborhood do not grow. People need to be exposed to things in life. We learn from each other and we learn by what we see and do. Students who are exposed to things in life can talk or write about what they have seen and done. Questions on test usually try to relate to the students' past experience and when you don't know what the question is asking or related to its hard to answer. White students are exposed to more in life and can relate to the questions that are asked in the questions that are usually written by whites.

Until we can expose African American students to the world and what it has to offer, our students will always be behind.

### **Grace**

Grace is a 43-year-old African American female who attended all desegregated schools. She grew up in a rural town in North Carolina. The elementary school she attended was located less than a half mile from her house. Grace was assigned to attend a high school outside the city limits of where she stayed. The high school she attended was a predominantly white high school a few miles from her home in a different town. She graduated from high school in 1990. Grace attended North Carolina Central University and graduated with Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Computer Information Systems.

Grace's experiences are that of a student attending desegregated schools who lived in a very small town. Her schooling experiences mirror those of many African American students attending high school in the late 80's, early 90's where segregation was still very apparent.

Grace lived in a community that consisted of her family members living in close proximity. As she mentions in her oral history, her neighborhood was segregated because of geographical reasons:

Most of the land around the house I grew up in was owned by my late grandfather. This was my mom's father. My mother and her siblings grew up working on my grandfather's farm. After my grandfather passed, an uncle took over the farm land. Acres were rented to other farmers to plant crops and other farm land was purchased by my parents, aunts and uncle. We did not look at our neighborhood as being segregated but as a family community.

The schooling experiences of Grace mirror that of Edward in relation to having conflicts among peers of the same race in regards to skin color. Grace describes,

Being a minority with a fair complexion, I did not have many friends of my same race. Some of the black females treated me like I did not belong. I felt like the white females accepted me more than the black females. Sometimes to have “friends,” I had to hang out with the white girls even when they compared their tans to my skin color saying they were almost as dark as I was. I desperately wanted the black females to accept me as friends. There would be times I would try to act out to the principal to prove to the black girls, I could be down too. The black girls would accept me for short periods of time, but then would turn on me saying I was a “wannabe.”

Grace explains how black and white students attending her school segregated due to “unwritten rules”:

The whites mostly hung out in the smoking area (even non-smoking whites) between the seventh and eighth grade and ninth- through 12th-grade school buildings. Most African Americans hung out in the old small recreation gym (which we called the little gym) playing or watching basketball. A very small mixed group would sometimes meet at the swings in front of the school by the mascot statue. This was the lifestyle for us.

Within the classroom, Grace explains in her oral history that education, especially for black students, could be challenging. Some of these behaviors are still apparent today in public education:

It took a little longer for many of my black counterparts to grasp things. The teachers did not slow down or take the time to make sure each student understood what was taught before moving on. Often the black students would not raise their hands to ask questions to avoid looking inferior to or “less than” the white students. The white students received extra help because they asked for it. Black students would act as if they didn’t care when they got bad grades so they would not look stupid to the white students. Some black students used aggression and anger in class to prove their toughness to avoid appearing they cared.

Segregation outside of school was very apparent among her fellow peers. As Grace explains in her oral history, discrimination took place in how differently African American and white students were treated:

During that time, there were only two fast food restaurants in my town. The white youth hung out in an old parking lot and at one of the fast food restaurant. The black youth tried to hang at and around the other local fast food restaurant but were usually run off by the police if they were not purchasing or eating. It was okay for the whites to loiter in the parking lot of the restaurant smoking and drinking but the blacks were run off from their restaurant if they looked like they were just standing around even after eating there.

Racial tension reared its ugly head during Grace's senior year. Up until that time, she went about the normal everyday activity of high school life. Students were segregated based upon the unwritten rules of her town and society in general. One night in October would change the whole complexity of her senior year as Grace explains,

One night in October, excitement was in the air. The senior class was decorating the "little gym" for a Halloween haunted house. This felt like the one time we all; black, white, lower class, middle class, upper class, popular, and unpopular could work together for a common goal. Everyone played a role and everyone was needed to make this project a big success. Then our world was turned upside down. There was a case of vandalism where someone spray painted "KKK" on the school activity bus parked outside of the gym. We knew it was directed towards the blacks in that school. Was it done as a joke? Was it done to scare us? Was it done to let us know they existed? We didn't have the answers to those questions but we knew it wasn't right.

Grace went on to talk about how the African American students contemplated about striking back:

The black students quit decorating. We had so many questions going through our minds. What do we do now? Should we fight back? Should we tell someone?

We decided to leave the school premises and come up with a plan. The African American seniors met at a black classmate's home who lived close by to discuss what happened and what we planned to do about it. After speaking to a parent, we decided not to go back to the school that night and not to participate in the senior class haunted house. We were still very mad and wanted to do something; anything, but we knew the parent was right. What would fighting back do? We would probably be the ones who are suspended and blamed. We were close to graduating and had too much to lose.

Grace explains that what the next day at school was:

The next day in school was awkward and uncomfortable. Tension was very high that day. Blacks were too upset even with white friends. The white students could not understand why black students were so upset. The school was segregated that day. Blacks only hung out with, sat, and had lunch with other black students. Previously mixed race friends stayed away from each. White students outnumbered the black students by a lot but now it felt like school was our world and we did not matter.

Grace further explains that administration was not supportive in this case and the incident caused much separation for days after:

The police were never called to investigate. No one was punished and it took a while before the activity bus was removed or repainted. The principal investigated but nothing ever came from it. It was a constant reminder for many days after. Eventually mixed race friends eventually started mingling again. In my case, I never mentioned the incident to my white friends but our friendship was never the same. I just didn't know how I could trust and feel secure with those friends.

### **Helen**

Helen is a 37-year-old African American female who attended all desegregated schools. She grew up in North Carolina in a two-parent household. Helen graduated from Fayetteville State University, where she earned a double major in Business

Administration & Computer Science and a Bachelor of Science in five years. She graduated from high school in 1997.

Helen, like most participants in this study, experienced segregation and racism as it was embedded within society. She explained in her oral history her experience when her family moved into their new neighborhood:

My family moved into a community called “Town & Country” when I was about 4 years old. During that time, we were the second black family to move into the neighborhood and buy a house. I remember our neighbors being overly excited and coming to visit within the first few weeks of us living there. I thought that was odd—like really odd; I thought that type of thing only happened on television.

Helen attended a predominantly black school with a few white students. Within the school, she did not notice any segregation but outside within the town itself, just as the story with her neighborhood, she did see heavy segregation and racism. Helen explains in her oral history:

My whole life, I’ve always went to the predominantly black school so I didn’t experience or wasn’t aware of any segregation within the actual school. I can say, however, that within my city was pretty much segregated, particularly during the time I was in high school. My high school excelled in athletics, but back then, the local newspaper didn’t recognize OR put my school on the front page for something positive. I remember there was a student that called in a bomb threat at our school, which caused school to be dismissed for almost an entire day. Our track team won the Indoor State Championship. Guess which story made the front page? Our track accolades were mentioned but it wasn’t considered top news. Our rival school across town, which was white, had their “star point guard” was caught smoking weed by a city police officer. The student was arrested and booked on drug charges. No one knew about this as it was kept out of the news. Eventually there was a leak and news spread about the arrest. I would say definite unwritten segregation here.

As a college graduate from a Historically Black University (HBCU), Helen had an interesting view on how students' educational and career opportunities are affected by what type of school, whether predominantly black or white, they attended. In this case, Helen talked about how different races perceive attending their respective white or black colleges or universities:

I do think that the educational and career opportunities are affected by what college one may attend. I think that those minority students who attend predominantly black colleges are looked down upon just because of what school they decided to get a degree from. Honestly, when I'm out and about, I have never seen a non-black person wear any paraphernalia from a predominantly black college. Not trying to generalize or judge, these are just my observations. However, you will see a black person with a predominantly white college sweatshirt on; especially if they attended that college/university. That's the same situation with career opportunities. At a job interview, I was asked why I picked the Historically Black College/University (HBCU) out of all of the colleges in the world. My response was, "I wanted to go to a HBCU within North Carolina who had a winning basketball team. Because of my decision I have 2 CIAA rings." Their response was "interesting."

Helen feels that black communities benefited from black students attending a predominantly black school within their community. She felt that her high school experience was successful and benefited her along with the community she grew up in:

I think successful black students, whom at one time attended a basically an "all black school," do benefit the black community. Normally it's not just the black community; it's OUR/THEIR community. Most times, those same students return to their community that they came out of to support, contribute, mentor, motivate, or simply engage with the younger generation that's coming behind them. To me, the benefit is showing a way to get an education, become successful, and give back. In my community, this is a reoccurring role.

Helen further explains that the concept of “family” has been lost—which factors into African Americans being disadvantaged. She explains,

Yes, I agree the black family as a whole has gotten away from the word itself, FAMILY. Yes, we (blacks) as a people have had disadvantages, but we currently have a black President that is the leader of the free world. We cannot continue to give ‘other folks’ so much credit over our current situation. Not to downplay any of the struggles of my ancestors, but we are killing ourselves . . . by ourselves. The family structure is out of whack—we are so accepting of everything because no one wants to hurt anyone’s feelings. Back in the day, when you walked in your Grandmother’s house, or anyone who was older than your parents, you said “yes ma’am, yes sir.” You didn’t talk back regardless of what was going on in your mind. Men wore their pants up. It was taboo for you to cuss in front of grown people and you showed respect whether you wanted to or not. Anyone could correct you if they saw you out doing something wrong and that person didn’t have to worry about someone’s mother coming to their house to cuss them out because someone had to correct their child. We have had and still continue to have disadvantages. However, we as a people have lost all sense of pride for which we really are. We can’t keep pointing the finger at everyone else, when we have four pointed right back at us.

Furthermore, Helen explains that the disadvantages African Americans have contributes to the achievement gap that exists. In addition, she explains that there are other forces in play:

I believe there are four reasons this achievement gap exists; (1) White Privilege; many ignore the fact that it exists, but it does. (2) The media, which portrays an image that doesn’t look like most blacks. (3) Parents; there comes a time when the parents have to take some responsibility in the way their children are acting and how they are being raised. (4) Life experiences; this depends on the first, second, and third reasons that I just mentioned. Depending on them, your life experience will and can determine the achievement gap.

### Isabel

Isabel is a 37-year-old African American female who attended all desegregated schools, all which were predominantly white, and makes her different than a majority of the other participants in this study. She grew up in North Carolina and received both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Appalachian State University.

Some of Isabel's experiences mirror other participants within this study in regards to pocketed segregation among students. She explains in her oral history the struggle with trying to fit in with having both white and black friends:

As I think back on my K-12 grade years there were instances such as the cafeteria in high school where I sat with all of my black friends. Even though I had white best friends at the time, it didn't matter as we all had lunch together. There was a so-called black section where we all ate together. No one ever talked about it, it just happened. Sometimes I would venture out and sit with my white friends, but then I would get called names or made fun of by my black friends.

When it comes to the classroom, Isabel's perspective has changed from when she was in high school to now working at a predominantly white university:

In the schools that I attended before college, I felt that most of the white teachers treated black students and white students the same. I was never treated differently by any teacher that I had for a class. Now that I currently work at a predominantly white institution, I have heard from many of my black students that white teachers interact with them differently.

While in high school, Isabel recalls one negative, racial event that erupted in her school:

My junior year, a fight broke out between a Hispanic/Latino student and a white student. I'm not sure why everyone felt as though they must take sides but it seemed that the black students sided with the Hispanic/Latino student and most of the white people sided with the white student. Apparently, the white student had

called the Hispanic student a name and started talking about his family. The Hispanic student punched him in the face. Several teachers tried to break up the fight but it just wasn't happening. The police were called in as other students had begun to fight as well. It was just a mess. The next day people that I had spoken to my entire life didn't speak to me. I got called into the principal's office with about 7-8 other students to be on this committee to help solve the now racial tension. The committee met twice before things went back to normal. We never met again. I think back on that now and wonder if it was just a political move from the school administration. Both students were suspended and eventually came back. On the day of the actual event, many white parents pulled their children out of school for fear that things would get worse. My mom wanted me out of school as well but couldn't get off of work so I went home with a friend. My friend, who was white, was on the side of the Hispanic student. We talked a lot about that during the afternoon.

Isabel had mixed emotions when it came to the *Brown* decision in 1954 ending segregation and if it benefited the black and white communities:

I am very thankful for the *Brown* decision. Let's be honest. Even today, predominantly white institutions (PWI) seem to have better resources for students than our Historically Black Institutions (HBI). I remember always having new books and other necessary resources growing up in my schools. One of my cousins who went to a HBI in Georgia didn't have this same experience. She would often complain of bugs in her school. I didn't have those in the schools I attended, whether it was middle or high school or on the university level. I am sure it made some members of the white community uncomfortable when segregation ended in the school systems. I think it also helped some white people really understand the difference of allocated resources in the different systems.

### **Jennifer**

Jennifer is a 33-year-old African American woman who grew up in Burlington, NC in a two-parent household. Both parents were college graduates and both worked two jobs. She also had an older sister, an older brother, and a younger sister. Her older siblings were from her parents' previous marriages. Jennifer attended predominantly black elementary, middle, and high schools. She earned a Bachelor in Clinical

Laboratory Science from East Carolina, MS in Adult Education from North Carolina A&T State University, and PhD in Adult, Professional, and Community Education from Texas State University.

The result of socioeconomic status (SES) in regards to the area in which Jennifer lived prompted her attending predominantly black elementary, middle, and high schools. She and her family lived in a low SES area that was made up of a large number of African-Americans with very few white families. Jennifer's schooling experiences come from the perspective of going to school with a majority of African American students with very few whites. Her hometown was segregated in terms of geographical regions. She explains:

The "Country Club," had middle and high schools that were commonly referred to as being located on the "white" side of town. I think an unwritten rule was not to hang out at certain spaces such as Mayberry's near the city park. And with regard to parks, the two parks I played at were different because these parks were on the black side. Blacks only went to the skating rink on Sundays and we really went to dance rather than skate. Another "black" space was the carwash on Sundays. You rarely saw white people in attendance.

Jennifer recalls in her oral history that even athletics were segregated and influenced her decision to switch sports while in high school:

I was very athletic growing up and I hated to play at a certain high school in the suburbs. The entire team was white . . . I mean no black girls at all. It was like this year after year in middle school and high school. Another high school in the county in the suburbs was similar also. Now that I think about it that's the reason why I stopped playing softball and committed to track full time. With track, I was surrounded by more black people.

When it comes to race and skin color, some young adults would hang out together with no issue of race or ethnicity. Unfortunately, it was the adults that had issues with someone of a different race as Jennifer explains,

I never spent the night at my white friend's house. We had been friends since elementary school but I knew her mother would not ever allow me to spend the night. In middle school, we sat in the gym before class began every morning. You would always see the Blacks sitting together and the whites in another section. The only integration was due to athletics. At my middle and high school, athletics mended the racial divide among us. I do not recall any "race wars" or "racially charged" altercations in school.

As a current college professor, Jennifer believes that the *Brown* decision of 1954 to end segregation in public schools actually hurt the black community in many aspects:

I think the *Brown* decision of 1954 hurt the black community. As a college professor and a scholar in the field of adult education, it pains me to know the status of us as black people with regard to education. I am proud to work at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), but even in this environment some people just do not get it. White students are increasingly occupying Historically Black Educational Spaces. I have had white students attempt to exercise their White Privilege and try to disrespect me in front of the class that I am teaching! To add, my black students remain silent when this happens! I feel that even in the educational space, also known as the classroom, I have been mindful of my remarks so I do not offend anyone.

Jennifer further goes on to explain what she personally feels that segregated schools may be the best for the black community right now:

I think that one day an integrated school will be best for all of us in society. But right now, in the midst of this amplification of over microaggressions and racial division, our black community needs to rebuild and segregated schools may be best for our future and progression as a race.

Even though Jennifer felt segregated schools may be best for the black community right now, she feels there are some advantages in attending a desegregated school:

The world is integrated so I think one advantage of attending an integrated school is exposure to the reality that exists in the world. A disadvantage, of course, would be an increased risk for discrimination.

### **Kirk**

As the researcher of this study, I decided to use myself as a participant as an African-American male who attended predominantly white Catholic School from K-5th grade and then transitioned to predominantly white public middle school. I graduated from predominantly white high school in 1992 and then attended Seton Hall University, a predominantly white, Catholic private school. I earned a Master's in school administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and I am currently attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where I have already obtained an Educational Specialist in Education Leadership and am working to complete my doctorate.

While growing up, my neighborhood consisted of African-American families but living in a suburban area, segregation and racism was very prevalent as explained in my oral history:

The neighborhood I grew up in was a small neighborhood in the country, about 10–15 minutes from town. My neighborhood was black and consisted of about 10 houses on my street. As a child, I hung out with kids in my neighborhood and we played basketball and rode around our neighborhoods on our bikes. Up the street, there was a local neighborhood store that had white owners. I remember as a child when we, my friends from the neighborhood, went into the store, as we walked in, we would be watched closely. The store was owned by white people.

Thinking back on it now, I know we were watched so we wouldn't steal. There were whites that lived close to the store and I can remember that if we, meaning the black kids, were in the store at the same time as white kids, they would watch and interact with the white kids differently than us.

I remember an experience where we had a segregated swimming pool on the outskirts of our neighborhood:

Living in the country, there were pockets of different races within the area. Our neighborhood was black but a few miles down the street, there were white neighborhoods. These white neighborhoods consisted of folks that were considered "red necks" as they sported confederate flags and dressed in camouflage and hunting gear. I remember a huge "public" swimming pool that was right on the outskirts of our neighborhood. This was an all-white swimming pool because during the summer time, we would ride by and I would ask my parents if I could go swimming there. They would always respond, "It is a private pool and blacks are not allowed to swim there." In thinking back, I never saw a black person swimming in the pool. As a child, I rode by the pool daily and during the summer time, I would feel sad because I so wanted to swim there so badly. I still can remember seeing how much fun kids and adults were having diving off the high diving board, running around, and playing.

Local restaurants did allow blacks to eat in them but just as the segregated swimming pools near my neighborhood, these restaurants consisted of mainly white people who had prejudices against blacks, especially my family:

Living in the country and within our town, there were small, locally ran restaurants. I can remember walking into certain restaurants to eat and my parents and I might be the only black family there. People of color would be respectful, for the most part, they would stare at me and my mother as we were light-skinned and my father was much darker in complexion.

While attending predominantly white schools, I encountered several school experiences involving some blatant and underlying racism among my peers and staff at my school:

As my middle school days progressed, I remember being the only black student in my math class, as it was an honors class. As a result of the “track” I was placed on, I was the only black student to take an honors math class. On many occasions, I remember white students telling me that they didn’t think of me as “black.” At the time I didn’t take offense in this statement but looking back, I constantly wonder what exactly they really meant. In class, I remember the teacher, along with students, engaged in conversations about color during math class. They insisted that I acted “respectful, intelligent, and just different . . .” Also, I remember my principal would always call me out of class and ask my opinions of things. Back then, I thought I was special and respected. In analyzing it now, I believe the principal did think of me in that way but I also believe that he was trying to get the pulse of the “black” students and stay ahead of any potential events that could have happened.

The same chorus teacher happened to be my chorus teacher both in middle and high school. I respected him as an educator but looking back, I am not sure if there was underlying racism involved. I don’t think it was anything intentional but I believe subconsciously, something was there:

My chorus teacher would always have me be the “sound man” in high school. He was also the middle school chorus teacher so we had a long-standing relationship. I noticed as I moved from middle school to high school, he put me more in the role of a technical, sound person that was behind the scenes instead of lead singing roles. I am not sure if that was because I really wasn’t that good of a singer or if it was a race issue where he diminished my role because of how the other students viewed me. A majority of students in the chorus were white.

When it came to interactions and relations between students of different races, everything was straight forward:

During my time in high school, I do remember that if a white student didn’t like a black student, they would let them know. The good thing about that was everyone knew what everyone’s intentions and feelings were so it was understood. We hung together and segregation comprised of students grouping themselves together by race in the commons, at lunch, before and after school, and between classes.

I, many times, was put in uncomfortable situations trying to fit in with both races:

Many times I was stuck in the middle because my white friends would want me to hang out with them and my black friends would want the same. I had to balance my time between both “sets” of friends.

With racial tensions occurring in my high school, there were several events that happened in the school or community based on racial events:

In high school, I was our class president and president of the grievance committee which was a student committee that discussed any student related problems and I was a liaison to administration. There was one event that involved Confederate Flags. White students wore and sported Confederate Flags on shirts, belt buckles, and on their cars on a regular basis. Black students, of course, didn't care too much for these flags. In an effort to show “black pride and unity”, black students began to wear the hip-hop leather African medallions with the “red, black, and green” colors. They would also wear Malcolm X and “black power” shirts. The shirts black students wore did not have any derogatory statements on them. Black students had problems with the Confederate Flag on clothing and being displayed and white students had problems with the pro-black movement. Tensions ran high for a couple of months. White students that didn't wear Confederate Flags started being influenced by those white students that did wear Confederate Flags. White students that weren't directly involved began to voice their displeasure in the hip-hop leather African medallions and “black power” paraphilia. White students made the argument that if black students can wear these items, then they are justified to wear the Confederate Flag on clothing and “sport” it proudly. Eventually the situation died down and student forgot about it. No violent events occurred.

Like a majority of the participants in this study, I have mixed results on the *Brown* decision in 1954 which ended segregation in public schools as explained below:

I have mixed feelings about the *Brown* decision. On one hand, in talking to some older African American students that went to segregated schools, they felt that all-black schools were very beneficial in some cases because teachers cared about the students. Many times teachers had relationships with parents within the community as they attended church with them, saw them at local businesses, and

attended social events with them. They made personal connections and the concept of “it takes a village to raise a child” was apparent. There was a sense of black pride within the community. Students, for the most part, got along with each other and had respect for students. On the other hand, with the *Brown* decision, black students did not have the facilities and resources that white students had in their schools. Many African American students that attended segregated schools said they had inferior textbooks, school facilities, and the overall quality of resources was not good. The *Brown* decision opened up opportunities for black students to pursue educational and career paths that may have been limited if segregation continued.

### **Introduction of Themes**

After the review of the transcripts, potential themes were identified. A coding system was set up in order to arrange similar statements or comments from the interviews. Seven themes emerged from the interviews: Unequal Facilities, Community, High Regard for Education, Hostile Environments, Challenges with Social Desegregation, Ongoing Discrimination, and the Impact of Intangibles Outweighing that of Facilities (see Table 2). Themes were identified when at least four of the six participants mentioned them during the interview. After reading the transcripts from each interview, common words were identified and counted. The data was coded by marking similar texts with a code label so that it could be more easily retrieved at a later stage for further comparison and analysis. Coding allowed the data to be analyzed for themes, ideas, and categories, which were also counted. Thus, the reoccurrences of these words helped to draw inferences from similarities and differences in patterns between pairs of cases and to specify and focus on the themes for this study.

Table 2

## Description of Themes

Theme	Description
Unequal Facilities	Discussed the perceptions of the participants on resources and materials used to support the curriculum.
Community Centered	Revealed the perception of the participants as to how the teachers, parents, and church played a role in education.
High Regard for Education	Focused on the participants' views of the value placed on education
Hostile Environments	Expressed how the participants adjusted to desegregation
Challenges with Social Desegregation	Allowed the participants to discuss events that shaped the school culture after desegregation
Ongoing Discrimination	Focused on how they continue to experience discrimination
Intangibles Outweighed Facilities	Focused on how family/community, valuing education were more impactful than poor facilities and resources

### The Findings

#### What Were the Schooling Experiences of African Americans from the Post-*Brown* Era to 2001?

When comparing the schooling experiences of African Americans attending school in different time periods, the qualitative data offered by the participants of the study are categorized into two time eras: (a) African Americans who attended segregated

schools after the *Brown* decision of 1954, and (b) African Americans who attended desegregated schools.

**Theme 1: The quality of facilities was inferior in all-black schools during segregation and in predominantly black schools during desegregation.** The data indicate that participants in the first time period had facilities and resources separate and unequal to those of whites. Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denis, and Edward attended at least one segregated school from the 1954 *Brown* decision until the mid to late 1970s. Each of these five participants made references to facilities at their schools and the conditions of their neighborhoods. Participants explained that many facilities at their schools and structures in their neighborhoods were unequal to those used by white students during segregation. Siddle Walker and Archung (2003) note that in North Carolina in the 1920s and 30s the discrepancy between the money invested in black and white schools were significant. For example, the cost of the largest building for African American students was \$4,465 as compared to allocations totaling \$9,000 and \$15,000 for white schools.

Unequal facilities were still apparent in the 1960s and 1970s as Alice explains,

I can say that overall, the facilities were kept clean and taken care of because everyone had a sense of pride. In looking back, our facilities were way more inferior to white schools. We didn't know any better because we considered the facilities "our stuff" and it was all we had.

Blake noted the schools he attended did not have enough resources and the equipment was handed down from the white schools to the African American schools:

Race was an issue because we knew that sometimes the white schools had better equipment than the black schools. Case in point, when I was in the band we knew that we had hand-me-down instruments in the middle schools and high schools.

Blake also stated,

Heating was ok but we had no air-conditioning. Most schools, whether white or black, had heat. This was great during the winter but those months before we got out for the summer, it sometimes became unbearable

Edward had the same experience as Blake when it came to resources and equipment:

In elementary school, many of our books were second hand. Some had pages torn out so if you got to a point where your pages were gone you had to share with someone that had those. I didn't have a gym until I was in Jr. High. We played outside unless it was raining, snowing, or really, really cold. In terms of heating and air, the best I can remember the heat worked. I didn't experience air conditioning at all during my formative years.

Cathy shared,

Chalked boards were worn—chalk was scarce—erasers worn—but that's all we knew. It was understood that you used chalk until it was too small to write with.

Denise stated,

We had a library and we had books in the library. But we didn't have any science materials or the material that I probably had was older. . . . I'm sure we got the hand-me-downs, so when you get the hand-me-downs, by the time you get the hand-me-downs they probably have two or three more books, so that's how we were at a disadvantage, because that's how they probably kept us down.

Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk attended desegregated schools after the post-*Brown* decision in 1954 in the 1980s. Each of the six participants in the study made references to the composition of what their neighborhoods looked like and the condition of the facilities at their schools.

Florence explained that attending a desegregated school that was predominantly white, she did not experience any differences in facilities or resources:

I went to a predominantly white school and all of the facilities were fine. I was not given the worst resources nor did I have to use different facilities. My parents were responsible for purchasing supplies for me to use just as the other students parents did for them. I shared the classroom, cafeteria, etc., as a regular student that attended a public school.

Grace, Helen, and Jennifer indicated that their facilities were not in the best condition. Grace, who attended a desegregated school that was predominantly white, explains,

Our gym was outdated with the old wooden pull out bleachers. Sometimes it was a struggle to pull those bleachers out as they got stuck. There was no air conditioner or heat. It was cold in the fall going into the winter and hot in the summer.

In this particular case, the conditions of the facilities were mainly based upon socio-economic status and not because of the racial make-up of her school.

Helen and Jennifer, on the other hand, attended the same predominantly black school, Jennifer graduating about four years after Helen. They both stated that their school facilities lacked in resources based upon the racial makeup of their schools and thus were not on par to other white schools in the same district. Jennifer stated,

You could tell that our classrooms were not the best. Our desks were somewhat old and we had very old overhead projectors. There was mold on some of the ceiling tiles. My cousin attended a white school across town. She explained that her classrooms were nothing like ours. Our sporting facilities were below average. The one thing we did have that was decent was our track. Track was dominated by African-Americans and our school had a rich tradition of winning the state each year. It was paved and had some rough areas but we ran on it.

Similar to Jennifer, Helen talks about her perspective on different facilities within the school, especially the sporting venues. By the time Helen was a senior, one of the sporting venues, the track, was the best in the district as she explains,

The cafeteria wasn't the greatest. The furniture was pretty old. It took a while to get new tables and chairs. I remember seeing those big roaches scurrying across the floor. With our sporting venues, our softball field was horrible. See, the girls at our school wasn't into playing softball as much. That was considered a "white girls sport." I loved playing softball but because of that reason, I decided to run track. With the many state championships we had, we had one of the only tracks in the district that was rubber and not a paved.

Isabel had a different experience when it came to facilities as she attended a predominantly white high school. Her facilities were adequate and she compared her experience to one of the participants in this study as they were within the same school district and knew one another:

It seemed as though our high school and middle school facilities were kept a bit cleaner than the black schools in the district. I can even go as far to say that because our high school was in the upper-class part of town it was kept cleaner than some of the other predominantly high schools in the area as well. Our football field was shared between the high school and the local university so of course it was top of the line. Our parking lots were well taken care of and had good lighting.

As the researcher and a participant, the facilities at my high school, which was predominantly white, were average. I did not notice any glaring inadequacies when it came to classrooms or other facilities at my school:

In thinking back to my classrooms, they were kept neat and clean. Desks were old but were in somewhat of a good condition. Our school was kept clean and facilities were good. I did attend a predominantly white high school so thinking back, that probably was a given.

When comparing the participants' quality of facilities within the two time periods, it seems that participants who attended all-black schools during segregation and predominantly black schools during desegregation (particularly if the school was low SES) shared the same experiences. For the most part, facilities and resources were inferior to those of white schools. This included outdated furniture, older classrooms, unclean cafeterias, and, sometimes, below average sporting venues.

**Theme 2: African Americans experienced strong community in their schools during segregation and in their neighborhoods during early desegregation.** A sense of community was evident in all-black schools throughout segregated schooling. Fields-Smith (2005) indicates that a relationship of trust and cooperation was strong between the school and members of its community. Black communities supported their schools in many instances by paying fees associated with school and providing needed materials (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003).

Five participants, Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denise, and Edward, indicated that during their schooling experiences in segregated schools, they experienced that same sense of community. One component that strengthened the community was the fact that teachers

were members of their church and would visit their homes. All the participants stressed that their communities' mind-sets and ideals were much different than the communities in today's society.

Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denise, and Edward all had similar views when it came to being community oriented. Alice says,

My teachers went to church with my parents so I made sure that I did exactly what I was supposed to do because they could see my mom and dad on Sunday at church. It is much different today where people get offended if you try to tell them their child is doing something wrong. The community, along with my teachers, instilled in us to be something. I always think of the phrase, "by the time you reach my age you're either something or you're dead."

Blake had the same experience as he shares,

The community had wonderful churches and mostly everybody was affiliated with a church, including educators. Most of the time, we (students) were able to depend on the churches for help if needed. We knew that a lot of the churches in the community were involved when needed. Teachers seem to care about you as an individual. You would see teachers at church and in the communities. Teachers seem to care about you as an individual.

Blake also stated,

Before integration, the community was tightknit and everybody chipped in when there was a need. Although parents were working, we knew we had them when we needed them. Encouragement was key. It was never a case where they (parents and community members) ever said you couldn't make it or discouraged you.

Cathy shared the same sentiment when it came to how her teachers treated her:

Attending an all-African American school, I felt that some of the teachers really wanted us to learn and become successful. They took a genuine interest in our futures. They were hard on us and pushed us to become the best students we could be. I really didn't recognize back then but seeing the world now, it was the best thing they could have done.

Denise had similar experiences to Alice in regards to a sense of community and teachers attending church with her parents. She knew not to act up in class or else:

The worst thing for us was if a teacher had to send a note or go to your house. They felt comfortable and would go to your house if they had a problem. It was like a huge family, our neighborhood. But my mom, she didn't drive. If the school had a PTA meeting, somebody that was at my church picked her up and they supported the school. It was one big support system.

Edward lived in an all-black community until he and his family moved his fifth-grade year. During his early elementary years, he shared the same sense of community that Alice, Blake, Cathy, and Denise experienced:

We lived in the city and I went to an all-black school. In my neighborhood, we had the saying, "it takes a village to raise a child" and I had many villagers that had an interest in my character and education. It was understood that failure was NOT an option.

A sense of community within segregated schools was created by many factors as told by the participants. The teachers had a genuine interest in providing a quality education for the participants and pushed them to be the best students they could be. Furthermore, teachers cared about the participants' well-being outside of simply educating them. The teachers' presence reached outside the school walls as participants

shared that they were active and visible members in the community. Teachers interacted with the participants' families in various settings throughout the community. This overall effort exhorted by all members of the community propelled participants to further their education and become better individuals.

Many black teachers across the South acted in the same manner as the participants' teachers did. Siddie Walker (2000) explains,

Teachers held extracurricular tutoring sessions, visited homes and churches in the community where they taught . . . they provided guidance about "life" responsibilities. They talked with students before and after class, carried a student home if it meant that the child would be able to participate in some extracurricular activity he or she could not otherwise participate in, purchased school supplies for their classrooms, and helped to supply clothing for students whose parents had fewer financial resources and scholarship money for those who needed help to go to college. As one teacher described the personal and financial sacrifices made, "it hurts, but you have to do these things sometime." (p. 265)

The remaining participants, Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer and Kirk, all attended desegregated schools only. Their experiences of close knit community were similar to those of the other participants, but in their cases, the feeling of community came from their neighborhoods, rather than their schools. Their communities had a sense of pride and a willingness to assist.

Florence attended a predominantly white school and explains the unity within the black community when it came to helping several of her classmates:

My parents, church and some social auxiliaries were very supportive of all of the students attending my high school. They would collect supplies to be given to the needed students. I remember that as an unwritten rule, only three black girls could make the cheerleading squad even if more were capable. My senior year,

two of the girls needed assistance with their uniforms and camp. The community was right there and pitched in to help pay for some of their expenses.

Grace and Isabel, like Florence, attended a predominantly white school. Grace explains:

My neighborhood was made up of mostly African Americans because of the geographical location. All our neighbors were relatives that also owned farm land. I grew up with my first, second and distant cousins in my neighborhood. We all played together. Our hang outs were in each other's yards, the elementary school playground, and in the woods of our neighborhoods. We knew we had to listen. We had multiple mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters regardless of who lived in your homes. All adults in the community helped raise all the kids in the community.

Like Grace, Isabel explains the same strong community bond shared even though the school she attended was predominantly white:

I lived in a pre-dominantly black, low-mid income neighborhood. The nearest restaurants were 5 minutes away and most of them were locally-owned restaurants. One of those restaurants served a little bit of everything such as hotdogs, hamburgers, chuckwagons, fish sandwiches, and so much more. I remember going into the restaurants and the owners would always ask how I was doing in school. Many times, they would give me free food because of the good grades I got in school. I still visit that restaurant when I go back home. The owners always ask about my life and we reminisce about the good old days.

Helen and Isabel attended the same predominantly black high school, but at different times within the late 1990s and early 2000s. As they lived not more than 10 minutes away from each other, their community had a strong sense of pride that rallied behind the rich sports tradition of their school. Education was tied strongly into the formula as the values of getting an education was first and foremost. Helen explains,

Ever since I was a small child, my skills on the basketball court were exceptional. I was groomed by my family and local neighborhood recreational coaches to have the opportunity to play in high school and college. Everyone pushed me and held me accountable. My parents didn't have egos and think they knew more than the coaches. Once in high school, it was the same way. My high school coach lived in my community. He sometimes picked me up or took me home from practice, checked on my grades, talked with my parents, and genuinely cared about my success. Because of that, I was able to play for a Division II Historically Black College/University (HBCU) where I played on and received two conference championship rings and graduated with a double major.

Jennifer had a similar experience in sports with her coach, along with her family and community, holding her accountable:

Our school built a dynasty within track and field. We had at least one individual state champion, sometimes multiple, every year I was in school. We actually won multiple team state champions with our boys and girls teams. My coach was the best track and field coach in the state. The thing that made him special was that he was interested just as much, if not more, in my academics than my performance on the track. The whole community was like that. My coach knew my parents and all my family members. He stayed on me and if I wasn't doing exceptional in school, I wouldn't compete.

As the researcher and participant, I experienced the same sense of community as the other participants. Even though my school was predominantly white and about 15 minutes away, my neighborhood was small and our houses were in close proximity of each other. The families and kids within our neighborhood interacted with each other constantly. Events were common where food and fellowship was shared among us:

I remember my neighbor across the street would have the best cookouts. Hotdogs, hamburgers, potato salad, and all sorts of sweets. We would come over underneath their carport and hang out for hours eating and playing. I respected them and if they told me to do something, I would do it. I wasn't like today where in some cases, you hear adults, or kids, saying, "You are not my parents so you can't tell me what to do." It was just different. They were like a second set

of parents. I wouldn't dare disrespect them. I knew what would be waiting for me at home if I did disrespect them or anyone else within my neighborhood.

Participants from both time periods indicated a strong-knit community and neighborhood-centered environment. Participants in the first time period had strong relationships with their parents. In addition, they shared those strong bonds with the teachers and religious leaders who lived within the community. Everyone within the school community communicated outside of the school environment and collaborated on students' education, progress, and discipline.

Participants who attended fully desegregated schools in the second time period shared the same sense of community as participants who attended segregated schools, but centered more within the neighborhoods. With the participants now interacting with white students and teachers within their schools, the dependence of support was placed on members within the neighborhood. Family members, coaches, and next door neighbors would assist in anything needed to help the participants be successful while they were in school. This concept of "it takes a village to raise a child" held true as these participants had this support system through elementary, middle, and high school.

**Theme 3: African Americans experienced a high value placed on education during their segregation and desegregation schooling experiences.** As African Americans experienced sub-par facilities during segregation, high regards for education were held by these students, their parents, and their educators. With the *Brown* decision beginning to be implemented into schools and the "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" beginning to gain momentum, education was thought of as essential

in order to be successful within society for African Americans. Extensive works by Siddle Walker suggest that the value for education was used as a catalyst to move students of color beyond the barrier that segregation created. Teachers made sure students completed their work, presented the content effectively, and did not settle for anything less than success. The standards' set were high and students were expected to do anything necessary in order to learn. In line with the research conducted by Walker, five participants, Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denise, and Edward indicated that during segregation, they, along with their parents and teachers, placed a high value on education. Alice asserted,

All you heard from teachers, family members, and members of the community was that since you are an African American, and female, you have to be twice as good as you fellow white counterparts! In my opinion, as an educator that has been in the profession for over 30 years, a lot of African Americans do not value education as they did before the *Brown* decision. Many take it for granted.

Blake, similar to Alice, stated that people around him influenced his decisions:

My lifestyle was dictated by the people around me who wanted African Americans to succeed in school and more importantly life. Students knew that the teachers had our future in their hands and they knew that they were genuine.

Blake went on to say,

Education was really high and stressed to the point that when we get report cards everybody asks how you did. Men and women alike stressed education. Parents were the same way in stressing education. Parents were at the top of the list for education. With the teachers going to the same churches the ministers knew what we were doing. They stressed education. The elders in the community were high on education too.

Cathy describes how her educational experiences in high school opened doors for her to gain employment after high school:

Initially, I had planned to attend college and took all the necessary courses to do so while in high school. In the second semester of my senior year, I met my would-to-be husband and decided to get married after high school instead. During this time, the school offered a career day event that a local phone company representative attended and presented what looked like to me was a pretty good career choice since I had changed my mind about going to college. This was an advantage only given to certain schools and mine was one of them.

Even with the job Cathy obtained with the phone company after high school, she still strived to gain more education and better herself:

After high school, I attended our local community college while working trying to gain an advantage. Even in my new career with the phone company, I was still training to be an engineer.

Denise communicates that the expectations among educators was very, very high. The social aspect of everyday school that sometimes negatively plagues our students today was not as big a factor back then as she explains,

My parents always worked and they always instilled education in us and what we needed to do. They always tried to instill value in you that you can be the best at whatever you are; whatever you want to do you can do it. It seems like they had high expectations. Our teachers were very caring, they accepted—they expected nothing but the best. They always tried to preach that we could do anything that we wanted to do. They wanted us to go to school for the education. We were not going to socialize. If nobody liked us, that was okay. We were going to school to learn.

Denise further explains,

As a former teacher and recently retired principal, times have changed. In many cases, the education piece is lost and the socialization piece is more important. Students, and unfortunately their parents, are more worried about what is being said on social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter.

Edward echoes the sentiments of the previous four participants with the importance of education as he explains how education was at the forefront of his teachers and family:

The teachers really made sure we got the instruction. We thought they (teachers) were the meanest people on earth. Back then, segregated was better in my opinion because African American educators knew what African American children were in store for. They did everything possible to prepare us to be the first African American president. My minister taught Bible at my elementary school so I knew I better behave and excel because I would see him at church. It truly seemed like they all had high expectations for us. Teachers were hard on us. My parents stressed and demanded that I do my best. If I came home with a 'C' on a report card, it may as well have been an "F."

Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk all held education in high regards, much like the other participants that attended segregated schools. The parents of Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk also valued education and instilled it within them.

Florence's philosophy of education was that it was essential to her success in life:

All the while during high school, I knew I wanted to attend a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) and become a teacher and then administrator one day. I also wanted the experience of going to school with one race, preferably African Americans, to see what the difference would be. I also wanted to teach in a predominantly black environment. I wasn't able to teach at an all-black school but I did have the pleasure of leading a predominantly black school as an

administrator and I loved it. It opened my eyes to the way my staff members viewed a particular student's ability just because they were black and were considered low social economic status.

Like many of the other participants, the parents of Grace were involved with her education and had strict rules when it came to grades:

My parents did not attend college so doing well in school for me was a must. They wanted us to have the opportunity to attend college and make something out of ourselves. They knew that education was the key to that. My sister and I were punished if we did not do our best in school or if we misbehaved. My mom responded to teacher's notes and attended teacher conferences as much as she could with working different shifts. Also, my sister and I were praised and rewarded for getting good grades.

Grace also talked about how the community, especially the church, supported education:

My hometown church also praised children for doing well in school. The church had a youth group would meet with the kids on a regular basis. I remember my fourth-grade teacher was also a minister in my church. In Sunday School, teachers would give students treats for getting good grades. The church gave students a personalized Bible and a \$500 gift for graduating high school.

Helen valued education to the fullest. Her perspective on education is from an African American female growing up in a low socioeconomic status area as she explains,

My parents were all about going further than they did – they placed education at the top of the list. My experience has been it's all about bettering yourself. I think in education with lower socioeconomic groups it's all about 'making it out of somewhere.' Getting paperwork that says you have a degree. Normally, the people I have come in contact with are the first in their family to go on to higher education. They want to get their degree and be able to live a comfortable type of lifestyle where they can support themselves and their families.

Isabel attended a predominantly white school as an African American female. Even though she lived in a low socio economic status neighborhood, the students she went to school with took education very seriously. Most of the students that attended her school lived in the high socio-economic status area within her town. The influence of her classmates reinforced with the expectations of her parents, made education a top priority for her:

There were challenges while attending my high school but not to the extent of what I heard went on at the other high school (all-black) in our district. I was surrounded by students, for the most part, that wanted to do well in school. You weren't looked at an outcast or "uncool" if you were successful. Having friends and family that attended the other high school, I could tell the mindset there would be more about survival and just "getting through high school." Totally different environment.

Jennifer came from family, particularly a mother who was an educator, who stressed the importance of getting as much education as possible. She followed in her mother's footsteps by obtaining her doctorate:

My mom was a teacher, an assistant principal, a principal, and professor so education was a big thing in our household. Anything less than B was unacceptable. I had constant pressure from my parents to be better than everyone else. With all the things my mom dealt with as an administrator, I know I couldn't come home with a bad grade or misbehave in the classroom.

As a college professor now, Jennifer definitely sees how the value of education among African Americans, in her opinion, has decreased since the *Brown* decision:

As I teach on the university level now, I see that some black people do not value education as they did before the *Brown* decision. Many take it for granted! Many of students come to the university level unprepared, both black and white, but as

an African American female, I see our people ill-equipped in many cases. The lack of work ethic many times is a result of some type of entitlement student feel. It is mind blowing considering how hard African Americans worked to put us in a position to have the opportunities we have today!

As the researcher and participant, my parents valued education more than anything else. My dad worked three, sometime four jobs. He had his own business in addition to working for the city of my town. My mother worked at a local dry cleaner for as long as I can remember before it closed down. After that, she worked in a rest home. Neither of them went to college and they wanted me to go to school so I wouldn't have to work as hard as they did. We were a middle-class family and my dad always preached that as long as I kept my grades up, he would provide for me:

My dad looked out for me while in high school. He bought me my first car. The only requirement I had was to make the A/B honor roll and keep my grades up. I helped him out on the weekends with his business. I never worked during the week because he and my mother did not want any job to take away from me doing my homework and participating in sports. I remember attendance was important. They stressed that if you weren't at school, you couldn't learn. From kindergarten through 12th grade, I believe I only missed, at the most, three days of school.

Participants in both time periods had a high regard for education that was constantly reinforced and communicated by their parents, teachers, and members of their community or neighborhoods. The participants knew they were expected to perform at the highest levels. Additionally, parents and teachers stressed the importance of education and supported students' educational endeavors at every level. In narrative given by all the participants, they expressed that one, if not all, of the aforementioned groups made it mandatory for them to do well in school. Failure was not an option.

These parents, teachers, and members of the community served as African American role models. They held these participants to a higher standard.

**Theme 4: African Americans experienced hostile environments during segregation and desegregation.** The era of desegregation during the post-*Brown* decision was a difficult transition for both blacks and whites. Even though the *Brown* decision was handed down in 1954, many schools did not totally desegregate until the late 1970s. As a result of attending predominantly white schools, participants within the first time period were placed in hostile environments caused by whites.

Three participants, Cathy, Denise, and Edward attended both segregated and desegregated schools at one time during their elementary, middle, and high school years. Cathy explained that growing up in a small suburban town had its challenges when it came to interacting with people of a different color:

Our town's majority make-up was whites. It was a typical scene of pure "red necks." These individuals dared you to impose on them in any way. It was common place for them to use the "n" word. It was a common name for people of color and we heard the barrage of racial slurs constantly.

With the mentality whites had, Cathy states that they felt superior over blacks and exercised this mentality all the time. This was especially apparent in school:

White students acted superior and said that African American students should not expect to be equal or on the same level as them. Whites expected that blacks should not be first in line, walk beside them, stand near them or talk to them.

Denise stated that the Ku-Klux-Klan would come through town and they would march openly and freely.

I remember times when the Ku-Klux-Klan would march through the town in their white sheets and hoods in broad daylight. So much hate would come from that group against ethnic groups that weren't like them, especially African Americans. They acted as if we were a terrible, uncivilized group of humans that didn't deserve to live.

Edward, who attended a predominantly white school, reported fighting a group of white boys and being called bad names:

Me and a group of white boys were having a dispute as they were using the "n" word casually. One of them said if I opened my mouth again he would show me what "whoopin" a nigger looked like. I opened my mouth and had the first of many fights because of race. I beat up three of them that day.

Edward also provides his perspective on how African American educators were treated when they taught in predominantly white schools after the Brown decision in 1954:

Many teachers were moved to the white high school once integration took place. African American teachers had it harder than students in those cases. They were treated like second rated citizens in the teaching profession. White parents did not like the fact African Americans were teaching their children and automatically thought they were not qualified simply because of their skin color.

Alice and Blake attended segregated schools throughout elementary, middle, high school, and college. Even though they attended all-black schools, their experiences were similar, if not worse, to Cathy, Denise and Edward. In addition, they had to deal with society still not accepting African American as equal citizens.

Alice recalls the infamous Orangeburg Massacre in 1968 that occurred near and on her all-black college campus. Many African American students, both college and high schoolers, were shot and injured during the event as she her accounts:

One of the African American male students was taken off campus and beaten beyond recognition. One was a 16-year-old student at a local high school who was crossing through campus on his way home from basketball practice, and the other young man was shot and killed. Most of the students were shot in the back as they were running. The word was put out that mattresses were needed off our beds to lay the wounded on because they couldn't get them to the hospital fast enough. And the ones that made it to the hospital, nobody wanted to attend to them. It was horrible.

Blake explained his comfort with using ordinary facilities that many African American take granted in using today:

As a young black male, a simple thing like using the bathroom was a challenge. One time, I went to the bathroom at the movies and almost was attacked by a group of white boys. This experience made me more cautious of white people and my surroundings. I believe this trend continues today as African American have to be aware of their surroundings in certain situations.

Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk attended desegregated schools from the 1980s to today. Florence and Isabel are the only two participants that did not experience hostile environments caused by whites. Florence explains her experiences as positive ones:

As a student in the 1980's, all students were treated fairly in my eyes. To be honest with you, I did not know any difference. I had always been in elementary, middle and high school with whites as the majority.

Isabel explains that her friends, who were white, did not view her or her mother differently because of their color or socio-economic status:

The very first time I can remember in middle school my friend invited me over to her house located in the "Country Club" part of town. Her mom wanted to pick me up at my house and I told her that my mom would just drop me off but she

insisted on picking me so that we can go directly to dinner. For some reason I became very nervous about her coming to my house knowing that she lived in a “mansion” in the country club. Her mom pulled up in her big Lexus and came to the door. My mom, who was also kind of uncomfortable, invited her in and offered her something to drink. The two became friends and remain friends until this day.

Even though Grace went to a desegregated school, which was predominantly white, she still experienced negative interactions with her fellow white students as she explains,

I remember the while inside decorating, someone (still don't know who) spray painted “KKK” on the school activity bus parked outside of the gym. Someone went outside and happen to find the racist vandalism. The blacks were shocked and outraged. Just like that, senior year was a big bust for the African American students at my high school.

Grace further explains that administration wasn't supportive in this case and the incident caused much separation for days after:

The only investigation was conducted by the high school principal. All blacks knew the principal was a racist. He called black students to the office to get their stories and he had a smug smirk across his face felt like he was taunting us. No one was ever found or convicted of the vandalism and nothing was ever done.

Helen gives an interesting story on how racism was exposed within a sporting event she played in. As she explains, the adults were the ones that had the biggest problems and caused a very hostile environment for her, her teammates, and their parents:

Our recreational basketball team, which was all-black, would play in a league and most of the other teams that we played were all white. We were between the ages

of 6 and 7 years old. I remember one time during warm-ups, prior to the game starting the parents of the other team was booing us, 6 and 7 year olds! Some of my teammates were crying and scared because these white parents were actually booing us . . . loudly. We ended up winning and at the end, when we were supposed to shake hands—the parents of the other team wouldn't let their kids shake hands 'with those niggers.' I remember the look on my Father's face—one of disgust.

Jennifer has a similar experience to Helen when it came to hostile environments causes by whites at sporting events:

When we played there, I remember seeing a lot of white people with cowbells and confederate flags and pickup trucks. Playing softball back then at the all-black school was challenging because we were never that good. To be honest, softball wasn't a sport that black girls, at my school anyway, were interested in or excelled in. Not being good, they had a field day making fun of us but would infuse racial slurs within the remarks. It was one of the reasons why I switched sports and ran track.

As the researcher and participant, I experienced several incidents of a hostile environment created by whites, my classmates, while in middle and high school. One incident occurred while I was in middle school:

One of the first experiences I remember of segregation that involved a negative experience that involved skin color was in middle school. I was in chorus and landed a major part in a musical. I was the only black student in chorus and I landed in a leading role. I remember a part involved another white female student to dance with me and she had to sit on my leg as I kneeled with my other knee on the floor. When we were practicing the part, she refused to touch or get near me. In thinking back, I remember her making the comment that I was black and she couldn't be "seen" interacting with me like that on stage.

While in high school, there was a school event that affected both black and white students. It started off small but would eventually affect the whole school:

From time to time, we did have physical fights between students, like any normal high school. One particular fight was over a girl. This particular fight happened to be over a black male dating a white female. The white girl's older brother and his friends didn't like this too much. In addition, the rumor was that the white girl's dad was an active member of the KKK. In this situation, it was merely a fist fight between the brother of the white girl and the black male student. No riots or other fights broke out but tensions ran high. Black students were walking around fearful because the KKK were in large numbers with the school being out in the suburbs.

Participants in the first time period who attended both segregated and desegregated schools seemed to experience more intentional, derogatory actions directed at them as a result of their being the initial students to desegregate and attend previously all-white schools. In comparison, participants in the second time period who attended schools that had previously been desegregated experienced less blatant acts. These actions were still prevalent with participants in the second time period but seemed to be to a lesser degree than what participants in the first time period experienced.

All participants in both time periods experienced some type of hostile environment during their schooling experiences. These negative experiences consisted of racial slurs, physical violence, vandalism, humiliation, and feelings of inferiority. Many participants had unpleasant memories that will, unfortunately, stay with them for life. As the intent of desegregation was meant to be positive, many participants who experienced the early wave of desegregation gave narratives to suggest a different view. Even those participants who attended desegregated schools experienced hostile environments that took place outside of the school walls. Even though no child or young adult should be subjected to blatant racism, participants did not let these acts of hostility defeat them.

**Theme 5: African Americans in desegregated schools still faced challenges with social desegregation.**

Social desegregation was a challenge for participants who began to try and break the segregation barriers that still existed well after the *Brown* decision in 1954.

Two participants, Cathy and Denise, noted some challenges with social desegregation. These participants attended schools that were beginning to desegregate. According to Cathy's firsthand experiences, neither African-Americans nor whites embraced desegregation and struggled to cope. Cathy explains how students reacted at her at school:

Negative behavior only occurred during school assemblies and group meetings. Socialization was still segregated and was seen as racial student groups 'sat with their own kind' as blacks sat with and associated with blacks and whites did the same.

Denise, similar to Cathy, explained the difficulty of both races adjusting to desegregation and how simple tasks, such as finding a means to get to school, had its challenges. Denise explains that she had to walk to school or have her parents take her. She explained that she could not ride the bus because of the following:

I had to either walk to school or my parents took me to school because we could not ride on the bus because I was black. Where I lived, I was too close to the school. As a result, we had to walk and sometimes we would see other white students, riding by, and they would say racial slurs toward us and throw stuff things.

Edward, who also attended a desegregated school, noted that sports were a catalyst for improved socialization among student groups. It helped him to adjust during the trying times:

I did not have many problems probably because of my athletic ability. Sports were the one place where everything was on equal footing. The coaches went the extra mile to stress that on the field we were all equal and the best would play. Clubs and other social activities were not so easy to break into.

Similar to Edward, Alice believes that sports were a positive thing in helping improve socialization and helping ease desegregation. Alice attended all segregated schools during her entire school career but she explains how sports helped her younger brothers to attend college:

My youngest brother played basketball and got a full scholarship to play at a Division I school. My other brother went to another college on an athletic and academic scholarship. Both of them never really accounted any problems or oppositions within the locker room to me.

Blake, like Alice, attended all segregated schools during his entire school career. He, along with his community, experienced challenges with social desegregation. Alice recalls some negative events that erupted:

In my town, we had a lot of protests. People took to the streets to voice their displeasure. Also, people within our community participated in the March on Washington during 1965. My sister was there and she was only 16 years old. She and a friend were in a picture in *Life* magazine.

With Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk attending desegregated schools well after the *Brown* decision in 1954, all these participants experienced social

challenges in interacting with white students. Florence, Grace, Isabel, and Kirk attended predominantly white schools as African Americans. Even though the schools of these participants were totally desegregated, they still struggled with segregation within their schools.

Florence indicated feeling isolated as she states,

I sometimes wished that there were more African Americans at my school just so I had someone to identify with. It did not stop me from doing what I wanted to do. In fact, it influenced me to want to go into education and work with schools that were predominantly black.

Also, when referring to desegregation, Grace stated,

It was not written or spoken, but you hung out with your own race during breaks and lunch. A very small mixed group would sometimes meet at the swings in front of the school by the mascot statue but that was it.

According to Isabel, during lunch, the cafeteria continued to be segregated by race. Isabel explains her struggle with trying to fit in with having both white and black friends:

Even though I had white best friends at the time, it didn't matter because we all had lunch together. There was a so-called "black section" where we all ate together. No one ever talked about it, it just happened. Sometimes I would venture out and sit with my white friends, but then I would get called names or made fun of by my black friends.

Isabel also explains about her senior class picture and how it was segregated:

My senior class picture was segregated by color. It just felt comfortable and right. All the blacks sat in the bottom left corner.

As the researcher and participant, I experienced similar schooling experiences to Isabel where I tried to fit in with having both white and black friends:

Black students hung together and white students hung together. Segregation was alive and strong but by choice. The commons area, lunch room, between classes, and before/after school was segregated by race.

Helen and Jennifer attended predominantly black schools and offer a different perspective when it came to social challenges with desegregation well after the *Brown* decision of 1954. These two participants dealt with white students being a minority at their schools and having to adjust to a predominantly black student population. Neither of these participants personally felt any challenges because they were a part of the dominant race at their school. They both noted that white students were not discriminated against and accepted for the most part. Helen said,

There weren't that many white students that attended my school. I do remember the ones that did were looked at as just any other student. Now of course, we knew they were white but we didn't treat them any different because they were "white."

Jennifer, who attended the same school as Helen years later, shares the same sentiments as Helen when it came to white students attending her school:

I, along with my friends, looked at them as regular students that went to our school. We interacted and hung with them with no problem. Of course, all teenagers had disagreements and arguments but if when they occurred, it wasn't because they were "white." It was because it was a disagreement. Color had nothing to do with it.

All participants had their share of challenges when it came to desegregation. Those challenges existed inside and outside of school based upon the type of school attended. The participants who attended white schools during early desegregation faced blatant racism by white students and teachers. The feelings of inferiority, simply because of their skin color, made it difficult to enjoy their schooling experiences. Participants who attended predominantly white schools encountered a range of racism that was subtle to deliberate. Those participants who attended predominantly black schools experienced challenges with social desegregation outside of school. These challenges included interacting with whites who had the opinion or belief that African Americans were inferior and thus should “stay in their place.”

### **The Impact of the Schooling Experiences on the Careers and Subsequent Lives of the African American Participants in This Study**

The schooling experiences of African American participants contained many difficult events and obstacles that attempted to block their path of success. Even with the many adversities faced, the participants had two elements that championed their success; a high regard for education and a strong sense of family/community. These two critical elements assisted participants in overcoming obstacles and gaining a meaningful education. This ultimately contributed to the success they would experience in their subsequent lives. Participants had positive and negative experiences that impacted their school experiences. Nevertheless, those impacts, whether good or bad, made those participants better students and eventually, members of society.

**Theme 6: African Americans from both time periods experience ongoing discrimination.** All 11 of the participants indicated that their careers, their lives, or both have been affected by on-going discrimination. Alice expressed a belief that the continuous academic achievement gap between African American students and their white counterparts is directly related to increasing discrimination.

Teachers, especially white teachers, have long held that black students do not perform as well and they have learned to teach these black students at a lower level than white students. Teachers see many black students as students with behavior issues that will not put forth the effort to instill in them that they have the academic intellect to excel academically.

Blake stated that current discrimination is worse than discrimination during segregation but felt that desegregated schools provided students with an opportunity to view the real world.

Discrimination in today's society is so deeply rooted. At least during my time in attending a segregated school, I knew who didn't like me. I knew who to look out for and everyone, unfortunately, knew their lanes and to stay in them. Today, there is legislation and subtle things passed and put in place for discrimination against people of color.

Cathy shared that her career in engineering has been impacted by on-going discrimination:

I was the only African American woman that worked at my company after high school. Sometimes, the white guys acted like I was not there or not supposed to be there. "Who are you?" They would say things like that I was a 'token' of the company. Some even asked me, "What did you do to get this position?"

Denise is a retired principal that taught in a county that was predominantly white. As an African American female, she can recall being discriminated against because she was black and because she was a female:

As a young, black female principal, I can remember on several occasions a parent or community members saying directly to me asking to “see the principal” because they assumed that I couldn’t be in charge as a black female. They especially got upset when I didn’t agree with what they were saying.

Edward stated that he always has to be better at anything he does professionally because if he is not well above average, he will always be discriminated against:

I still feel I have to be better to get the same amount of respect as my white co-workers even in today’s society. Black men, in particular, have to constantly demonstrate their abilities. There is not as much room for error when I am at put against my white counterparts

Florence feels that society is trying to go in the right direction but still has much progress to be made in terms of discrimination:

Although society is changing in the right direction, there are still people in our country who will always feel that “white is right” and it is up to the young African American generation to continue to work hard, do the right thing, and take advantages of the many opportunities they have. If they do this, then eventually they will be successful. If they do those things, then maybe white people will change their minds about people of color.

Grace had the same sentiments as Edward, but her perspective is that of an African American female in regards to being above average that her white counterparts:

African Americans have always had to work harder than their white counterparts. We receive less pay for the same jobs. It takes us longer to receive recognition

and promotions. As long as this gap exists, African Americans will always be at a disadvantage when it comes to income and social status.

Helen gave specific examples of ongoing discrimination. She stated that as an adult, she clearly remembered three times being personally discriminated against. The first time occurred while she was shopping:

Once I worked as a cashier in retail. A fellow employee asked me if I wanted a 'nigger dime,' which was a dark discolored dime. I took everything I had not to lose my job that day. Just the fact that a fellow employee thought they could actually say that to me in person. That employee was fired two weeks after the incident. The second incident also occurred at the same job. A white female was hired due to a friendship the manager of the business had.

She explains what happened next:

The new employee got her job as a result of knowing the manager. A few days later, the employee stated to one of her white co-workers saying, "I can't stand those uppity niggers in the office." As a result of her comments, she was turned into human resources and later fired.

Isabel indicated that her experiences as an African American female at a predominantly white university shows her the common discrimination that is still taking place:

White teachers in at my university sometimes generalize when it comes to black students. White teachers, and some students, think that one black student represents their entire race and therefore, they must think or act like all black people. I have had several students come to me and give me instances of this happening in class.

Like Isabel, Jennifer is now as a college professor. She realizes that some of her fellow professors do not have the capacity to realize culture differences in some situations. Furthermore, she states that some teachers do not realize how perceptions shape interactions with black students as she explains:

I am an advocate for culturally relevant pedagogy and andragogy [the art and science of teaching adults]. As long as they (1) recognize their white privilege, (2) accept they do have White privilege, (3) negotiate their tension with their White Privilege, and lastly (4) consistently and intentionally continue to unpack their privilege to better understand how to best serve their black students. This also is applicable to socioeconomically privilege blacks in America.

As the researcher and participant, I have been a witness to ongoing discrimination as an African American male that can be perceived as not being “black” due to my features. In agreement with Grace and Edward, African Americans have to be “better than average” to even be considered for a job. In some cases, that is not enough:

One time I remember sitting in the office of my boss as we went through job applications for a job we were hiring for. I was a part of the hiring committee. When my boss came upon one application, I remember him saying, “Wow, this candidate’s name is Shaquan . . . I can tell that is a black name . . .” At that point, he balled the application up and threw it in the trashcan. He didn’t even get past the name at the top of the application.

**Theme 7: The impact of family/community and high regard for education outweighed poor facilities and resources.** The data analyzed showed that the schooling experiences of the participants had an impact on their careers and subsequent lives. The participants’ schooling experiences were both positive and negative in nature and varied

depending on the time period and school setting. Based upon their current status, all of the participants have done extremely well in their careers and are thriving in their lives.

Ashenfelter and Yoon (2006) indicated the correlation between school quality and subsequent income was achieved through increasing one's education. All 11 participants pursued some type of post-secondary education when they graduated from high school. Eight participants ended up going into the field of education where they obtained their bachelors, masters, and/or doctorate degrees. Two participants ended up using their baccalaureate degrees in their respective careers today. One participant used her community college degree to further her career advancement.

Alice, Blake, Denise, Edward, Florence, and Kirk became teachers who taught in traditional classroom settings and became successful school principals. Alice and Jennifer both obtained doctorate degrees and taught on the college/university level as professors. Isabel obtained a Master's degree and works on the university level as a director of staff development. Grace and Helen are in management positions in their respective companies. Cathy worked a long career and held various management positions and is now retired.

Many of the participants who entered education have what Siddle Walker and Archung (2003) calls "institutional caring." This concept is when leaders of schools "recognize the academic, social, and psychological needs of students and through the school policy, arranged for those needs to be met" (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003, p. 34). This type of caring was brought about through the actions of their past educators.

The five participants, Alice, Blake, Cathy, Denise, and Edward, who attended segregated schools, had a mix of positive and negative school experiences. For Alice and Blake, their experience of attending segregated schools had a positive impact due to the community support and a sense of pride among African Americans when it came to education. This experience influenced their career choices and pushed them to further their education past high school. The negative impact of their schooling experiences stemmed from unequal facilities and limited resources. Even though Alice and Blake did not have the same resources as students in white schools, they persevered and achieved a high level of education. Alice indicates the impact her schooling experiences had on her life today:

The hardships that I endured during school only made me stronger. Even though we did not have the resources of the white schools, we made up for it with the support of the community. Educators were looked at as role models. Their actions and words made me go into education. I can say I have not done too badly. I have obtained my doctorate and financially, I have supported my children. One of my daughters has obtained her doctorate.

Blake shares the same sentiments of Alice. He explains,

My exposure to African American educators was vital to furthering my education. I really did not have a choice in the matter. Their expectations of me during my time in school was to better myself once I graduated high school. My best option was college, no if, and, or buts. Attending a Historically Black College/ University (HBCU) and having African American professors instruct me made me want to go into education. I am now an assistant principal and able to support myself and live the life I want to live.

Cathy and Denise had similar positive schooling experiences to Alice and Blake.

They expressed strong community support and valued education when they attended

segregated schools. Unfortunately, when Cathy and Denise attended desegregated schools, they experienced racism among their peers and with some educators who taught them. This type of racism and behavior made them stronger and resulted in their valuing education even more. Those experiences did not deter them or impact them negatively as they went on to pursue education past high school.

Edward experienced strong community support and the importance of receiving an education with similar experiences of Alice, Blake, Cathy, and Denise. However, unlike the four participants who had positive experiences attending segregated schools, Edward had some negative schooling experiences with his fellow black classmates due to his skin complexion. Edward shared the same experiences of racism among peers and educators as Cathy and Denise when he began to attend desegregated schools. Also like Cathy and Denise, these experiences challenged him to be the best he could be at whatever he did and continue his education past high school.

Six participants, Florence, Grace, Helen, Isabel, Jennifer, and Kirk, all attended desegregated schools throughout elementary, middle, and high school. All six participants' schooling experiences afforded them to share a strong sense of community and value for education as the previous five participants who attended segregated and desegregated schools.

Florence, Grace, Isabel, and Kirk attended predominantly white schools and had varied school experiences, both positive and negative. Florence and I both had very encouraging schooling experiences which included overall positive interactions with their white peers and teachers.

Grace and I also attended predominantly white schools but had mixed schooling experiences with both peers and educators. Both these students, because of their skin complexion, were caught in the middle of trying to fit in when interacting with both their white and black friends. Also, acts of racism among students and educators were prevalent in their schooling experiences, similar to the experiences of Cathy, Denise, and Edward. Even with the negative experiences, both students' overall school experiences were positive. Their respective schools had a positive impact which afforded them the opportunity to continue their education after high school.

Helen and Jennifer attended predominantly black schools and had overall positive experiences. Similar to Alice and Blake, who attended segregated schools, Helen and Jennifer experienced a strong sense of community and emphasis placed on education. Additionally, they experienced sub-par facilities, similar to Alice and Blake. The value of education among their families and coaches both pushed these students to attend universities after they graduated high school.

It seems that no matter what circumstances or struggles were thrown at all the participants during their schooling experiences, two factors always seemed to emerge triumphant; a strong sense of family/community and high regard for education. These factors pushed all the participants to better themselves by obtaining education so they could be successful in their subsequent lives. Even though the impacts varied from positive to negative schooling experiences, all these participants used those experiences to put themselves in position to obtain more education and improve their subsequent lives.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

We are now operating a school system in America that's more segregated than at any time since the death of Martin Luther King.

—Jonathan Kozol, 2016

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling was overturned in 1954 by the U.S. Supreme Court, who declared that segregated schools were unequal and called for desegregation with “deliberate speed.” However, the ruling was met with resistance and many school districts kept their schools legally segregated. The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) court ruling sped up the transition to desegregation. Yet, many districts still resisted and broke the new federal integration law. The purpose of this study was to gather perspectives from African Americans on their schooling experiences from the post-*Brown* decision to the 2001 and to examine whether these experiences impacted their careers and subsequent lives. Two time periods were examined: (a) African Americans who attended segregated schools, and (b) African Americans who attended desegregated schools. Chapter V will review the results of the study by presenting a summary of findings, discoveries, recommendations for further study, implications for today’s schools and students, and conclusions.

### **What Were the Schooling Experiences of African Americans from the Post-*Brown* Era to 2001?**

For the first research question pertaining to the school experiences of participants attending segregated *and* desegregated schools, participants indicated that during segregation, resources and materials allotted for African Americans students were unequal and inferior to those of whites. Siddle Walker (2000) states that political agendas by white school boards played a significant part in inequality when it came to resources provided to black schools:

The aspirations of African Americans were reportedly rebutted because of a desire by White school boards to be certain that the African American school did not offer academic courses that equaled or exceeded those being offered at the White school. (p. 267)

The resources the participants had during their school experiences were significantly below those of white schools. These resources included the school as a whole, classrooms, supplies, extracurricular activity facilities, and books. For example, while white students had new band instruments, textbooks, and playground/park equipment, African Americans used old equipment, books that were outdated and had previously been used by white students, and worn out outdoor equipment. Also, while white students had better gymnasiums with air-conditioning, some African American students reported having no air-conditioning during the hot months.

Although the participants reported having inadequate resources, they also communicated a strong sense of community. Their learning environments were built on relationships with parents, teachers, and ministers, who lived in close proximity to their

schools. Because of the relationships, everyone communicated outside of the school environment and collaborated concerning students' education, progress, and discipline. Not only did the individuals live in the community, but the parents also owned businesses in the community, which were supported by families in the community. The teachers served as role models to the participants. As many of the participants' teachers attended segregated schools, they had a sense of relatability and creditability as they knew first-hand what it took to be successful. The findings support the work of Siddle Walker (2000) regarding how participants viewed educators during their schooling experiences:

Usually products of Southern segregated schools themselves, these teachers both implicitly identified with student needs and aspirations and, simultaneously, understood how to negotiate the world beyond the local community. Having lived the benefit of education, the teachers could also tell students how to move beyond the limited life possibilities of a segregated world and how to use education to achieve a middle class life. (p. 265)

Concerning the general atmosphere of their schools and facilities, most of the participants said they enjoyed their schooling experiences and their overall feeling was a pleasant one. They did not see the lack of resources or inadequate facilities as being a hindrance to their education. Most of the participants praised their teachers and administrators and applauded their efforts to bring the participants the best education and schooling experience they could. These educators took them far beyond their school walls in terms of experience and preparation. Only participants who attended desegregated schools after attending segregated schools reported unpleasant experiences with white teachers.

In terms of the school experiences of participants attending only desegregated schools, all participants indicated a sense of community and value for education derived from their schooling experiences. All these participants also spoke of a strong family and community support system that included all members of the community.

In regards to resources and facilities, the participants who attended desegregated schools that were predominantly black reported that their resources were limited and facilities were not up to par. Sporting venues, such as athletic fields, and the upkeep of classrooms and part of their building were below standards in comparison to white schools minutes away within their own school district.

The participants who attended desegregated schools that were predominantly white indicated their resources and facilities were average to above average depending on the socio-economic make-up of the area in which they lived.

The participants' overall schooling experiences were those of a positive nature. Participants who attended predominantly white schools had some racial actions and attitudes within their learning environment that tainted their experiences. Participants who attended predominantly black schools suffered from racial actions and attitudes outside their school walls. Regardless of the school, predominantly white or black, education was held in high regards and all the participants were overall supported by the educators with whom they interacted.

Many people within society make the assumption that segregated schooling was detrimental to African American students. However, contrary to mainstream beliefs, many African American communities were fond of their segregated schools. Siddle

Walker (2000) provides accounts of a community in coastal North Carolina that displayed an overwhelming loyalty to their segregated school. African Americans within this community had a one-year boycott where they tried to save their school. The parents were in favor of a desegregated structure but were not willing to surrender their traditions:

Their own schools had a “rich educational heritage that dated back at least a century”; the teachers “set high standards and constantly put new challenges in front of their students.” (Siddle Walker, 2000, p. 261)

The participants who attended segregated schools validated they loved their school setting, minus the inequality in facilities and resources, which were present.

The responses provided by the participants of the study are parallel to the literature offered by Piert. Piert (2013) wrote that the decision to desegregate public schools in America proved to be a two-edged sword to African American communities. The decision to desegregate was met with resistance from whites. Although African American students were allowed into schools alongside white students, African American communities had to forfeit many of their own schools, curriculum, teachers, administrators, and culture. For many African American parents, relinquishing their cultural traditions was too high of a price to pay, resulting in frustration and a false sense of belief in the public school system.

The results of the study are also reflective of the work of Pellegrino, Mann and Russell (2013). They write that during segregation, despite the lack of access to adequate facilities, resources, and general freedoms found in white society, education was valued

by the African American community. Even with the attempts to marginalize African American access to formal learning, great strides were taken to support a system of education during the Jim Crow Era. Moreover, some African American schools were just as competitive as white schools. African American communities had successful schools and their effective educational systems were supported by their communities. However, the schooling experience for African Americans changed with desegregation. Desegregated schools lacked the nurturing settings, which once developed students' sense of self-efficacy and fostered student achievement through academic rigor. In addition, desegregated schools short-changed African American students, robbing them of the sense of community and the fond memories that the segregated school environment provided. The participants who first attended segregated then desegregated schools echoed this sentiment throughout their narratives.

**How Have the Schooling Experiences of African Americans during the  
Aforementioned Time Period Impacted Their Careers and Subsequent Lives?**

Overall, the participants believed their schooling experiences contributed positively to their lives. They believed that many of their successes and achievements both during and after high school could be attributed to their strong resolve, which was derived from a strong sense of family, community, and value for education.

All of the participants furthered their education after high school; however, they each related how their schooling experiences aided them in their efforts after high school.

Participants reported a belief that students from different backgrounds should attend school together. One aspect of desegregation was that students of different ethnic

groups should co-exist, function, and learn from each other in a school setting. The main component of desegregation was to make sure black and white students both had access to the same resources and education. However, some participants indicated there is still a great deal of racial inequality in society, especially in white and black institutions. Recent research by the Pew Center (2016) would support the participants' views on inequality in America. Eighty-eight percent of African Americans believe the U.S. needs to continue to make changes in order for all African Americans to have equal rights with whites. However, 43% of African Americans have doubts that those changes will ever be made (see Figure 3).

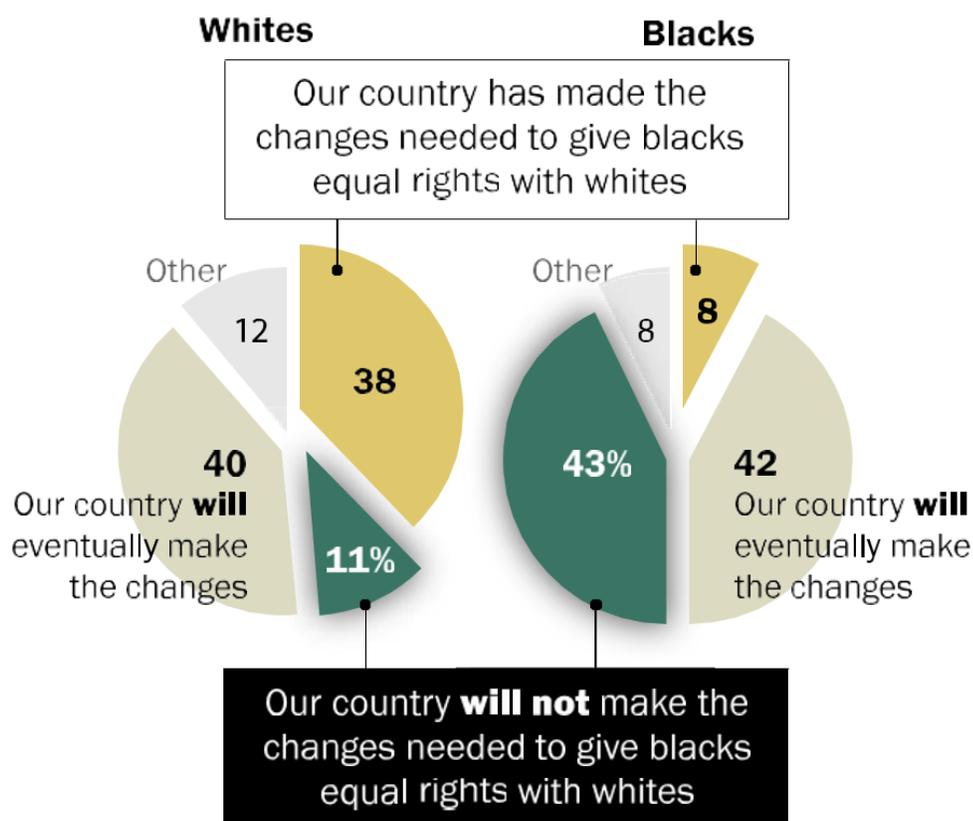


Figure 3. Participants' Views on Inequality in America.

Participants noted that while some of white societal perceptions of black and white communities are racially equal, structures inside and outside of schools place African American students at a disadvantage when compared to their white counterparts. This idea of unequal access to resources stated by many of the participants speaks to concept of racialized education terrain. Diamond (2006) references Bonilla-Silva, who explains that the U.S society operates in a system that is racialized:

[T]he placement of actors in racial categories involves some form of hierarchy . . . The race placed position tends to receive greater economic re-numeration and access to better occupations and prospects in the labor market, occupies a primary position in the political system, is granted higher social estimation (e.g., is viewed as “smarter” and “better looking”), and often has license to draw physical (segregation) as well as social (racial etiquette) boundaries between itself and other races. (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 37, as cited in Diamond, 2006, p. 498)

As a result of racialized society, all students, both African American and white, travel through the same constructs in educational institutions which creates a racialized educational terrain. All people within the U.S. have different access to essential resources based upon their race. Many participants within this study experienced the tricky navigation through the racialized educational terrain while they attended school. The participants within this study took racialized society and education head on and proved to be successful in their endeavors.

### **Lessons Learned**

As this study was conducted, the narratives of the participants, supported by the literature, brought to light some concerning disparities relating to the status of African Americans in the United States in the past and today. One such disparity was related to

wealth, which is a part of the racialized society concept of Bonilla-Silva. For example, when African Americans and whites earn the same income, African Americans, in some cases, have far fewer assets than their white counterparts. This supports the literature provided by Diamond (2006) that states that wealth, rather than income, gives a more accurate depiction of racial inequality within the U.S. Parents of white students that have access to these assets can use them to pay for tutors, purchase educational materials and pay for private schools and more expensive colleges. The participants within this study who attended segregated schools allude to the disparity in wealth when it came to available assets.

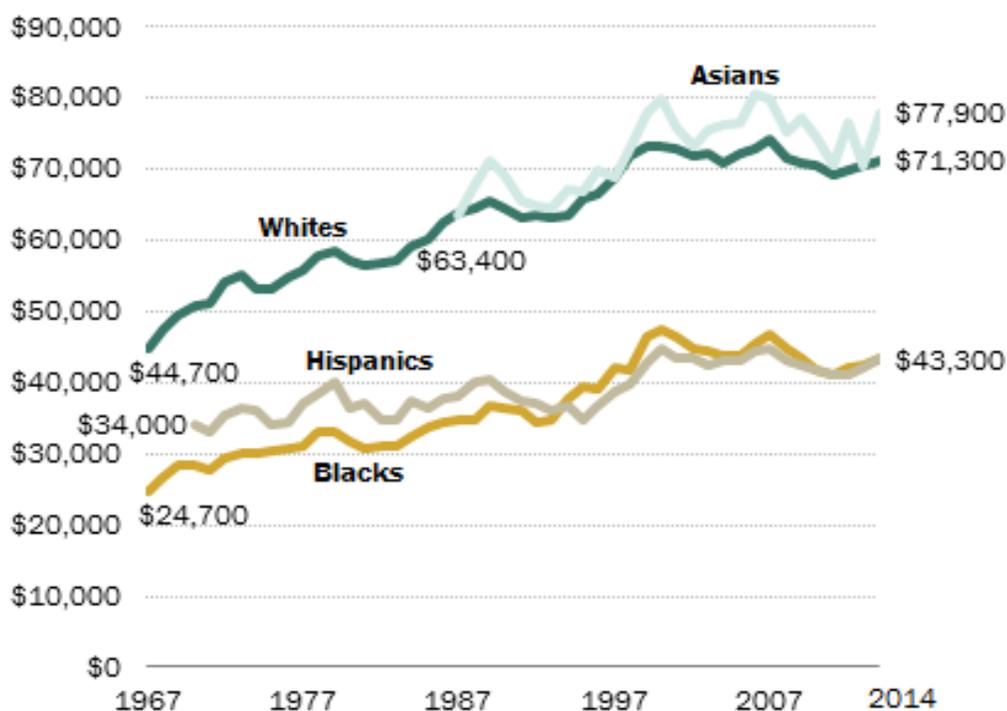
Segregation, by many members of society both black and white, was believed to be beneficial to African Americans. Steele (2013) wrote that school desegregation provided mixed emotions to many African-Americans in the United States. The reality is that many African-Americans are relegated to life at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. A recent study by the Pew Research Centers (2016) states that, on average, blacks are at least twice as likely to be poor or unemployed as whites. Also, black households earn a little more than half of what white households earn. In terms of wealth, white households are 13 times wealthier than black households. These data show that by economic measures, African-Americans are worse off than their white counterparts (see Figure 4).

Many of the participants in this study are current or former educators. In their conversations about the state of education today, they support the aforementioned facts about the socio-economic status of African American students and their families. Many

participants deal first hand with the hardships and economic woes many of these families face.

## Racial gaps in household income persist

*Median adjusted household income in 2014 dollars*



Note: Income standardized to a household size of three and is reported for the calendar year prior to the survey year. For details, see Methodology. Race and ethnicity are based upon the race and ethnicity of the head of household. Whites, blacks and Asians include only those who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Data for whites, blacks and Asians from 1970 to 2014 include only non-Hispanics. Data for whites and blacks prior to 1970 include Hispanics. Data for Hispanics not available prior to 1970. Data for Asians not available prior to 1987. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 1968-2015 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS)

"On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

Figure 4. Racial Gaps in Household Income (Pew Research Center, 2016).

In regards to the societal state of African Americans, the data from the Pew Research Center (2016) is just as discouraging. The life expectancies of African-American men and women are less than those of white men and women. Half of all prison inmates are African-Americans, which is proportionately four times greater than their numbers in the overall population. They are also more likely to be the victims of crime than their proportion in the general population would indicate. African-Americans are six to seven times more likely to be the victims of murder, which is the leading cause of death among young African-American men. As some participants mention in their narratives, the lack of community support and value for education in today's society is likely a major contributing factor to these social disparities.

One of the main purposes of education is to prepare all students to become productive citizens. Du Bois (1935) knew this to be true as he wrote that education was essential to prepare African-Americans to live and compete in white society and that educational equity may be viewed as a way to achieve overall societal desegregation. He went on to say that desegregation will not fail, but will yield positive results when properly implemented.

Unfortunately, ulterior motives embedded within educational policy and practices alter the outcomes of desegregation. Wells and Frankenberg (2008) note that in many districts, within-school tracking programs, often segregate African-American students. For example, students in the upper tracks (predominantly white) are prepared for college and ultimately secure higher paying jobs, while those in lower academic groups (predominantly black) are more likely to be trained for the lesser paying vocational

occupations. As a principal at a high school, I see this first-hand in the small number of African American students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Moreover, many African American students are tracked for Occupational Course of Study (OCS) and remedial tracks early in elementary.

The above information translates into African American students not being prepared to further their education after high school, and thus not attending college or higher institutions of learning. In terms of earning a college degree, there is a gap that exists between African Americans and Whites. 36% of whites age 25 or older hold a bachelor's degree as compared to 23% of blacks (Pew Research Center, 2016). This is more than a one-third difference. Studies show that earning a college degree will significantly increase your earning potential over the course of your life.

Study participants, who currently work in higher education, noted that many African American students make it to the college or university level ill-prepared to complete college level work. This results in these students frequently dropping out and not graduating.

The early history of segregation and desegregation directly impacted how African-Americans were educated, or not educated, in American history. African Americans were not considered as equals to their white counterparts in any way, shape, or form. My belief is that African Americans have been behind in terms of education since the *Plessy* decision in 1896. The denied resources throughout history contribute to the state of some African Americans today. The previous discussion supports the many disparities when it comes to economic and social status of African Americans in the

United States. All the participants in this study had a strong support system of family and community as well as value for education which propelled them to be successful in their subsequent lives. They are the exception to what is shaping to be a discouraging trend of economic and social woes over the last few years.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study attempted to gather perspectives from African Americans on their schooling experiences in various time periods from the post-*Brown* decision to 2001 and to determine how these experiences impacted their career and subsequent lives. Thus far, although there are strides that have been made, there is still room in the literature to understand the African American segregated schooling experience and its related components. There are numerous ways in which scholars could continue the research initiated in this study. Some possible suggestions for future research topics are: (a) What are the impacts of desegregation on the African American community?; (b) What was the desegregation process on outlying independent school districts?; (c) How is re-segregation occurring within urban schools today?; (d) What are the student-teacher dynamics of class and color differences?; and (e) What are the experiences of those who attended both segregated and newly desegregated schools in smaller communities elsewhere in the nation?

The present study represents accounts of former African Americans' perspectives regarding their experiences in segregated and desegregated schools. The information provided stems from former students who lived in communities in North Carolina and is therefore site-specific. Additional in-depth, case studies would help to gain a greater

understanding of events during these periods. Former students who attended African American segregated schools have a wealth of wisdom from which much can be learned. Unfortunately, potential research participants are growing fewer in number with each passing year. Those interested in adding to the literature and extending our knowledge must act on their interests with a sense of urgency.

### **Implications for Today's Schools and Students**

In today's society, the outlook on education can be presented as bleak with school districts receiving severe budget cuts and less value being placed on our public school system. African American students are often the recipients of these cuts as they are educated in school environments that have limited resources. African American students today face some of the same struggles as black students who attended segregated schools. As Siddle Walker (1996) indicates, the deliberate absence of equality in educational resources for African American students in the era of segregation was a direct correlation of how African Americans were treated in society during that time. However, with inequality alive and thriving during that time, a strong sense of family and community coupled with a high regard for education pierced the barrier of inequality in all-black segregated schools. For instance, between the years of 1865 and 1870, African Americans are said to have contributed nearly \$785,700 to schools and by 1901, African Americans paid a total of \$25 million in school taxes (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). African American parents and community members were totally committed to the education of the students in their communities:

African Americans bought pianos, playground equipment, books, science equipment, and so on, in efforts to uplift their children's education. Some parents also regularly attended parent-teacher meetings at the school and supported the school by teaching traditional values about education. That is, they taught attitudes at home about how teachers were to be treated and how students were to conduct themselves at school. Moreover, they instilled in students an understanding of the need for education and provided the time for students to do homework. (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003, p. 32)

Unfortunately in today's desegregated schools that are predominantly black, the presence of family and community support along with the value of education is missing. When both these factors are missing, it creates a continuous cycle of limited and unsuccessful educational experiences. Generation after generation gets stuck in the routine of their present lifestyle. This existence can lead to a live of "just getting by" and poverty. In essence, the lack of community and family support affects the attainment of education. Lewis (1996) explains that "low levels of literacy result in low employment rates and lower wages. Not having literacy skills usually makes it impossible for an individual to break out of the intergenerational cycles of poverty" (p. 186).

As a current educator, I see the many obstacles put in place for African Americans students. Historical accounts of segregated schools paint a picture of pain and inequality for African American students. A similar picture is painted today for African American students, but there are two hues missing on the canvas: a sense of community and family, and value for education. Like most works of art that are beautiful, they are very complex in nature. The same goes for the answer to fix a complex problem of rejuvenating a sense of community and family and value for education.

This study shows that even though African Americans faced inequality in the form of a lack of resources and discrimination, they combated this with a value for education and a unity within their community. This same resolve needs to be infused within our urban schools today. Schools must be inviting, open, and flexible to parents of students, especially African Americans, to show them that education is vital to be successful in today's society. A sense of urgency must be present in order to improve and move in the right direction. If parents within the African American community won't come to the schools, then the school must go to them within the community. A sense of trust must be established within the community. Once that trust is established, the history of how communities were unified during segregation and the power of how African Americans did more with less needs to be shared. Respected, elder, African Americans who struggled and experienced that sense of community and value for education must be allowed to have their stories shared with this generation. Education among the adults within the community must take priority over entertainment and social commodities.

One of the main keys to reestablishing a sense of community and value for education is to target our African American elementary students early. African American students must be reached at an early age to experience success and establish good habits to carry them throughout school. Resources must be poured into our elementary schools. As Fredrick Douglas once said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." This is more relevant today than ever before. In addition, African American

students need to see more African American educators in front of them in the classroom on a daily basis.

The picture I just painted unfortunately is a masterpiece that is deteriorating day by day. There are many “hues” missing in the work of art we call education. Until those hues of community and value for education are added to the canvas, African Americans will continue to be trapped in the cycle of mediocrity and poverty.

### **Conclusions**

In America, race has a symbolic meaning that has stood the test of time throughout history to the present day. According to Diamond (2006), one’s race assigns characteristics that identify a person with perceived positive or negative attributes. In society, one’s race also determines their access to valuable resources. A prime example of not having “access to valuable resources” is clearly shown as African Americans fought for their basic rights as Americans for years. One of those resources was the opportunity to have a quality education. As the *Brown* decision proved, equal access was not the case when it came to resources for African American students. Narratives from participants who attended segregated and desegregated schools spoke to the notion that being “Black” had negative attributes associated with it.

Based upon the societal beliefs about African Americans throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, African Americans were believed to be far less intelligent than whites. Unfortunately, this idea of intellectual inferiority still exists with some individuals within society today. In the educational realm, some past and present educators hold lower

expectations for African American students' than they do for white students. Many of the participants, in both time periods, give accounts of this mentality within their accounts.

This mentality of whites believing African Americans are inferior can translate into some African Americans thinking, and believing, in the same manner. The constant reinforcement of African Americans “not capable of doing certain things because they are black” begins to be embedded within their mindset. This mindset was present in several of the participants’ narratives as they explained how whites questioned their abilities and skills in leadership and managerial positions simply because they were black.

Even with the odds stacked against the participants in this study, their narratives served as evidence that they were resilient in their pursuit of doing the impossible. Each participant had their own trials or tribulations to overcome. Some participants’ experiences proved to be harder than others as they fought through the racial barriers as pioneers of desegregation. There were two things that were consistent with all the participants’ testimonies; the importance of education and the strong sense of family and community.

Unlike much of the literature which attempts to depict the era of segregated schools in a negative and inferior light, the African American participants in this study had a different view. Their actual schooling experiences happened to be positive more times than most. There was a sense of happiness, tradition, and adversity that all participants shared. In essence, it took the adversity and struggle to bring forth the rich tradition which led to the happiness.

The question that must be asked today is, “How can the strong sense of family and community that was present in segregated schools be recaptured in today’s desegregated schools?” The answer to this question is extremely intricate and complicated. In fact, if I had the true answer to this question, I would be one of the most sought after educators in the country and could retire at an early age.

Research, along with the accounts of the participants within this study, shows that segregated schools were the rock of the community. Schools within the African American community were instrumental in educating African American students. African American students had role models in the form of educators they could emulate every day. These educators held the best interest of their students at the forefront because they could relate to them and wanted them to be successful in life. On the other hand, aspects of segregated school hindered African American students in the form of inadequate facilities and resources. I believe if segregated schools could have received the same resources as white schools, they would have thrived and survived while still holding on to their cultural identity, beliefs, and customs.

In today’s society, the close-knit community and value for education is absent in many African American communities. There are many factors that cause the sense of community and value of education to be lost in the day-to-day shuffle. African Americans seem to be pulled in different directions with poverty, a lack of resources, and no sense of hope. With the demands of trying to earn a living and survive in society, many parents are stretched thin which causes the education of their children to take a back seat. The pressure of providing for their families causes some parents to take less

responsibility in raising their children, whether right or wrong. Unfortunately, the expectation is for educators to take up the slack when it comes to parenting. Many educators do not have the necessary skills or patience to cope with the emotional and physical baggage that some African American students bring to school. When it comes to African American educators, there is certainly a shortage of them as fewer and fewer African Americans are enrolling into teacher education programs at universities and colleges across the country. African American students see less African American educators they can relate to in the classroom each day.

Overcoming these previously-mentioned barriers becomes more difficult day by day. With sanctions placed on low-performing schools where minority and poverty rates are high, fewer resources are allocated to school districts, and the number of people going into the education field is dwindling; the uphill climb is a great one. As an African American educator, I do not have a clear road map to success when it comes to gaining back a sense of community and value for education within our African American communities. All I can offer is to continue to work hard, care for students, and use my voice to promote the ideals of unity, pride, and education that once existed within our African American segregated schools.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Interview Questions for All Participants**

1. Please give some background about yourself; your age, where you grew up and environment you faced, family information (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.), where you attended elementary/middle/high school, and post-secondary education.
2. What types of segregation, whether by law or informally, existed in your community? Give me some examples of how it affected your lifestyle.
3. What were your perceptions of the facilities and resources that you had prior to integration?
4. What type of role did family, community, and members within the school play prior to integration? What were their values in regards to education?
5. What are your feelings about how black teachers interacted with black students within your segregated school?
6. What are your feelings about how white teachers interacted with black students within your integrated school? Did you feel they ever treated them differently? If so how?
7. Were there any negative events that erupted due to racial events or integration? How did the black community respond? How did the white community respond?
8. Have you ever been discriminated against during your time as a student or young adult? Have you been discriminated against within the last 10 or 20 years? Which

discrimination do you feel is worse, current discrimination or discrimination that took place during the time of segregation/early integration?

9. Do you feel black students' educational and career opportunities are/were affected because they attended a predominantly white or a predominantly black school?  
Please explain.
10. It is my feeling that African American have been at a disadvantage when it comes to education since the 1800s for various reasons such as slavery, lack of educational opportunity, family and home environments, and other reason. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
11. I feel the educational disadvantages African Americans have faced (and continue to face) contribute directly to the achievement gap that exists in our country. Why do you feel there is an achievement gap between African American students and other races, especially white students?
12. Were there any instances during your school experience where you witnessed or experienced any type discrimination whether it was formal or "unwritten"? If so, how did you or other individuals deal with it?
13. The *Brown* decision in 1954 ended segregation in public schools. Do you think this decision benefited the black community? The white community? Explain why you feel the way you do.

### **Interview Questions for Participants in Period 1 Only**

1. While attending your segregated school, what types of extra-curricular activities were offered?
2. When you attended your integrated school in its early stages, what activities were done jointly, if any? (e.g., sporting teams, clubs, etc.)
3. What do you believe are some advantages of a segregated school? Disadvantages?
4. What do you believe are some advantages of an integrated school? Disadvantages?
5. While attending your segregated school, how were the interactions among your fellow black students?
6. How were white/black interactions at integrated schools you attended? Did you experience any major problems?
7. Which school, segregated or integrated, do you personally feel was the best? Why?

### **Interview Questions for Participants in Period 2 Only**

1. What were your feelings about attending a predominantly black school? Please share any stories or schooling experiences during your time in school.
2. What were your feelings about attending a predominantly white school? Please share any stories or schooling experiences during your time in school.
3. How did you feel about being a student and attending a school that was heavily populated by white students with a small number of minority students? Do you think it benefited the black community? The white community? Of equal benefit to both? No benefit to either community?
4. How did you feel about being a student and attending in a school that was heavily populated by black students? Do you think it benefited the black community? No benefit at all?