

**Student Perspectives of Supporting and Hindering Factors in School Integration
and the Role of Racial Identity in the Process**

by

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Abstract

May 17, 1954 would be an important historic day and would influence education in the lives of African American students in the United States with the unanimous verdict of *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* that ruled separate but equal was no longer an acceptable practice in education for students in elementary and secondary schools across the country. Across the United States, school leaders grappled with implementation of integration, and in many portions of the country, especially in the Deep South, integration would be a slow and often tumultuous process for African Americans fighting for their rights to attend integrated schools.

This study investigated one school system's efforts to develop a Freedom of Choice initiative to desegregate the schools to fulfill the letter of the law of the *Brown* decision. The research examined the process to implement a *Freedom of Choice* initiative, the perceived factors that facilitated and hindered the process, and the perceived positive and negative outcomes as a result of this initiative. A secondary focus was on the role and perception of racial identity during the *Freedom of Choice* initiative from the perspective of those students that were a part of the integration efforts in one southern town. This historical case study allowed the story of school desegregation to be told from the perspective of nine participants who were students during this transition as the school integrated under Freedom of Choice.

There have been limited studies completed that have focused specifically on Freedom of Choice in schools and few, if any, discussed the impact it had on students that were affected by

the integration of schools. This study sought to provide significant information to the body of work related to school integration in primary and secondary schools from the lived experiences of those involved in integration.

The findings of this research indicated that there was a strong sense of family and community support for integration along with compassionate teachers and students that helped to facilitate the transition for students. Although the school system integrated with little negative publicity, there were points during integration that greatly hindered large numbers of African Americans students that mainly revolved around the racist attitudes of teachers and students in the city. One story that did resonate with the participants was a loss of culture from the African American community as they integrated into the all-White schools. The research allowed for a previously untold story to be recorded from the lived experiences of students from their perspective of living in the South.

The findings of this research also indicated that students' racial identity was greatly influenced by their home life, and as students began the integration process, their racial identity was affirmed in their relationships with others. Students understood what race meant and the African Americans were proud of their background. Again, this strong sense of pride was developed from home. Caucasian students understood the world around them in terms of race, and that they benefited in their race was in power and making the decisions in the school system. The idea of white privilege was explored and this concept was evident through the interactions of the Caucasian students during integration.

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This has been a journey that I have had the pleasure to be a part of from the beginning of the dissertation process as I have learned more about integration in Alabama, but it is a journey that some have been a part of since the 1960s when they began the brave walk into an all-White school where they knew that there would be some that did not want them there. If it were not for these students, then we would not have the diversity and a higher level of success in our schools today. To all those that came before me, I want to say thank you! Thank you for your determination and thank you for your contribution to ensure that your voices would be heard.

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CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

**“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal ...”
– excerpt from the Declaration of Independence**

Introduction

As schools began to integrate in the United States in the early 1960s, two cultures (White and African American) that had been divided in school settings and in many aspects of community life, were brought together in school buildings across the South with the passage of the famed *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision. The two questions posed by Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter in this decision were “Did the 14th amendment’s framers intend to outlaw school segregation. If not, did the Court have the power to perform that task itself?” (Irons, 2002, p. 156). In this decision, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could not legally separate students by race, “officially asserting that our society should be race-blind, and in order to do so, school racial distributions should reflect the distribution of the race in the community” (Moody, 2001, p. 679). Chief Justice Earl Warren read these words announcing the unanimous decision of the Court: “We conclude unanimously that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Irons, 2002, p. 163; Kluger, 2004, p. 710). It was important that Chief Justice Warren had a unanimous decision because he felt that “only if the justices spoke with one voice, in words the American people could understand, would the Court be able to help the nation heal its racial wounds” (Irons, 2002, p. 160).

Segregated schools were based on race and the principle that these two races should be separated just as much of the country had been in transportation, commerce, and housing. It is important to realize that race, as a term, is a socially constructed idea and was not based on biological principles (Halley, Eshleman & Vijaya, 2011; Jensen, 2005; Rothenberg, 2012). Ancient Greeks did not think in terms of race; instead they thought in terms of place (Painter, 2010). It was not until much later that translators put that word in their mouths, thus giving it power. In fact, the earliest known human classification system from 1684 was based on four geographical divisions (Painter, 2010). Fast forward to the 1950s, and race was central to the day-to-day operations of the country.

The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (comprised of four state cases consolidated into one) successfully challenged previously prohibited equal access and opportunities for African Americans in public schools. The plaintiffs of the 1951 class action lawsuit argued that the Topeka Board of Education separation of public schools for African American and White children denied African American children equal educational opportunities (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). The 1954 ruling demanded an immediate change to old segregation laws in education. The passage of *Brown* in 1954 was not quickly enacted by all schools across the country, which raised questions across the country, especially in the Southern States. Whites did not want African American students in their schools, and in many cases, African Americans did not want to leave their own schools to be a part of the all-White segregated schools. There was no time table issued by the Court to integrate. The Court only wrote that schools should integrate in “good faith, deliberate speed, and have a prompt start” (Rossell, Armor, & Walberg, 2002, p. 23; Wise, 2011, p. 22). In 1956, two years after the decision, only a handful of Black children attended classes with Whites in the South (Irons, 2002). Disruptive scenes could be

seen at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 when school officials tried to integrate the schools which left many to fear that full integration would not occur in the schools as hoped for in the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Both groups of students had formed their own peer groups and own identity in their own schools. Among the issues that needed to be addressed were, “Why change when the current state of the schools pitted one racial group against another? What changes would occur in students when they were forced to integrate? How would they be perceived by peers of a different race? Would students be able to make a smooth transition? “Many of these questions could have been a factor in why so many schools across the South did not move quickly to integrate, but with pressure from the Federal Government to withhold federal funds, schools were forced to make changes to fulfill the letter of the law, whether they wanted to or not. Although it was almost ten years later, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) began to utilize the power afforded it by the recently passed Civil Rights Act of 1964 to pressure Southern school systems to desegregate. HEW presented districts with yearly guidelines for desegregating that they were to follow to prevent the loss of federal funding (Bagley, 2007). Most Whites in the South feared that mixing would lead to a world in which Black men might challenge White domination of life, including decent jobs (Patterson, 2001). Although it seemed that all African Americans were in favor of integration, there was a core group led by W. E. B. Du Bois that said that Negroes (Blacks) could not receive a proper education in White institutions. Patterson (2001) quoted Du Bois as saying,

A separate Negro school, where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be Black ... is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to by

ignorant social climbers, whose sole claim to superiority is ability to kick ‘niggers’ when they are down. (p. 9)

On the other side of the argument were Blacks that felt the need for integration to lift “the veil of oppression” that they felt Whites had on Black society (Patterson, 2001, p. 70).

From an historical perspective, the creation of schools was not something that was consistently done in the United States. In fact, it was not until 1635 that a public school was established in the United States and not until 1918 that laws were created that mandated compulsory school-attendance. The following timeline highlights important state and federal legislation, judicial decisions, and historical periods of education in the United States ending with the forced integration of all schools throughout the country:

1635 *Boston Latin School:* first “grammar” school or secondary school in the colonies opens:

Boston Latin was funded, in part, by income from a public land sale, making it the first public school in the United States.

1789 *United States Constitution:* Tenth Amendment provides legal basis for making education a state function. First Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment together assure separation of church and state in the provision of education at the local level.

1789 *State constitutions:* provide for the establishment of statewide school systems and, for states entering the union after 1862, contain allotments of federal lands to support state institutions of higher education.

1830 *Laws prohibiting the teaching of slaves to read:* first such law passed in Louisiana; Georgia and Virginia follow in 1831; Alabama in 1832, South Carolina in 1834, and North Carolina in 1835.

- 1849** The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules that segregated schools are permissible under the state's constitution (*Roberts v. City of Boston*). The United States Supreme Court will later use this case to support the "separate but equal" doctrine.
- 1857** With the *Dred Scott* decision, the Supreme Court upholds the denial of citizenship to African Americans and rules that descendants of slaves are "so far inferior that they had no rights which the White man was bound to respect."
- 1865** Schools created for "Negroes" with the establishment of the federal Freedman's Bureau which provided organizational and financial support and shielded schools and teachers from violent attacks and intimidation from hostile Whites.
- 1867** *U.S. Office of Education* established.
- 1868** The Fourteenth Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing "equal protection under the law"; citizenship is extended to African Americans.
- 1890** Louisiana passes the first Jim Crow law requiring separate accommodations for Whites and Blacks.
- 1896** *Plessey v. Ferguson*: Supreme Court validated the separation of Black and White pupils and established the "separate but equal" doctrine. The ruling, built on notions of White supremacy and Black inferiority, provides legal justification for Jim Crow laws in southern states.
- 1918** *Compulsory school-attendance laws*: all states have such a law, although the maximum age of compulsion often exceeds the age at which a work-permit can be granted.
- 1947** In a precursor to the *Brown* case, a federal appeals court strikes down segregated schooling for Mexican American and White students (*Westminster School Dist. v.*

- Mendez*). The verdict prompts California Governor Earl Warren to repeal a state law calling for segregation of Native American and Asian American students.
- 1954** *Brown v. Board of Education (Topeka)*: held unconstitutional the deliberate segregation of schools by law on account of race. In a unanimous opinion, the Supreme Court overturns *Plessy* and declares that separate schools are “inherently unequal.” The Court delays deciding on how to implement the decision and asks for another round of arguments.
- 1955** In *Brown II*, the Supreme Court orders the lower federal courts to require desegregation “with all deliberate speed.”
- 1957** More than 1,000 paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division and a federalized Arkansas National Guard protect nine Black students integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- 1958** The Supreme Court rules that fear of social unrest or violence, whether real or constructed by those wishing to oppose integration, does not excuse state governments from complying with *Brown*. (*Cooper v. Aaron*)
- 10,000 young people march in Washington, DC, in support of integration.
- 1959** 25,000 young people march in Washington, DC, in support of integration.
- Prince Edward County, Virginia, officials close their public schools rather than integrate them. White students attend private academies; Black students do not head back to class until 1963, when the Ford Foundation funds private Black schools. The Supreme Court orders the county to reopen its schools on a desegregated basis in 1964.
- 1960** In New Orleans, federal marshals shielded Ruby Bridges, Gail St. Etienne, Leona Tate and Tessie Prevost from angry crowds as they enrolled in school.

1963 Two African American students, Vivian Malone and James A. Hood, successfully register at the University of Alabama despite George Wallace’s “stand in the schoolhouse door” — but only after President Kennedy federalizes the Alabama National Guard. On September 10, 20 Black students integrated schools in Birmingham, Mobile, and Tuskegee, Alabama.

For the first time, a small number of Black students in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Mississippi attend public elementary and secondary schools with White students.

1964 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is adopted. Title IV of the Act authorizes the federal government to file school desegregation cases. Title VI of the Act prohibits discrimination in programs and activities, including schools, receiving federal financial assistance.

1968 The Supreme Court orders states to dismantle segregated school systems “root and branch.” The Court identifies five factors — facilities, staff, faculty, extracurricular activities and transportation — to be used to gauge a school system’s compliance with the mandate of *Brown*. (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*)

1969 The Supreme Court declares the “all deliberate speed” standard is no longer constitutionally permissible and orders the immediate desegregation of Mississippi schools. (*Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*)

1971 The Court approves busing, magnet schools, compensatory education and other tools as appropriate remedies to overcome the role of residential segregation in perpetuating racially segregated schools. (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education*)

While there was strong resistance to school integration, in parts of the South some schools took a slightly proactive approach to integration by allowing families to volunteer to go

to schools in which their child would be in the minority to be in accordance with the law in the 1960s. This movement became known as Freedom of Choice. Schools, particularly in the South, began to use this as a means to demonstrate integration efforts. Freedom of Choice plans provided minority students and their parents with the formal right to select a school other than their formally assigned segregated school (Irons, 2002; Raffell, 1998). Although these plans were seen as fulfilling the letter of the law, few African Americans integrated schools in the South with no Whites choosing to attend the all Black schools.

In one community in East Alabama, a Freedom of Choice initiative was begun in the mid-1960s. Some citizens (both Black and White), community leaders, school board members, and local clergy came together to forge a new frontier in the schooling of children in the community. Working together, this group successfully integrated an Alabama public school system when other schools across the South were still trying to remain segregated.

Background of the Study

In 1954, in *Brown v. the Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could not legally separate students by race, “officially asserting that our society should be race-blind. If schools are blind to race, then school racial distributions should reflect the distribution of race in the community” (Moody, 2001, p. 679). The unanimous *Brown* decision ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently inequitable, regardless of how physically similar they might be. Thus, they violated the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution’s equal protection clause by denying Blacks equal educational opportunities (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). Based on this Court decision, within the realm of public education, Black and White students could no longer be segregated based purely on race (Bagley, 2007; Duke, 2009)

Many would see education as the teaching the three r's (reading, writing, and arithmetic), but with the diverse world we live in, schools are also responsible for teaching many of life's lessons that parents may not teach at home due to personal beliefs, limited parenting skills or lack of time. On the other hand, parents are sometimes too protective to let the reality of the outside world be a part of their lives. Education directly enhances productivity, and thus the incomes of those who receive schooling, by providing individuals with useful knowledge and skills. Goldin (1999) stated that "schooling also spurs invention and innovation" (p. 1) which will help students grow and contribute to society. "School desegregation has been seen as not simply a means of providing African American students with access to the physical and financial resources of predominantly White schools, but also a means of enabling them to share in social and social-psychological assets of White classmates" (Bankston & Caldas, 1996, p. 537). With an integrated school system, African American students would be afforded the same opportunities as their White counterparts in that the resources would be the same and they would have an opportunity to leave school with the necessary skills to make them productive citizens. Also, in the eyes of their parents, have access to better jobs and a better life than they were afforded from segregated schools with little or no resources. The heart of Brown was the recognition that separate could never be equal, in part because social relations formed in school are an essential part of the educational process (Moody, 2001). Prior to issuing their ruling in 1954, the Supreme Court Justices were quoted as saying, "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments" (Russo, Harris, & Sandidge, p. 298). This recognition signified the essential role that state and local governments had in preparing students for the future and the need to ensure that schools were integrated to provide for future success.

With the passage of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, schools were faced with many questions, centered on the implementation of this new law. Unfortunately, the Court's rhetoric did not bring about any immediate change, especially in the Jim Crow South, where deeply etched social realities were hard to erase. Within a year, the Supreme Court issued a second decision that further dictated requirements for school systems to follow. Specifically, in this decision, the court stated that schools should "make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance" in implementing its mandates aimed at ending de jure segregation (Russo, Harris & Sandidge, 1994, p. 298). Although this decree was issued by the Supreme Court, historians have noted that in many states, it would be almost 20 years before they would completely comply with the court's decision. While the *Brown* decision declared state-promoted segregation unconstitutional and pronounced any such laws or policies null and void, it did not prescribe what school systems must do to desegregate (Armor, 1995). In many cases, states took a very methodical approach to keep the schools segregated while staying clear of the watchful ideas of the federal government. This includes Freedom of Choice and Pupil Placement Laws that gave southern states the appearance that they were making steps to integrate schools. In New Orleans, the plan developed was to integrate schools one year at a time, beginning with the first grade. The efforts failed as the elementary school was integrated, because by the fifth day of school, White parents had withdrawn all their children from the integrated classroom and placed them in private schools financed by public entities (Patterson, 2001). These funds would be from local and state funds that had been diverted to circumvent integration efforts. It would be the federal funds that were threatened to be withheld if schools did not remove their dual school systems in Alabama; however, pupil placement laws gave local school boards the ability to place students in schools based on ability, availability of transportation, and academic

background (Raffel, 1998). Such laws, passed at the state level, gave local school boards great discretion in pupil assignment, enough to slow or stop implementation of school desegregation. This happened in Tuskegee, Alabama with the Macon County Board of Education that closed the school when Black students tried to integrate the school (Norrell, 1998). In 1965, only 6% of the Black students in the South were in an integrated school. In 1967 this number rose to 22% in the 17 southern and border states, but this did not fulfill the letter of the law that all schools across the country would be integrated (Weeks, 1971).

Further to the east of Tuskegee, there was a school system that had begun a five-year process of school integration in 1965. In May 1965, the Rose City Schools (pseudonym) board members discussed Freedom of Choice as a means of integrating the school system. The school board passed the following resolution to implement a plan of action.

Freedom of Choice:

- a) Effective with the commencement of the school year 1965–1966, all students in the public schools in Grades 1, 7, 11, and 12 (Grade 7 being the only transitional grade in the Rose City School System) shall have freedom of choice in the manner and through the medium hereinafter stated, to attend any school in the Rose City School System, regardless of race, color or national origin and enjoy the benefit of all services and facilities available at said school. The freedom of choice herein granted is granted to the parent, or guardian of the pupil or pupils involved, or to such person standing in loco parentis to such pupil or pupils, and such freedom of choice must be exercised at the time and in the manner herein specified. Teachers, principals and other school personnel shall not be permitted to advise, recommend or otherwise

influence such decision. Nor, will school personnel either favor or penalize children because of the choice made.

- b) In the event overcrowding results at a particular school from the choices made, priority of assignment shall be based solely on proximity without regard to race, color or national origin.
- c) Those whose choices are rejected because of overcrowding will be notified and permitted to make an effective choice of a formerly Negro or formerly White school.
- d) Policy for Years Subsequent to 1965–1966: The freedom of choice provided for in Paragraph II (a), above, shall be extended to the parents, guardians or persons standing in loco parentis of pupils enrolled in not fewer than eight grades in 1966–67, and of all pupils in the Rose City School System thereafter.

The first African American students were admitted to the high school in the fall of 1965 as a part of a two-year voluntary period offering African American families the choice of allowing their students to attend the all-White school. It was not until 1969 that the school system forced the entire school district to have fully integrated schools for the 1970–1971 school year.

Statement of the Problem

The Freedom of Choice Movement in this school district provided African American students a means by which to attend all-White public high schools to receive the same education, and sometimes more importantly, the same resources that had been afforded to Whites. African American students and their parents made a choice to integrate the school systems prior to

mandatory integration in 1970 and made their mark in history. When they choose to do this, the impact of this experience upon the students in terms of their self-awareness and cultural identities and the elements that fostered and hindered the process are seldom presented in the literature. This is a part of history that has been left unexamined and which should be included in order to understand the process and preserve it for future generations so that we can learn from these experiences and perhaps apply them to future endeavors involving school and/or societal change.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the cultural transitions that occurred with the students living in east-central Alabama involved in the *Freedom of Choice* movement following the passing of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. There has been little research written that focused on the lived experiences of those who participated in integration of schools through *Freedom of Choice*. There was an examination of the factors that contributed to student participation in this movement and determine what personal factors hindered the process. A second focus was to determine the role and perception of racial identity during the *Freedom of Choice* Movement. Because it was the African Americans that had to change environments, their interactions between other African Americans that chose to stay at the segregated school and Caucasians at the integrated schools, the researcher wanted to know how their concept of racial identity/cultural identity developed over time. The same was true of Caucasians that were now interacting with those of a different race to determine what changes occurred within them during this time and now as adults.

Understanding the lived experiences of both African Americans and Caucasians that came together through a difficult time in American history can be used to help current educators best understand how to work with students of varying backgrounds in today's classrooms.

Research Questions

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following questions:

- Question 1: What perceived factors facilitated the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 2: What perceived factors hindered the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 3: What were the perceived positive and negative outcomes of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 4: What was the role and perception of racial identity in the participants during the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study focuses upon issues of racial identity and cultural identity development during the time of integration as compared to their present thoughts on identity. As developed by Sussman (2000), one's own cultural/racial identity is not questioned until that person realizes the differences within their own culture as they begin to identify with another culture. This is typically seen when a person discovers injustices and begins to become uncomfortable with the way their culture treats others and begins to make changes within their own lives to embrace the differences of others. This is geared more toward the Caucasian participants in the study because they were in the majority and did not have to change schools during integration. Because this research focuses on two distinct groups of

students, African American and Caucasian, and their transitions during integration, their lived experiences would be analyzed through their perceived cultural identity.

Another way to look at African American identity is described in Figure 1 by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998, p. 24). “Racial salience and centrality refer to the significance that individuals attach to race in defining themselves; while racial regard and ideology refer to the individuals’ perceptions of what it means to be Black” (p. 24). As this is broken down, salience is seen as a variable that tends to change as the individual experiences various situations. Not each person reacts in the same way, and salience takes that into account. Centrality “refers to the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with regard to race and is relatively stable across situations” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 25). These same authors summarize racial regard “as the extent to which the individual feels positively about his or her race” and “ideology is composed of the individual’s beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that the members of the race should act” (p. 27). As race becomes more salient, it allows individuals to address problems of racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and systematic racial oppression (Sue, 2001).

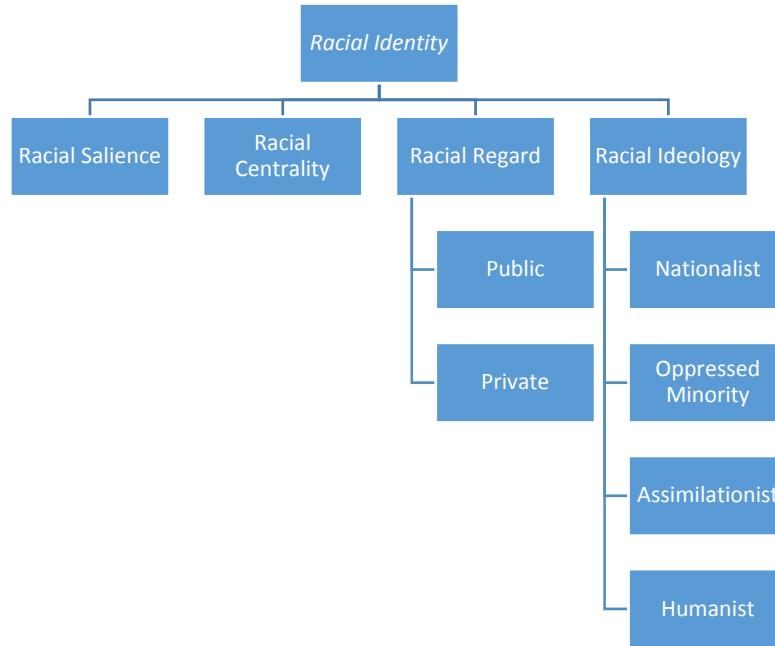


Figure 1. Original Conceptual Framework

This framework was selected to determine where African American students perceived themselves racially during integration and if their lived experiences showed any change. The African American students had developed their own identity in their segregated schools, and by choosing to integrate, they would undergo challenges in their new environment and from those that they seemed to leave behind in their old school. Understanding how their lived experiences had an impact on their development, and determining those factors that made the greatest impact in their lives will be explored through the interviews.

To include Caucasian racial identity development, the research of Helms (1992) was used to develop perceptions of identity development for the White students involved in the *Freedom of Choice* initiative. This framework hinged upon the various stages that Whites would encounter as they begin to deal with race. These stages included contact, disintegration,

reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. The contact stage was characterized by a lack of awareness of cultural and institutional racism, and of one's own White privilege; that often included naïve curiosity about or a fear of people of color. The disintegration stage marked a time of understanding that cultural and institutional racism exists. Reintegration was marked by the acceptance of the status quo and the desire to be accepted by one's own racial group which could lead to the acceptance of racism. The pseudo-independent stage was marked by the abandoning beliefs in White superiority. Followed by immersion/emersion Stage in which the individual may begin searching for a new, more comfortable way to be White. Finally, the autonomy stage marked the positive feelings associated with this redefinition of being White; energized the person's efforts to confront racism and oppression.

Methods

A qualitative case study was used to address the research questions. Qualitative research investigates research questions dealing with how, what, and why in situations calling for in-depth exploration to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). A case study approach was used because it examines “contemporary events, uses direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (Yin, 2009, p. 11).

Sample

The sample for this study was generated from a list of those students who participated in the *Freedom of Choice* Movement at the selected school system prior to forced integration in 1970. The sample included students that were at the middle and high schools during this time. The earliest records show that the school system was integrated in 1965 through freedom of choice at the high school for students in the eleventh or twelfth grade. This list was provided by a key informant in the study and names were added as the researcher began to conduct research

for the study. Yin (2014) stated that key informants are often crucial to the success of a case study because they can provide insight into a matter and give access to other interviewees who may have corroborating or contrary evidence.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The primary data source for this study was face-to-face interviews. An interview script was created based on list of predetermined questions that each participant would be asked. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Transcripts were shared with the interviewees to provide member check. Throughout the data collection process, interviews were transcribed, reviewed with common themes and memories noted.

Content document analysis was also used to create a timeline of the major events in the school system that contributed to integration through the Freedom of Choice movement as compared to other school systems in the state of Alabama to give a sense of understanding of how this school system chose to comply with the court decree to integrate the school system.

The constant comparison method and open coding were the two techniques used to analyze and conceptualize the data for this qualitative study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During each interview, the researcher would record notes to capture key thoughts and familiar themes that could be compared to the other interviews. The analysis process consisted of “compiling, disassembling, reassembling, arraying, interpreting and concluding” the data (Yin, 2012, p. 177).

Significance of the Study

The stories told by the participants and captured in this study are of those who witnessed the integration of schools firsthand, gaining insight into what they learned through this process about their community, school, and most importantly themselves. The friendships gained and the

barriers broken can only be described as a forging a new frontier in an unknown world. Even though we are looking at people who lived within the same city, the communities in which they were from were seen as totally different worlds. These two cultures did find that one thing they had in common in that they wanted to provide the best education for their children.

Understanding that this could not be done in isolation of the two groups showed their forward thinking and willingness to embrace their own differences; while learning about themselves through their participation in the Freedom of Choice Movement. Ultimately, it appears that they sought to create the best learning environment possible for all students, embracing their growth and sharing their experiences.

There have been limited studies completed that have focused specifically on the Freedom of Choice movement in schools and the impact it had on students that were affected by integration of schools. Because there has been very little research done, little is known about the actual people involved so this study provides insights not previously examined that could help us to understand issues of racial identity and cultural identity more thoroughly providing a way to modify the conceptual framework of how students view themselves as individuals and within various subgroups.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study focused on students that participated in the Freedom of Choice movement in a specific school system in the Southeastern United States and findings may not be generalizable to other settings or situations. .
2. Not all students involved in the Freedom of Choice movement for this school were involved in the study.

3. Some participants may not be willing to discuss negative experiences during this time frame, so some data may not have been gathered.

Assumptions

Assumptions of this study include:

1. Participants selected to participate in this study were representative of the various classes that integrated the school system during the Freedom of Choice movement.
2. The participants answered the questions honestly and consistently.

Definition of Terms

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas 347 U.S. 483 (1954) – A landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court that declared state laws establishing separate public school for Black and White students unconstitutional.

Brown v. Board of Education (Brown II) 349 U. S. 294 (1955) – The remedy decision of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in which the United States Supreme Court decided that “school authorities have the primary responsibility for elucidating, assessing, and solving the problems; the courts will have to consider whether the action of school authorities constitutes good faith implementation of the governing constitutional principles.”

De facto segregation – discrimination that was not segregation by law; received formal approval by way of a standardization process. De facto segregation is generally the result of housing patterns, population movements, and economic conditions often reinforced by governmental policies not aimed at segregation but having that effect.

De jure segregation – racial separation that is required by law.

Desegregation – to eliminate any law, provision, or practice requiring isolation of the members of a particular race in separate units.

Freedom of Choice – plan devised in many communities allowing Black and White students the choice of which school they would attend in the 1960s; Black students were allowed the option to choose to attend a traditional all-Black school or a traditional all-White school; as well, White students were allowed the same choice.

Integration – incorporation as equals into a society or organization of individuals or different groups.

Jim Crow Laws – series of rigid anti-Black laws that created a caste system in which Blacks were treated as second class citizens from approximately 1877 through the mid-1960s (Pilgrim, 2000).

NACCP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, usually is an African American civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909. Its mission is “to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all person and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.”

Plessy v. Ferguson – 163 U.S. 537 (1896), is a landmark United States Supreme Court decision in the jurisprudence of the United States, uphold the constitutionality of state laws requiring racial segregation in public facilities under the doctrine of separate but equal.

Pupil Placement Laws – Legislation passed by states in the South resisting the Brown v. Board of Education decisions that set the standards of assignment and the methods of review for the assignment of pupils to schools under freedom-of-choice plans.

School Segregation – the isolation of students in schools by race so that schools can be racially identified; generally refers to schools serving one minority or race. For example, a Black school or a White school.

Segregation – the legal and social system of separating citizens on the basis of race.

Southern and Border States – Refers to Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and the District of Columbia.

Organization of the Study

This chapter introduced the problem statement and its design components. Chapter II contains a review of the literature and related research. This is followed by Chapter III presenting the methodology and procedures used in data collection and analysis. Chapter IV presents a summary of the results of the data analysis. The last chapter, Chapter V, contains a summary and discussion of the findings of this study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Race is a fiction we must never accept. Race is a fact we must never forget.”
Nell Irvin Painter, American Historian

Introduction

May 17, 1954 would be an important historic day, influencing education in the lives of African American students in the United States. This was the day which ushered in the unanimous Supreme Court verdict in *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*, which ruled that “separate but equal” was no longer an acceptable practice in education for students in elementary and secondary schools across the country (Irons, 2002, p. 163; Kluger, 2004, p. 710). From that day forward, it was the law of the land that African American students should be afforded the opportunity to attend schools with their White counterparts regardless of location of the schools.

The *Brown* decision was a step toward equal rights for African Americans during a time of Jim Crow and other laws that had legally segregated the two races across the country, but especially in the South. In the South, these were a series of rigid anti-Black laws that created a caste system in which Blacks were treated as second class citizens (Pilgrim, 2000). This dual system was evident in the school systems in which each race had its own school, and the African American schools were always lacking in materials and support.

There was a slow response to desegregation by the school systems following the passage of *Brown* in 1954, which many cited the lack of direction from the Supreme Court ruling. The

following year, the Supreme Court came back with an additional ruling that stated that school systems must begin integrating schools with “all deliberate speed” (Duke, 2009, p. 16; Klarman, 2007; Wise, 2001, p. 22). It was after this ruling that schools began creating voluntary measures of integration which included Freedom of Choice plans.

The topics outlined in this chapter provide a historical background of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, its impact on schools, and in particular its impact on schools in Alabama. In addition to presenting historical information about integration in Alabama, a section on racial identity and cultural competence is presented to provide background of the development of the idea of race in the United States and its formation from an individual perspective. The chapter concludes with relevant information relating to integration and the development of racial identity of students during this time.

Background of *Brown v. Board of Education*

In the development of public education in the United States in the early 1800s, family wealth, race, and gender had a strong impact on how much formal educational a student received, with no education offered to slaves (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Walker and Archung (2003) suggested that prior to 1954, the educational systems in place across the country could have been seen that Whites developed schools designed to maintain the privileges of White students and to prepare African American students for their passive roles they were expected to play within society. “Jim Crow schools which taught their students only those skills needed for agricultural work and domestic service fit the needs of the White economy and society” (Irons, 2002, p. 31).

The push for equality and opportunity in education in public schools has a long history in the Courts. For example, in the winter of 1846 a group of nearly ninety African Americans first

wrote a petition to the Boston School Committee that called for an immediate end to segregation in the city's [Boston] public schools. They wrote:

The establishment of separate schools for our children deprives us of those equal privileges and advantages to which we are entitled as citizens. We therefore earnestly request that our children be allowed to attend schools in the Districts in which we live.
(Mandale & Patton, 2001, p. 42)

Unfortunately, the response for the school committee was not in their favor. In fact, the committee wrote, "In the case of colored children, we maintain that their peculiar physical, mental and moral structure requires an educational treatment different from that of white children" (Mandale & Patton, 2001, p. 42). Now fast-forward back to the 1950s, and African Americans were still fighting for the right to attend schools with their White counterparts. Irons (2002) stated that the opinions in these cases shared three assumptions:

1. That judges should defer to the judgments of elected lawmakers and school officials that segregation was in the "best interests" of all children, Black and White alike;
2. The Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of "the equal protection of the laws" to every person did not apply to education, which was solely a state and local affair;
3. That the "prejudices" of White voters and parents were "not created by law, and cannot be changed by law." (p. 27)

Prior to *Brown vs the Board of Education*, there were four others cases at the state level that were grappling with the idea of legally segregated schools across the country which included *Belton v. Gebhart* (Delaware), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (Virginia), *Briggs v. Elliot* (South Carolina), and *Bolling v. Sharpe* (Washington, DC). In these collective cases, psychologists testified that based on their research "discrimination, prejudice

and segregation have definitely detrimental effects on the personality development of the Negro child” (Stephan, 1978, p. 218). These findings helped to push the Supreme Court to make a similar decision in the 1954.

As previously noted, in 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that schools could not legally separate students by race, “officially asserting that our society should be race-blind. If schools are blind to race, then school racial distributions should reflect the distribution of race in the community” (Moody, 2001, p. 679). Judge Robert Carter, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) general counsel and leading attorney in the *Brown* case, said that “equal education and integrated education were one of the same, the goal was not integration, but equal educational opportunity” (Lipman, 1998, p. 12).

The central question presented to the Supreme Court was “Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?” (Martin, 1998, p. 121; Rhode & Ogletree, 2004, p. 143). The court answered this question by saying “We believe that it does” (Rhode & Ogletree, 2004, p. 143). The *Brown* decision unanimously ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently inequitable, regardless of how physically similar, violating the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution’s equal protection clause by denying Blacks equal educational opportunities (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995; Duke, 2009; Guthrie & Springer, 2004; ; Levine, 1993; Reber, 2004; Rhode & Ogletree, 2004; Rossell, Armor, & Walberg, 2002). The *Brown* decision changed the law so that schools could no longer be segregated based on race (Duke, 2009; Morrison, 2004; Wise, 2011). Consequently, the separate-but-equal doctrine from *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 was no longer applicable in public schools (Davis, 2001).

With the passage of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, schools were faced with many questions centered on the implementation of this new law. As noted above, within a year the Supreme Court issued a second decision that further dictated requirements for school systems to proceed “with all deliberate speed” in eliminating a dual school system based on race which is commonly referred to as *Brown II* (Duke, 2009, p. 16; Wise, 2001, p. 22). Specifically, the Court said that schools must “make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance” in implementing its mandates aimed at ending de jure segregation (Russo, Harris & Sandidge, 1994, p. 298).

The Supreme Court’s decision would affect “more than twelve million students in five thousand separate districts, almost all with school boards elected by voters who were overwhelmingly White” (Irons, 2002, p. 147). The only requirement for states to follow was to “rescind their segregation laws and school districts desist in assigning children to schools on the basis of their race rather than their residence” (Rossell, et al., 2002, p. 67). However, there was no time frame specified by the Supreme Court; therefore, school desegregation proceeded slowly and in various pockets across the country, and not at all in the six Southern states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina (Davis, 2001). In fact, in March 1956 a group of U.S Senators and Representatives from the eleven states of the Old Confederacy signed a statement called the “Southern Manifesto” in which they declared “their opposition to the Supreme Court’s decision and urged that schools fight any attempts to integrate” (p. 32).

Although the “separate but equal doctrine” meant that many Black students, particularly in the South, walked past White schools to get to their own segregated schools, many communities across the country in both the North and the South were segregated by race due to housing patterns and economic conditions, and de facto segregation had been a common

practice. Even with this natural segregation of communities, the courts recognized that the idea of separate but equal (Moody 2001; Russo, 2004), did not represent the true purpose of our educational system, reaffirming that intentionally segregated schools were “inherently unequal” (Duke, 2009, p. 15; Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997, p. 5).

Moody (2001) summarized that at the heart of *Brown* was the recognition that separate could never be equal, in part because social relations formed in school are an essential part of the educational process. Society understood then and today that schools provide a much broader sense of the term education (Goldin, 1999). Many would see education as the teaching of the three R’s (reading, writing, and arithmetic), but schools were also the setting to teach social skills, such as forming friendships, leadership skills, etc.

According to Russo, Harris and Sandidge (1994), the Supreme Court Justices viewed education as “perhaps the most important function of state and local governments” (p. 298). Chief Justice Earl Warren emphasized that education serves as “a primary instrument in awakening a child to [our Nation’s] cultural values” (Rhode & Ogletree, 2004, p. 144). Irons (2002) summarized Chief Justice Warren’s comments by stating:

What these cases really involved was the psychological impact of enforced separation on Black children. Warren stressed ‘the importance of education to our democratic society.’ Surprisingly, he said nothing about reading, writing, or arithmetic. The primary role of public education lies in fostering ‘cultural values’ and ‘good citizenship’ among children. (p. 162).

Goldin (2009) found that formal education, especially basic literacy, is essential for a well-functioning democracy, and enhances citizenship and community. Building on this is important

as schools want to produce students that will become productive members of society, including the local, state and national levels.

With regard to our schools, “the racial worldview holds that Blacks cannot achieve in any intellectual endeavor, and this has so infected our consciousness that even young Black children are entrapped in the myth and inhibited from expressing intellectual curiosity” (Smedley, 1999, p. 697). This thought process is what kept many schools thinking that the separate but equal doctrine held true for the separation of the races in our schools. Patterson (2001) wrote of Justice Warren’s ruling:

To separate them [Black children in grade and high school] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. (p. 10)

This statement reflected what many of the time were thinking with regard to race and one race being superior to the other. Social scientist Kenneth Clark was quoted as saying:

What made the enforced separation of Black children from Whites most damaging, he felt, was not tattered books or untrained teachers, but the stigma of inferiority that segregation inflicted on Black children. School officials could buy newer books and hire better teachers for Black children, but they could not erase feelings of inferiority from their minds. (Irons, 2002, p. 63)

With education seen as the great equalizer among the races, it is interesting to note that many across the country at this time did not want all students to have equal access to an education. In the South, Blacks had to “confront perceptions that they did not need education or that they needed an education only for menial tasks” (Walker, 2000, p. 258). Before and after

the Civil War, the education for Blacks did not focus on the traditional academic studies, but rather on skills such as how to shoe a horse, how to weave cloth, making clothes, and building houses (Weeks, 1971). “Among both White southerners and White northern philanthropists, the consistent belief was that Blacks needed a second-class education to prepare them for the types of second-class jobs they would assume in society” (Walker & Archung, 2003, p. 25). This included the rise of industrial education as being considered the appropriate education for African Americans which is similar to the vocational education programs started at Tuskegee Institute. This would give African Americans skills that would make them self-sustaining and independent. Another concern of a segregated education centered on the negative effects of their mental health that would ultimately impede their educational process (Irons, 2002).

After the Supreme Court decision in *Brown II* (1955), the federal district courts had the task of ensuring integration of schools was taking place (Rossell, et al., 2002). Although this decree was issued by the Supreme Court, historians have noted that in many states, it would be almost 20 years before they would completely comply with the court’s decision. In many cases, states took a very methodical approach to keep the schools segregated. It would not be until 1964 that some schools across the country took active steps to fully integrating their school systems. In 1964, the Supreme Court handed down its ruling in the *Griffin* case, ten years and one week after the *Brown* decision with Justice Hugo Black, an Alabama native, expressing the Courts frustration with the slow pace in which schools were implementing integration efforts. “There has been entirely too much deliberation and not enough speed in enforcing the constitutional rights which we held in *Brown v. Board of Education* had been denied” in reference to the Black children in Prince Edward County Virginia (Irons, 2002, p. 193). This led to other remedies such as affirmative desegregation, racial balance, mandatory busing, and racial

quotas for teacher and staff assignments (Armor, 1995). It also led some school systems to begin to implement integration plans under Freedom of Choice initiatives.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, specifically Title VI, gave the federal government a means of enforcing desegregation. Title VI of the act “barred the use of federal funds for segregated programs and schools” (website: www.infoplease.com). By withholding funds, school systems felt the pressure from the federal government, and therefore, had to find ways to implement the school desegregation decree (Rossell, et al., 2002). This step forced schools systems to begin to develop and execute integration plans that would abide by the law so that no federal monies would be withheld.

In 1969, the verdict in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (396 U.S. 19) in which the Court ruled that further delays would be unconstitutional and school boards had to put forth realistic plans for desegregation immediately, ultimately ending segregated schools across the country (Davis, 2001).

Table 1 outlines the stages of school segregation and desegregation in the United States listing the legal marker and legal standard cited in the court cases ending with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that ultimately integrated all schools in the country.

Table 1

Stages of School Segregation/Desegregation

Stage	Time	Legal Marker	Legal Standard	Evaluation Criterion	Desegregation Status	Key Historical Events
From Compulsory Illiteracy to Negro Schools	Pre 1896	<i>Fourteenth Amendment</i>	Segregation allowed		Schools for Negroes allowed	Civil War; Reconstruction
Segregation: “Separate but Equal”	1896–1935	<i>Plessy</i>	Separate and unequal	Inequity	Dual systems allowed	End of Reconstruction
Challenging Segregation	1935–1954	<i>Gaines</i>	Separate but equal (higher education)	Equity in higher education	Dual systems unconstitutional	World War II
Ending State Segregation	1954–1964	<i>Brown</i>	Non-discrimination	Equity	Dual systems unconstitutional	Assassination of President John F. Kennedy Jr.
Achieving Racially Balanced Schools	1964–1974	<i>Green; Swann; Keyes</i>	Racial balance	Equity	Desegregation to be achieved in dual systems	Civil Rights Act of 1964; Assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy

Note. Adapted from Rossell, C. H., Armor, D. J. & Walberg, H. J. (2002). *School desegregation in the 21st century*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Funding Inequities in Schools

With the conclusion of the Civil War and the enactment of Jim Crow laws in the South, tension between the races has been recorded in newspapers, magazines, and history books. One area that was the most segregated were public schools. The Jim Crow laws and the “separate but equal doctrine” made segregated schools legal, but very unequal in the resources that were afforded to the all-Black schools. Black schools, as an unwritten rule, received much less than White schools and what they had, most notably buses and books, was often second-hand. Although seen as not needed in the White schools, all-Black schools welcomed these resources, since it was better than not having anything at all (Patterson, 2001). This inequality was seen as representative of the African American race in that they were considered not as deserving of new books and resources. By the early 1930s, these disparities in educational expenditures were evident throughout the South. For example, in Randolph County, Georgia, \$36.66 was expended annually for the education of each White child, while only 43 cents was spent on each Black child. Russell County, Alabama, spent \$45.74 per White child each year and only \$2.55 per Black.

The values of educational facilities were similarly disproportionate. In Upson County, Georgia, for every \$1.00 of the declared value of Black schools, White schools were valued at \$2,055 (Fulfilling the Letter and Spirit of the Law, 1976). Walker and Archung (2003) reported that in 1925 a \$4,465 school was built for African Americans in North Carolina which was the largest and most expensive at that time for the county, but just two years prior, the neighboring White school had been allocated \$9,000. In the 1948–49 school year, the average investment per pupil in Atlanta public school facilities was \$228.05 for Blacks and \$570 for Whites with an average of 36.2 Black children per classroom, compared to an average of 22.6 among Whites

(Patterson, 2001). Many African Americans vividly remember the inequities between the two schools including the lack of bus transportation, poor facilities, and secondhand textbooks (Levine, 1993; Walker & Archung, 2003).

For years, the all-Black schools were seen as inferior to those of their White counterparts simply because the power of the time was held in the hands of the White lawmakers with few African Americans able to hold elected power in the community. Whites believed that African American education should be a function of the federal government and not a local responsibility. Furthermore, “Whites believed that African Americans did not contribute sufficiently to the tax base to be worthy of receiving an equitable share for their schools” (Walker, 2000, p. 259). Smedley (1999) summarized her findings in the following:

Today scholars are beginning to realize that ‘race’ is nothing more and nothing less than a social intervention. It has nothing to do with the intrinsic or potential qualities of the physically differing populations, but much to do with the allocation of power, privilege, and wealth among them. (p. 698–699)

The power, privilege and wealth remained with the all-White schools and their all-White school boards.

Alabama’s Resistance to Integration

Most of the Southern states resisted integration of schools through legal means. Alabama, the state in which this study occurred, began this process even before the *Brown* decision was made and increased their opposition after the decision. One year prior to the *Brown* decision, the state of Alabama allowed local superintendents to place students in schools based on academic preparation. After the *Brown* decision in 1954, the state enacted legislation aimed at circumventing the ruling. In 1955, the state passed the pupil placement law, written by state

senator Albert Boutwell. The law was designed to give local school boards the power to decide where students would attend school based on ability, availability of transportation, and academic background (Raffel, 1998). Pupil placement assignment gave local school boards great discretion in assigning students to schools within their districts and helped to continue segregated schools (Klarman, 2007). Ten southern states, including Alabama, passed pupil placement laws in an attempt to slow down or even halt integration efforts of African Americans (Raffel, 1998). Those in power knew that African Americans would be required to go through many administrative hearings and appeals to get around the laws, therefore making it difficult for them to integrate the school and ultimately causing many African Americans not to pursue their efforts. For those who did pursue integration, one part of the pupil placement laws was written in a way that ensured African Americans would not be able to attend an all-White school because they did not meet the “multitudinous psychological and educational criteria for admission” (Rossell, et al., 2002, p. 23). Klarman (2007) wrote that “although race was not an enumerated criterion, the purpose and effect of these [pupil placement] plans was to enable administrators to maintain segregation, while insulating the system from legal challenge because of the difficulty of proving that a multifactor decision was racially motivated” (p. 119).

Two more Alabama laws that were passed in 1956 attempted to give local boards the legal means to resist desegregation. One measure allowed schools boards to close any school faced with integration and also reasserted local control over education to the city municipalities without regard to federal law. The rationale cited that segregated schools would prevent confusion and disorder in the city while it promoted effective and economic planning for education (Klarman, 2007). The closing of Tuskegee High School in 1963 was one such example in which the local school board’s decision was to defy the desegregation orders. To

prevent African American students from integrating, the school board simply closed the school. It would be days later that a federal court judge would force the school to reopen, but by that point, many White parents took their children out of the school system and placed them in neighboring schools where integration had not taken place. Once the school was reopened, “approximately 100 of the boycotting students enrolled in a hastily organized school called the Macon Academy, and thus Alabama’s first segregation academy was born” (Herring, 2015, p. 38). In an attempt to keep schools segregated, private school systems began to appear across the South as some White parents began to pull their children out of public schools for fear that they would have to attend school with African American children. “To working-class Whites, integration, timed to coincide with the flight of the city’s elite, was a stigmatizing force that interfered with their ability to pursue with American dream, thus they resisted it” (Rhode & Olgetree, 2004, p. 88).

Another example of Alabama’s opposition to desegregation was George Wallace’s stand in the doors at the University of Alabama to block the integration efforts of two African American students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, using his power as governor and president of the state school board. This event was indicative of the sentiments of many White Alabamians and Southerners across the country, and would become the symbolic image that many will think of first when discussing the idea of segregation in the United States. It would be these events that prompted President John F. Kennedy to align himself publically with the Civil Rights movement (Elliott, 2003).

Amendment 111, also written by Boutwell, was a Freedom of Choice law that allowed parents to decide which schools their children would attend. It also organized separate schools for Blacks and Whites and gave power to the legislature that provided funding for and allowed

teachers to take their state paid salaries to the numerous Whites-only segregation academies and private schools that began to arise throughout Alabama and the rest of the South after the *Brown* decision (Frankenberg, Lee & Orfield, 2003). This amendment encouraged the continued segregation of the races by allowing the creating of these public academies and increased the number of private schools in the state. It should be noted that these early Freedom of Choice laws passed in Alabama were not the same as the Freedom of Choice plans that many schools adopted across the country.

George Wallace's political campaign and position as the official representative of Alabama heavily influenced the non-compliance of integration. George Wallace said in his governor's inaugural address in 1963, "I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say, 'Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!'" (Patterson, 2001, p. 94). In that same year, nine years after the passage of *Brown vs Board of Education*, Alabama public schools were still totally segregated (Frankenberg, Lee & Orfield, 2003).

Much of the opposition against integration was developed around the idea that integration would destroy the purity of the races (Davis, 2001). In January of 1967, Governor Lurleen Wallace, wife of former Governor George Wallace, told the Alabama Education Association that "the people of Alabama will not submit our children to federally controlled education" and that the actions of federal agents affecting local decisions in Alabama were "done" (Opelika Daily News, 1967). This again showed the strong position that the state government had in resisting the federal government's decree to end the dual system of schools based on race in the state.

Many Whites who did not want to stay in the integrated public schools started to attend private Christian academies/private schools which began to spike during the early 1960s. Wayne

Flynt (2004) argued, “The chronology of private Christian academies suggests their origins owed more to racism” as they began to show up during the *Freedom of Choice* years, and then exploded after forced integration (p. 361). In Alabama, private school enrollment nearly doubled, from 10,200 in 1960 to 20,500 in 1970 (Flynt, 2005). In Alabama, support for private schools was completely championed by Governor George Wallace and his famous “stand in the schoolhouse door” at the University of Alabama in June of 1963. Tuskegee saw the opening of Macon Academy in 1963 and two years later, Lee County opened a private school with the creation of Presbyterian Day School by parents and educators in Auburn (Bagley, 2007). A few years later, the Lee County Educational Foundation was formed and organized the opening of the newly renamed Lee Academy to serve grades one through six initially that fall. Foundation members targeted the city’s White families applauding the schools commitment to “academic excellence” and the enrollment of “the more able children as determined by nationally-used tests” (Bagley, 2007, p. 69). The creation of private schools, as previously noted, helped to preserve the “White” identity that the students had grown to know from their all-White school past.

As Table 2 shows, in 1968, fourteen years after the passage of *Brown*, almost 78% of the schools in the South had African American students in schools that were more than 90% minority as compared to only 58% in the Midwest, 51% in the West, and 43% in the Northeast. This shows the slow implementation of integration across the country, but more noticeable in the South. Even by 1969, many counties in Alabama were still segregated, and had not planned to integrate if it had not been for the verdict in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (396 U.S. 191) that would ultimately end segregated schools across the country since further delays to integration would be unconstitutional.

Table 2

Measures of Desegregation, 1968–1992

	U.S.	South	Northeast	Midwest	West
Percentage of Black students in schools more					
than 90 percent minority					
1968	62.9	77.5	42.7	58.0	50.9
1980	34.8	24.6	48.7	43.6	33.9
1992	34.1	26.5	49.9	39.4	26.6
Percentage of White students in schools					
90 percent White					
1968	77.8	68.8	82.5	89.4	61.4
1980	60.9	32.2	79.5	81.0	40.0
1992	48.9	26.0	66.7	71.9	26.7

Note. Adapted from Patterson, J. T. (2001). *Brown v. Board of Education: A civil rights milestone and its troubled legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Alabama’s Efforts toward Integration

Some would argue that the fear of the unknown or the idea that students learn better from those like them was a good reason to keep the schools segregated. Many civil rights leaders believed that “desegregated schools would be better for minority students and would be very important in helping Americans of all races to move beyond stereotypes toward genuine equality and respect- toward integration” (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003, p. 10). In Macon County, Alabama, the entire Tuskegee school system closed its doors in an attempt to prevent forced integration. In 1963, a lawsuit was filed against the Macon County Board of Education by Detroit Lee, an African American, on behalf of his son and fifteen other African American

students centered on the integration of Tuskegee High School and the lack of Black students in the school. In an attempt to delay the integration of the school, the school was closed, but was forced to reopen on September 9 with thirteen Black students attending the once all-White school. By the end of the first week of school, every single remaining White student had withdrawn from Tuskegee High and enrolled in neighboring Shorter or Notasulga High, or in Macon Academy (Bagley, 2007). In the Southwest part of the State that same year, Mobile County school system became the second system to become involved in a lawsuit to desegregate schools in which parents of twenty-three Black students wanted their children to attend the White schools in the county. In July 1963, the United States Fifth Circuit Court of appeals ordered the board to end racial segregation, and the Mobile County school system began desegregating one grade a year beginning with the twelfth grade (Duke, 2009).

About 35 miles from Tuskegee, Opelika would begin its integration efforts in 1965 by completing the necessary paperwork required by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) which included a Resolution of Compliance instrument in an attempt to show good faith to integrate (Bagley, 2007). The Opelika school system would plan to integrate grades one through four by implementing a Freedom of Choice plan.

In 1967, Judge Frank Johnson expanded the lawsuit to include every school system in the state not already under court order. On March 22, he ordered the governor and education officials in the state to “take affirmative action to disestablish all state enforced or encouraged public school segregation” (Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, 1967, p. 8). This now included 96 schools in the state (see Table 3). Johnson also told officials that they were under “an affirmative constitutional duty to take whatever corrective action is necessary” to dismantle the dual school system in the state (Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, 1967, p. 26). By

1972, the Southern schools were more integrated than those in the North which could be attributed to the number of lawsuits filed in the South to force integration efforts to happen in rural areas (Davis, 2001).

Table 3

Alabama School Districts Named in the March 22, 1967 Court Order (Lee, et al. v. Macon County Board of Education, et al., Civil Action No. 604 E (M.D., Ala.) Case Files, Federal District Courthouse, Montgomery, Alabama, opinion of March 22, 1967)

Alexander City	Enterprise	Ozark
Andalusia	Escambia County Etowah	Phenix City
Anniston	County	Pickens County
Athens	Eufaula	Piedmont
Attala	Fayette County	Pike County
Auburn	Floral	Randolph County
Autauga County	Florence	Roanoke
Baldwin County	Fort Payne	Russell County
Bibb County	Franklin County	Russellville
Blount County	Geneva County	St. Clair County
Brewton	Greene County	Scottsboro
Butler County	Henry County	Selma
Calhoun County	Houston County	Sheffield
Carbon Hill	Jackson County	Shelby County
Chambers County	Jacksonville	Sumter County
Cherokee County	Jasper	Sylacauga
Chilton County	Lamar County	Talladega
Clarke County	Lanett	Talladega County
Clay County	Lauderdale County	Tallapoosa County
Cleburne County	Lee County	Tallassee
Coffee County	Limestone County	Tarrant
Colbert County	Linden	Thomasville
Conecuh County	Marengo County	Troy
Coosa County	Marion	Tuscaloosa
Covington County	Marshall County	Tuscumbia
Cullman	Monroe County	Walker County
Cullman County	Mountain Brook	Washington County
Dale County	Muscle Shoals	Winfield
Dothan	Oneonta	Winston County
Elba	Opelika	
Elmore County	Opp	

School Integration and the *Freedom of Choice* Movement

In an effort to abide by *Brown v. Board of Education*, school systems began to implement *Freedom of Choice* plans in which parents could choose to send their students to either all Black or all White schools. “*Freedom of choice* allowed, in theory, any student to attend any school in the system, thereby allowing equal educational access for every student” (Duke, 2009, p. 18). While the law was initiated to thwart integration, these school-based plans were, for the most part, legitimate attempts to initiate the integration process. The underlying premise of these plans was that parents were given a choice of the educational setting and allowed to choose the environment they feel was most appropriate for their children — a segregated school or an integrated school. The guidelines for integration generally called for freedom of choice to be opened for four grades that were to be spread out, for example: first grade, the first and last high school grade, and the first junior high grade. Susan Uchitelle (1993) summarized public school choice programs as:

These are programs that offer parents a variety of educational settings and allow them to choose the environment they feel is most appropriate for their own children. They are schools that offer parents an alternative to neighborhood schools that they consider. They strive to overcome educational inequalities. (p. 15)

These plans were relatively non-controversial because too few schools across the country were using them to integrate the schools, so there was little movement of African Americans into White schools (Rossell, et al., 2002). This would, however, give school systems the appearance they were integrating since there were only two options; but in many cases, parents kept their students in their neighborhood schools which were racially segregated.

In May 1965, the Opelika school system sent out information to parents announcing the freedom of choice plan that was in place for 15 days to give parents the ability to send their children to another school. No Whites chose to attend the Black schools, and there would only be two African Americans that would elect to attend White schools for the fall of 1965 (Bagley, 2007). This seemed to be the norm across the state — very few African Americans choosing to participate in *Freedom of Choice* to integrate all-White schools, and no Caucasians choosing to attend all-Black schools. It would not be until 1967 before Opelika schools included all grades in their *Freedom of Choice* plan, and that yielded 58 transfer requests, some of which were White students seeking to transfer to other White schools, but the majority of which were Black students transferring to White schools (Bagley, 2007).

In the neighboring city of Auburn, the 1965 school year would be their first attempt at integrating the schools utilizing a *Freedom of Choice* plan. Auburn school leaders chose to integrate grades 1, 7, 11, and 12 under the plan, and very similar to Opelika, no Whites chose to attend any of the Black schools and only a handful of Blacks would attend the White schools. Although the *Freedom of Choice* idea ultimately was not the final step toward integration, it remained in operation in Auburn City Schools for four years and appeared to have been successful in initiating integration before the courts forced its implementation in 1969. In a study of this initiative from the perspective of various groups involved in it, Herring (2015) found four barriers to its success. Among them were lack of professional development with faculty, the culture of the state of Alabama as a whole, state government, and the fear of the unknown based on experiences from similar efforts in other communities. However, she also found six factors that facilitated its implementation. They were strong community, caring and capable teachers, extensive planning by the leadership, [Auburn] university influence and

perceived well-educated community, community ownership in the process, and athletics serving as a “window” for the community to see success.

By 1968, freedom of choice plans were generally not approved by the federal courts because these plans did little to integrate large numbers of African Americans in schools across the country (Raffel, 1998). The Supreme Court rulings in *Green v. County* (1968) and *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (1969) ended *de jure* dual school systems and ultimately enforced the *Brown* decisions once and for all for school systems across the country.

Race and Racial Identity

Although in reality, there is only one human race, and the people who are part of it have various kinds of physical differences (Halley, et al., 2011; Jensen, 2005), in the early 1700s, the socially-constructed concept of race was created. Allen (2012) argues that the “invention of the White race took place after an early, but unsuccessful, colonial revolt of servants and poor freedmen” during Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. Smedley (1999) stated that “race is a cultural invention, that it bears no intrinsic relationship to actual human physical variations, but reflects social meanings imposed by these variations” (p. 690). She proposed that previously race was a mere classificatory term like kind, type, or even breed or stock and it had no clear meaning. A person’s skin color did not carry any useful meaning. What mattered most was where they lived (Painter, 2010). Smedley further suggests that race is a “social classification that reflected the expanded sense of human separateness and difference” (p. 694) and that “American society has made race (and the physical features connected to it) equivalent to, and the dominant source of human identity, superseding all other aspects of identity” (p. 695).

Race is also concept that is derived from a genetic designation based on physical features such as skin color and hair texture that could vary from person to person (Sheets & Hollins,

1999). Today, we think of race as a matter of biology, but a second thought reminds us that the meanings of race quickly spill out of merely physical categories (Painter, 2010; Rothenberg, 2011). This classification system supports many ideas that one race had more privileges than another.

Racial distinctions are associated with a power struggle focused upon which race holds power over the other (Sellers et al., 1998; Smedley, 1999). This power carries privilege or disadvantage because the people with power create and maintain the privilege for themselves at the expense of others (Jensen, 2005). The fact that race is socially constructed means that racial groups are themselves embedded in a particular, although changing, culture and history. It is the shared culture and history that makes one a member (or not) of a racial group (Halley et al., 2011; Rothenberg, 2012). Specifically, the “White” racial category has been associated with a high-status identity that gave them access to wealth, power, opportunity, and privilege (Smedley, 1999, p. 695).

Another definition of race includes “a category assigned to a group in a way that justifies the subordination of groups of color by the group in power” (Halley, Eshleman & Vijaya, 2011, p. 7). Power has become increasingly important because power tends to give one group an advantage over the other, and as seen in history, a way to keep a specific race at the bottom of the social ladder. It is interesting to note that “children as young as three notice racial differences” (Tatum, 1992, p. 5). Many of these differences are seen at the varying skin tones among children within a social setting. “When asked to reflect on their earliest race-related memories and the feelings associated with them, both White students and students of color often report feelings of confusion, anxiety, and/or fear” (Tatum, 1992, p. 5). They do not understand some of the glaring unwritten rules in society, but they recognize that there are differences

among them in a classroom. Wise (2011) found that “all Whites born before 1964 were placed above all persons of color when it came to economic and political hierarchies that were to form the U.S. without exception” (p. 3).

Sadowski (2006) stated that “awareness of race and the significance of racial differences often begins in early childhood” (p. 21). What children see and hear around them does help to formulate their understanding of race relations around them. “Group identification involves the awareness of clear boundaries between members of differing groups” and “these boundaries are both explicit and implicit and are imposed internally by members of the group and externally by the society at large” (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995, p. 903). As individuals get older, these group identifications begin to become more noticeable in areas of society where race is the primary basis of separation.

Race has also been defined in terms of either a racial group membership or racial self-designation (Parham & Helms, 1981). The earliest known human classification schemes focused on idiosyncratic taxonomy in which it was broken down by four geographical divisions as reported in *A New Division of the Earth and the Different Species or Races Living There* in April 1684 (Painter, 2010). As defined in physical anthropology and biology, “races are categories of human beings based on average differences in physical traits that are transmitted by genes and not by blood” (Davis, 2001, p. 18). Early research on race often focused on the shape of human skulls in an attempt to scientifically classify distinct races (Halley, Eshleman, & Vijaya, 2011; Rothenberg, 2012). According to the research of Friedrich Blumenbach, five races were identified as Mongoloids, Malays, Ethiopians (Africans), American Indians, and Caucasoids (Halley et al., 2011; Painter, 2010). In developing these five races, shade of skin color, profile of nose, structure of eyes, shape of lips, texture and amount of hair have been used to classify

individuals in term of race. It were these aesthetic judgments that gave us the term Caucasian (Painter, 2010). Through research, we now know that “human physical traits such as skin color and facial features vary on a continuum — slight gradations from one individual to another — rather than differing in distinctly separate groups” (Halley et al., 2011, p. 6). The work of cultural anthropologist, A.L. Kroeber in 1948 led him to determine that there were three major races in the world which included “Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid, commonly referred to as White, Yellow, and Black” (Davis, 2001, p. 19).

Race in the United States

In the United States, slavery has also helped construct concepts of White race in two contradictory ways. Painter (2010) stated that “American tradition equates Whiteness with freedom while consigning Blackness to slavery” and “The term ‘Caucasian’ as a designation for White people originates in concepts of beauty related to the White slave trade from eastern Europe, and Whiteness remains embedded in visions of beauty found in art history and popular culture” (p. 121).

“In America, race has historically been labeled as a dichotomous variable, with the lighter the skin holding the positive value and the darker the skin the negative value” (Suzuki, McRae, & Short, 2001, p. 846). This has been seen throughout U.S. history, especially during the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Senator James Eastland of Mississippi summed up his thoughts on race during this time as stating, “What the people of the country must realize is that the White race is a superior race, and the Negro race is an inferior race” (Patterson, 2001, p. 5). This sentiment was shared by many across the country and continued to hamper the efforts of integration for African Americans.

Race existed as a social and political understanding of humans that attempts to assign individuals into distinct groups in a way that “systematically benefits some—Whites, while limiting opportunities for others—people of Color (Halley, Eshleman & Vijaya, 2011, p. 7). “After the Civil War, although slavery ended, race and racial ideology remained and were strengthened. African Americans had to grapple with the reality of being defined as the lowest status group in American society” (Smedley, 1999, p. 695). During these tumultuous times, the color of a person’s skin dictated their station in life. For instance, whether a person was worthy of an education or forced to work on a farm or other labor intensive work for the rest of their life with no hope of moving up the social ladder was all based on the color of a person’s skin. In a speech given by Lyon G. Tyler, son of President John Tyler, in 1894, he was quoted as saying, “race, and not class, [was] the distinction in social life” in eighteenth-century Virginia by southern colonizers which help to confirm the fact that race had become the primary badge of status in the South (Allen, 2012, p. 240).

Helms (1993) found that “racial identity theory evolves out of the tradition of treating race as a sociopolitical and, to a lesser extent, a cultural construction” and that these “racial classifications are assumed not to be biological realities”, rather “membership is determined by socially defined inclusion criteria (e.g., skin color) that are commonly (mistakenly) considered to be “racial” in nature” (p. 181). Racial identity has become more rooted in how groups have endured different conditions of domination or oppression. Helms (1993) summarized that:

In U.S. society, ‘Whites’ (rather than Caucasians) are members of the entitled group, and it has been those characteristics (e.g., skin color) deemed by them to indicate ‘Whiteness’ that have permitted their members to have access to entitled status. People of color, that is, Native Americans, Blacks, Asians, and Latino/as of color, have tended to be the

deprived groups, though the nature of the deprivation may be varied slightly depending somewhat on how and when a particular group entered the collective societal awareness as a potential threat to the economic and political status quo of the White majority. (p. 184).

Wise (2011) stated that

Although Whiteness may mean different things in different places and at different times, one thing I feel confident saying is that to be White in the United States, regardless of regional origin, economic status, sex, gender identity... is to have certain common experiences based upon race. These experiences have to do with advantage, privilege (relative to people of color), and belonging. We are, unlike people of color, born to belonging, and have rarely had to prove ourselves deserving of our presence here. (p. 3)

It is the idea of White privilege that has shaped much of our history in the United States.

Rothenberg (2012) stated that “race exists only in relation to one another; Whiteness is meaningless in the absence of Blackness; the same holds in reverse” (p. 16). Having these two major groups identified continues to shape the daily interactions of Americans across the country.

White Privilege

In order to build an understanding of the races, it is important to develop awareness of attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that influence thinking and behavior (Suzuki, McRae, & Short, 2001). It is often the stereotypes that cause the most conflict because the various groups do not understand the social norms associated within that racial group. Constant and unrelenting portrayals of their inferiority conditioned many to a self-imagery of being culturally backward, primitive, prone to violence, morally corrupt, and undeserving of the benefits of civilization

(Smedley, 1999). Rothenberg (2012) found that race is often defined as Black and White; sometimes defined as White and “of color” (p. 108) and although it may seem neutral, the words mask a system of power, and that system privileges Whiteness. Wise (2011) wrote “the ability to come to America in the first place, the ability to procure land once here, and the ability to own other human beings while knowing that you would never be owned yourself, all depended on European ancestry” (p. 21). Those that did not share this same ancestry were not afforded those same rights, and in the case of African Americans, they were labeled as property with no rights as their White counterparts that may have been deemed indentured servants.

When discussing privilege, it is seen as a system where a group of people assume a certain level of acceptance, inclusion, and respect in the world, to operate within a relatively wide content zone (Rothenberg, 2012). It is a lack of understanding of others that perpetuates the negative stereotypes and a way to keep power of one group over another. Kendall (2013) wrote “privilege is hard to see for those of us born with access to power and resources; it is very visible for those whom privilege is not granted” (p. 22). Suzuki, McRae, and Short (2001) stated that “there are two elements of concern with negative stereotypes: perceptions of others and perceptions of oneself. Individuals may internalize negative and positive attitudes and stereotypes ascribed to their racial group and act as if they are reality” (p. 846). Again, the idea of which group has power over the other is important to understand because that will tend to foster the negative stereotypes and create a culture of superiority. Historically, White Americans have always felt the right to define the realities of Black and Brown people “insisting that enslaved persons were happy on the plantation and felt just like family, or that indigenous persons were the uncivilized ones, while those who would seek to conquer and destroy them were the practitioners of enlightenment” (Wise, 2011, p. 29).

The lived experiences of a particular group of people is what shapes their understanding of the world. It is what they know and what they believe to be true, right or wrong. It is not until someone or something points out these differences as positive or negative or even as the norm that a change can occur in a person. Jensen (2005) wrote that “White is not, by definition, the norm, the standard, the best. White is just White. But politically, White is not just White, of course. White is power. And using the terms White/non-White reminds us of that” (p. 2). It is this political arena that continued to shape the realities of the races in the United States.

Wise (2011), a White author, stated that “being a member of the majority, the dominant group, allows one to ignore how race shapes one’s life” and “for those of us called White, Whiteness simply is” (p. 2). Wise (2011) ends with “Whiteness becomes, for us, the unspoken, uninterrogated norm, taken for granted, much as water can be taken for granted by a fish” (p. 2). This develops the idea of White privilege in which being a member of the majority group presents access to day-to-day conveniences in an easier manner than that of the minority group. Rothenberg (2012) stated that

Privilege generally allows people to assume a certain level of acceptance, inclusion, and respect in the world; that increases the odds of having things their way and being able to set the agenda in a social situation and determine the rules and standards and how they are applied. (p. 115)

Kendall (2013) reflected on race and growing up in Texas as White during segregation was “direct and clear; White people are the regular people, the good people, the valuable people; all others, particularly Black people, are less than human” (p. 3). This lends itself to perpetuating the idea of White privilege and how Whites are viewed in favorable ways.

Race and the Doll Study

As mentioned earlier, children as young as three notice racial differences, but they must be taught or observe the negative stereotypes in order to develop an idea of which group has power over the other. During the proceedings of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the work of African American social scientist Kenneth Clark was instrumental in recounting the stories of race in the United States and its impact on children through his doll study (Keppel, 2002). In his study, Clark (1989) gave descriptions of how individual children responded to their preference in dolls, Brown or White, specifically which one they liked best, or looked most like them. He found that children in the North showed a clear preference for the White doll and found that the Brown doll was perceived as ugly or dirty. In the South, the results were greatly opposite in that they preferred the Brown doll, but did so by saying “This one. It’s a nigger. I’m a nigger” (Clark, 1989, p. 45). This profound statement by the African American children in the South led Clark to conclude that “rigid racial segregation and isolation” had caused Southern Black children to accept “as normal the fact of [their] inferior social status” which he concluded “is not symptomatic of a healthy personality” (p. 45). Other observations made from the doll studies included to choose which doll was nice, which doll looked bad, which doll did the children would like to play with, and which one nice in color. The study revealed that Black children preferred White dolls and rejected the Black dolls which implied that Black was not beautiful (Hraba & Grant, 1970). Through Clark’s work, published in *Prejudice and Your Child* in 1955, he wanted to convey to parents that “children learn prejudice in the course of observing and being influenced by the existence of patterns in the culture in which they live” (Keppel, 2002, p. 31). Keppel (2002) reported from Clark’s lifetime of work that:

Racial symbols are so prevalent in the American scene that all normal children eventually perceive them. They observe segregated residential areas, segregated and often inferior schools for Negro children, segregated recreational facilities, and, in some areas of the country, segregated transportation. They see Negroes often only in domestic service or in other menial occupations. Such observations contribute to the young child's attitude toward those individuals whom society consistently labels as 'inferior.' (p. 31)

The studies that Kenneth Clark and his wife, Mamie Phipps Clark, conducted showed the effect of prejudice and discrimination had on the youngest of its victims, the children of the segregated South.

Recent studies suggest that even by the age of eight, and certainly by ten, Black children are cognizant of the negative stereotypes commonly held about their racial group (Wise, 2011). These noticeable differences have led many to use race against the other and has created racial prejudice between the various groups. "Racial prejudice is viewed with the context of the White society's need to resolve the dissonance between the high moral ideas that embody being an American and America's immoral treatment of African Americans" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 20).

Racial Identity Development

The mainstream approach to racial/ethnic identity "has tended to focus on the significance of race or ethnicity in individual lives" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 20). Racial identity and racial identity development theory as defined by Janet Helms (1990) includes the following:

A sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group ... racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership. (p. 3)

Tatum (1992) stated that it is assumed that the development of a racial identity will occur in some form in everyone in a society where racial-group membership is emphasized. It should be noted that the development of racial identity is not a linear process, but one in which members move between the stages depending upon what is going on in their lives. One can assume that this is why racial identity development does not occur at the same rate for everyone within the group. Each person will experience their own sets of challenges with regard to race, and it will be these challenges that help to form their identity. Society has historically treated race as a means of distinguishing groups and individuals that often forces young people to develop their racial identities early in adolescence (Sadowski, 2006). It is during this time that young people become more “detached from their parents and attempt to establish an independent identity” (Sadowski, 2006, p. 20).

As each individual goes through the stages of racial identity, whether White or Black, they will bring in their own set of perceived assumptions of the world around them. Sadowski (2006) found that “when children see their race as the norm they are less likely to perceive characteristics associated with it (e.g., physical appearance) as makers of inferiority” (p. 21). It is important to note that a person’s own background will help guide them along their own development.

Black Racial Identity

Black racial identity development can be seen as an evolution “from a self-perception in which Blackness is degraded to a self-perception in which they are secure with Blackness” (Parham & Helms, 1981, p. 251). “According to the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), racial identity is that part of individuals’ self-concepts that is related to their membership within a race and is comprised of both the significance individuals place on race in

defining themselves and their interpretations of what it means to be Black” (Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009, p. 190). “Being African American in the United States has been described as a major disadvantage for an individual” (Bankston & Caldas, 1996, p. 536). Sellers et al. (1998) reported,

Living in a racist environment must have negative consequences for the African American psyche and it was assumed that African Americans were forced to either devalue aspects of themselves that reminded them of the stigma of being African American, or devalue the broader society for its prejudice against them, in order to function” (p. 20).

Statements like this have led to many debates how people of color view themselves in society, both within group and by other groups

Black racial identity development has been characterized by five stages, identified as Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment (Parham & Helms, 1981; Tatum, 1992). Tatum (1992) summarizes these stages in the following manner:

- Pre-encounter – the African American has absorbed many of the beliefs and values of the dominant White culture and seeks to assimilate; accepted by Whites.
- Encounter – forces the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one’s life.
- Immersion/Emersion – the simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one’s racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of Whiteness; actively seek out opportunities to explore aspects of their own history and culture.

- The fourth and fifth stages overlap and end in ways to translate their “personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or general sense of commitment” to the concerns of Blacks as a group, which is sustained over time. (p. 11–12)

Parham and Helms (1985) noted that “each of the proposed stages is characterized by different racial identity attitudes, each of which is allegedly characterized by distinctive cognitive, cognitive, and affective elects” (p. 431). Understanding that each person will bring in their own set of experiences to the table is key in developing the racial identity of African Americans.

Another way to look at racial of African American identity is described by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as featured in Figure 1 (Sellers et al., p. 24). “Racial salience and centrality refer to the significance that individuals attach to race in defining themselves; while racial regard and ideology refer to the individuals’ perceptions of what it means to be Black” (p. 24). As this is broken down, salience is seen as a variable that tends to change as the individual experiences various situations. Not each person reacts in the same way, and salience takes that into account. Centrality “refers to the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with regard to race and is relatively stable across situations” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 25). These same authors summarize racial regard “as the extent to which the individual feels positively about his or her race” and “ideology is composed of the individual’s beliefs, opinions, and attitudes with respect to the way she or he feels that the members of the race should act” (p. 27). As race becomes more salient, it allows individuals to address problems of racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and systematic racial oppression (Sue, 2001). These problems have been associated with the minority population and describe their struggle to achieve equality among the majority.

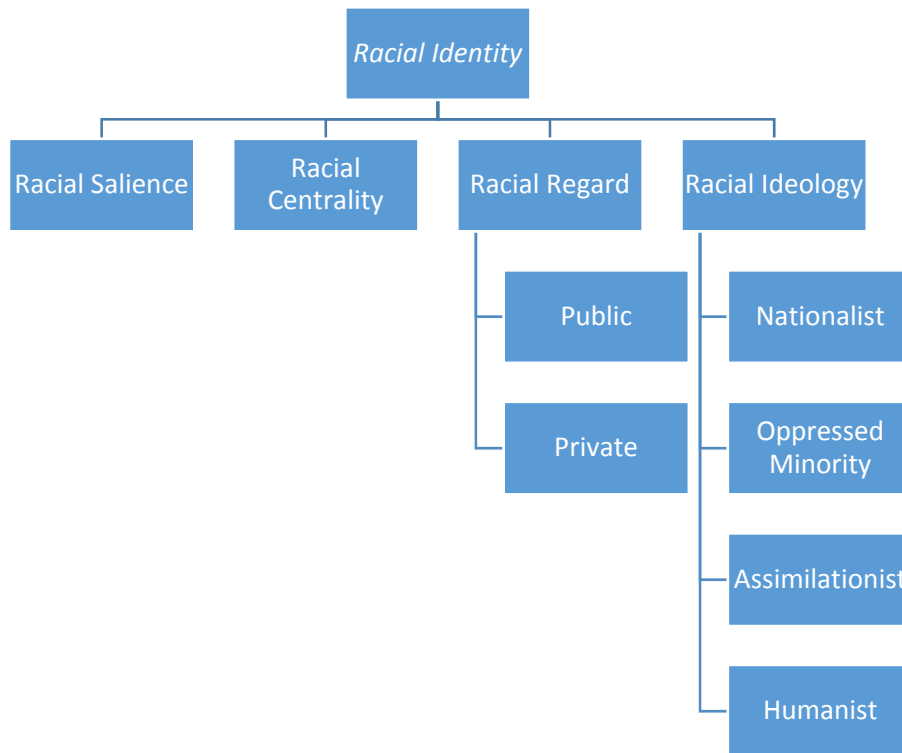


Figure 1. Original Conceptual Framework

Defining people of color in the United States “refers to those persons whose ostensible ancestry is at least in part African, Asian, Indigenous, and/or combinations of these groups and/or White or European ancestry” (Helms, 1993, p. 189). Davis (2001) also adds that the definition of who is Black in the United States “reflects the long experience with slavery and later Jim Crow segregation” to add “any person with any known African Black ancestry” (p. 5). This is what many have referred to as the one-drop rule. At the end of the 1960s, the term ‘Black’ rapidly replaced ‘Negro’ in general usage in the United States (Davis, 2001). During the 1970s, there was a movement labeled as “Black Power” that embraced the beauty and importance of African Americans in the United States. A time where “Black was beautiful” and African Americans were encouraged to accept and value the color of their skin, as opposed to the

time in history when many light skinned African Americans tried to “pass” as White in order to enjoy some of the simple conveniences afforded to a group of people that possessed power in the United States. The notion of “blackness, if not the actual color of skin, continues to play a leading role in American race theory” (Painter, 2010, p. 132).

Flynt (2004) added that religion represented another critical aspect of Black identity in that it provided affirmation of Blackness, leadership opportunities for women, political and economic leadership for the Black community, and essentially defining life for most African Americans. It is important to understand that although the term ‘African American’ “denotes an ethnic group of people, there is a wide range of diversity among and between African Americans” (Moore & Lewis, 2012, p. 145).

White Racial Identity

Just as there is a model for Black Racial Identity, there is also a White Racial Identity Development model (Helms, 1993; Tatum, 1992). This model contains six stages (Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independent, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy) as:

- Contact stage is characterized by a lack of awareness of cultural and institutional racism, and of one’s own White privilege; often includes naïve curiosity about or a fear of people of color.
- Disintegration stage is marked by a time of understanding that cultural and institutional racism exist.
- Reintegration stage is usually marked by the acceptance of the status quo and the desire to be accepted by one’s own racial group which could lead to the acceptance of racism.
- Pseudo-Independent stage is marked by the abandoning beliefs in White superiority.

- Immersion/Emersion stage is when the individual may begin searching for a new, more comfortable way to be White.
- Autonomy stage is marked by the positive feelings associated with this redefinition; energizes the person's efforts to confront racism and oppression.

Halley, Eshleman, and Vijaya (2001) found, through the work of Barbara Flagg, that "White people are often not conscious of being White; Often Whites simply perceive themselves as 'normal' or 'just human'; While Whiteness may be invisible to Whites, Whites tend to be aware of the races of people of color" (p. 4). The support that they have at home and school will be important as they learn about themselves from their own viewpoint and the viewpoint of others. It is sometimes the viewpoint of others that causes the most growth and understanding in that the person tends to gain insight in how difficult or easy one race has it over the other.

On the other side of the coin, White racial identity has been seen as the assumed superior race, thus Whites must "become aware of his or her Whiteness, accept it personally and social significant, and learn to feel good about it, not in the sense of a Klan members 'White Pride,' but in the context of a commitment to a just society" (Tatum, 1992, p. 94). Whites have been afforded the privilege of being in the majority, and with that many of the benefits associated with it. "As the dominant group in the United States, Whites too often have the luxury of remaining behind a veil of ignorance for years, while people of color begin noticing the different ways in which they are viewed and treated early on" (Wise, 2011). Whiteness consistently conveys privilege in some settings (Jensen, 2005). They have not been seen as second class citizens, forced to use inadequate facilities, or refused service. Because of this, the development of their identity has focused on two major developmental tasks; "the abandonment of individual racism and the recognition of and opposition to institutional and cultural racism" (Tatum, 1997, p. 94).

Since many Whites have not experienced the negative situations of racism, they do not understand the feelings associated with rejection simply because of skin color. Once they are in situations where they themselves recognize racism and begin to counteract those acts, they are able to understand an important aspect that White identity has afforded them.

Cultural Identity Development Across the Races

Comparing the racial identity development between the two races, it is important to note the idea of racism being developed among the groups. The idea that one is more powerful over another will be dictated by the area and circumstances surrounding each individual. An African American that is growing up in an affluent African American neighborhood may not experience the same injustices as an African American that is in a poorer area where the disparity between the minority and majority groups is more apparent. The same can be said of Whites living in areas where the minority groups possess more power. “The oppressed minority ideology emphasizes the similarities between the oppression that African Americans face and that of other groups and are acutely aware of the oppression that continues to confront African Americans” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 28). Often, it is not until we are removed from areas of comfort and familiarity that racial groups can begin to understand what other groups may go through on a daily basis. These are great learning curves and an area of growth for individuals who are willing to learn from those around them and put aside their own biases. This is often the result of cultural competency.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is multidimensional and multifaceted because the world itself has varying levels around it. Different perceptions, social class, geographic location, and familiarity with other racial and cultural groups are just a few factors that may account for differences within as well as between groups (Suzuki, McRae, & Short, 2001). “Culture provides both a

frame of reference for self-definition and a frame of reference for ordering relationships” (Sussman, 2000, p. 356). “One’s culture imperceptibly forms a mental framework through which individuals define their ontology, motivate and select their behaviors, and judge and evaluate actions of others” (Sussman, 2000, p. 356). The preceding statements give some meaning to the lives of individuals with respect to their cultural identity and the communities within which they live. Mehan (1992) states, “culture is not merely a pale reflection of structural forces; it is a system of mean that mediates social structure and human action” (p. 1). This gives us an idea of how people think and process information on a daily basis. Cultural competence can be defined “as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (King, Sims, & Osher, 2000).

Formal education systems and diverse media reinforce these shared meanings, symbols, and values (Sussman, 2000). Research by Tajfel and colleagues concluded that “identification with a social group adds to one’s positive self-concept in helping to develop a sense of well-being” (Sussman, 2000, p. 358). An individual’s self-defined cultural identity may differ from the perception of others (Sussman, 2000). For example, Koreans living in the US may be seen as Korean Americans by others even though they were not born in the US. The same type of approach has been used in describing immigrants from the Philippines who are seen as Asian Americans. “Research indicates that psychological characteristics and behavior are more affected by experiences specific to a child than by shared experiences” (Sue, 2001, p. 794). Sue (2001) goes on to state that “a holistic approach to understanding personal identity demands that we recognize all three levels: individual (uniqueness–not like others), group (shared cultural values and beliefs with reference groups), and universal (common features of being human).

Cultural competence is a developmental process that occurs along a continuum. Because the definition of cultural competence entails so many aspects, it has been divided into three categories: “(a) attitudes/beliefs—an understanding of one’s own cultural conditioning that affects personal beliefs, values, and attitudes; (b) knowledge—understanding and knowledge of the worldviews of culturally different individuals and groups; and (c) skills—use of culturally appropriate intervention/communication skills” (Sue, 2001, p. 798). Table 4 shows the three categories along with the different competencies associated with cultural competence. In the mental health field, the goal of cultural competence is “providing relevant treatment to all populations” (Sue, 2001, p. 800). This treatment allows the clients to interact effectively with those of a different cultural and/or socio-economic backgrounds. This is easily applicable to the education arena in that it can show growth toward understanding one’s own culture and those around an individual. Schools are a melting pot of various cultures and backgrounds, and it is important that students understand the diversity of their classmates while appreciating the differences that each of them bring to the table.

Sue (2001) stated that “individuals must experience and learn from as many sources as possible (not just the media or what their neighbors may say) to check the validity of their assumptions and beliefs” (p. 804). No one was born into our society with the desire or intention to be biased, prejudiced, or bigoted; misinformation related to culturally different groups is not acquired by free choice but imposed through a process of social conditioning. People learn to hate and fear others who are different from them” (Sue, 2001, p. 803). This was seen in the segregated schools in the United States and the resistance that many Whites had to integration. They were taught to hate African Americans simply because of the color of their skin. In many

instances, African American were in their homes, working for them and raising their children, but the notion that they could be seen as equal was not a concept they would accept.

A further statement by Sue (2001) reminds us that although attending workshops and receiving continuing education on multiculturalism are helpful, people must take responsibility to initiate personal growth experiences in the real world. One such example was found by King, Sims, and Osher (2000), and shared on the <http://cecp.air.org> website, that discussed how family is defined by a person's cultural background:

In matrilineal societies, a child's maternal uncle plays a central role in care taking. It is common for the father to reside in another domicile, minimizing his role in raising his wife's children. Such a practice may be unfamiliar to people who define family patrilineally. If a child's uncle from a matrilineal culture responded to a call from school, it may be important to know that his culture defines family according to this structure. By accepting this cultural practice, this school can maximize its relationship with the child's family.

It would have been easy for an outsider to have negative comments toward the father not realizing that the family structure dictates the relationship and interaction of the families. Understanding this diversity between cultures and even within cultures is important in defining culturally competent individuals and organizations.

Barrera and Corso (2002) found a way to include Special Education services into the context of cultural competence with the diverse populations that were being served. They developed "a core belief that the key to cultural competence lies more in our ability to craft respectful, reciprocal, and responsive interactions, both verbal and nonverbal, across diverse cultural parameters than in the breadth of our knowledge about other cultures" (p. 103). Using

this statement and Table 4, it is easy to visualize this in a manner that simply embraces the differences among the various cultures while providing an understanding of the culture without having to know the entire history of a culture. It is simply showing respect for our differences while working toward a common goal.

Table 4

Components of Cultural Competence (Sue, 2001, p. 799)

Belief/Attitude	Knowledge	Skill
1. Aware and sensitive to own heritage and valuing/respecting differences.	1. Has knowledge of own racial/cultural heritage and how it affects perceptions	1. Seeks out educational, consultative, and multicultural training experiences.
2. Aware of own background/ experiences and biases and how they influence psychological processes.	2. Possesses knowledge about racial identity development.	2. Seeks to understand self as racial/cultural being.
3. Recognizes limits of competencies and expertise.	3. Knowledgeable about own social impact and communication styles.	3. Familiarize self with relevant research on racial/ethnic groups.
4. Comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and others.	4. Knowledge about groups one works or interacts with.	4. Involved with minority groups outside of work role; community events, celebrations, neighbors, and so forth.
5. In touch with negative emotional reactions toward racial/ethnic groups and can be nonjudgmental.	5. Understands how race/ethnicity affects personality formation, vocational choices, psychological disorders, and so forth.	5. Able to engage in a variety of verbal/nonverbal helping styles.
6. Aware of stereotypes and preconceived notions.	6. Knows about sociopolitical influences, immigration, poverty, powerlessness, and so forth.	6. Can exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of clients.
7. Respects religious and/or spiritual beliefs of others.	7. Understands culture-bound, class-bound, and linguistic features of psychological help.	7. Can seek consultation with traditional healers.
8. Respects indigenous helping practices and community networks.	8. Knows the effects of institutional barriers.	8. Can take responsibility to provide linguistic competence for clients.
9. Values bilingualism.	9. Knows bias of assessment.	9. Has expertise in cultural aspects of assessment.
	10. Knowledgeable about minority family structures, community, and so forth.	10. Works to eliminate bias, prejudice, and discrimination.
	11. Knows how discriminatory practices operate at a community level.	11. Educates clients in the nature of one's practice.

The Maternal and Child Bureau (MCB) uses the term cultural competency for programmatic reasons, “promoting that competency implies more than a knowledge of beliefs, attitudes, and tolerance; rather, implies skills which help to translate beliefs, attitudes, and orientation into action and behavior in the daily interaction with children and families” (National MCBH Resource Center on Cultural Competency). The MCBH cited the following observations with regard to culturally competent organizations:

- Cultural competency refers to the effectiveness and efficacy of a multicultural work force as well its functional interactions with a culturally diverse client group.
- Cultural competence is a dynamic, on-going process – not a goal or outcome. It is a continuing process of growth in knowledge, experience, and understanding.
- Cultural competence is never perfect or permanent and requires a long term commitment.
- Since organizations are slow to change, there is no single activity or event that will ensure the cultural competence of an agency or staff. In fact, a one-time single activity reinforces the notion that “we’ve done that, now the problem is solved.”
- The entire organizational staff must be trained. It is not sufficient for front line staff to enhance their cultural competence in the absence of similar efforts on the part of administrators, managers and policy makers.
- Cultural competence requires more than a knowledge about racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and sexual preferences differences. It requires application of this knowledge in specific behaviors, policies and practices that acknowledge, respect, and value the integrity of clients and staff from all cultural backgrounds.

- Cultural competence also requires and values the active participation of clients and communities at all stages of program design including development, implementation, evaluation, and policy making.

School Integration and the Loss of Racial Identity

As schools across the South began to integrate, most school systems chose to send select Black students to the all-White high schools, thus, in some cases, creating a loss of identity for African American students who had to adopt a culture that did not necessarily represent who they were nor did it openly accept them. Bagley (2007) reported that the Black community reacted with “anger and sorrow” (p. 52). Summarizing the words of one of his interviews, one student reported that “we lost our full identity... we didn’t retain our mascot, our colors, anything” (p. 52). This was not unusual; in fact, it was the norm across the South. One such example was in North Carolina where Blacks leaders felt that school desegregation was the dismantling of Black education through the loss of Black leaders and cultural symbols (Cecelski, 1994). As schools integrated, there was no need to have two principals, so in many instances, it would be the Black administrators that would often lose their jobs first or be reassigned to other duties within the school system. Through integration of schools, very little, if any, was taken from the African American schools. These students had to adopt the traditions of the White schools and fall in line with the norms established by the school. Even as more African Americans integrated the schools and the schools became totally integrated, there were no attempts to merge the two identities together. The African American school’s identity was simply lost.

In Florence, Alabama, after integration of the two schools, African American students shared that Deshler (integrated school) was not “their school” and “they felt that they were in an

alien environment” (Morris & Morris, 2002, p. 78). Morris and Morris (2002) went on to say that the African American students felt that the sense of belonging that they had felt at Trenholm did not exist at Deshler. They went on to say that:

When Trenholm was closed and African American students enrolled at Deshler, they lost their school colors, their symbols, and their mascot. All of these symbols were important socially and emotionally to the students and to the African American community. It was around these symbols that the school community rallied. There was no longer the maroon and gold and the Trenholm Wildcats, but red and white and the Deshler Tigers. (p. 79)

This would be true of many of the schools across the South during integration. School leaders begin to implement full integration, but there was a lack of regard to the African American community as the schools merged.

As students entered the halls of the all-White high schools, there were pictures proudly displayed of the White students, but none of the all-Black schools pictures made it to the building. One student saw this as a reminder of the inferiority complex that they had grown up with, that the White students were the dominant forces in the school (Bryant, interview). In this case, it was a constant reminder of how things had been and how people in the community wanted to keep them. Throughout the *Brown* trial, psychologist Kenneth Clark was a key witness for the defendants in that he had studied the affect that segregated schools had on Black children. He was quoted as saying “that segregation aroused feelings of inferiority that damaged Black people” (Patterson, 2001, p. 43). This long standing effect is what everyone hoped would end through the integration of schools, giving African American students the equal opportunity that they deserved.

In *Along Freedom Road*, David Cecelski (1994) described what he calls the “dismantling of Black education,” or the loss of Black leaders and cultural symbols at their schools once total integration of school systems took place. Through the integration of schools, it was the African American students that were moved to the all-White schools, and in doing so, it was their culture that was lost in the transition. It would be this loss of culture that would be the basis for this study to understand what happens when two cultures are combined, but it is the minority culture that is clearly erased from the school culture.

In order to facilitate the discussion among the races and reduce student resistance, Tatum (1992) developed four strategies that promoted student development:

1. the creation of a safe classroom atmosphere by establishing clear guidelines for discussion;
2. the create of opportunities for self-generated knowledge;
3. the provision of an appropriate developmental model that students can use as a framework for understanding their own process;
4. the exploration of strategies to empower students as change agents. (p. 18)

Helping students identity the differences, while embracing change is a powerful way to give students ownership in developing their own identities, with race just being one variable in the process. In *Brown at 50: The Unfinished Legacy*, the editors wrote:

Race matters not just for Blacks, in other words, but for every citizen of the United States. Because of its foundational role in the making of this country’s history and myths, race, in conjunction with class and geography, invariably shapes educational, economic, and political opportunities for all of us. (p. 97)

In 1997, President Bill Clinton issued an executive order that created a Race Advisory Board for the purpose of examining race, racism, and potential racial reconciliation in America. The Board recommended “looking at America through the eyes of others (marginalized groups), searching for common values and goals shared by all groups, and developing and institutionalizing promising practices that would allow for equal access and opportunity” (Sue, 2001, p. 808). This is very much in line with the research of Tatum (1992) in which we start with a foundation in our educational system to help students understand race and build cultural competence among the races. It is also a part of the cultural transition process.

“In 1980, 74 percent of children under 18 years were White, not Hispanic; by 1990 this had declined to 69 percent, and projections suggest that by 2030, only 50 percent of U.S. children will be White, not Hispanic. In 1990 Black children accounted for 15 percent of all children, with a projected increase to 18 percent by 2030” (National MCHB Resource Center on Cultural Competency, <http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov>). The National MCHB Resource Center on Cultural Competency also stated that 43 percent of children in the United States under age five are of a race or ethnicity other than White, and children often have a language, culture, and religion different from their teachers. While student demographics are changing, teachers are not since “68% of teachers are White and 80% of higher education faculty in early childhood programs are White” (Lim & Able-Boone, 2007, p.240). With such discrepancies, many of our children are being taught by teachers that may not identify with their cultural norms. This is also shown in the way many African Americans may view school itself and their lack of achievement as compared to their White counterparts. Poor academic performance among African Americans can be attributed to the “social stratification, marginality, and racism that they have experienced in the society at large” (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995, p. 904). “School failure

may also be interpreted as African Americans' attempt to form a personal identification; by failing to succeed in school, children demonstrate their distinctiveness from and opposition to the White, European American culture" (p. 904). The idea that their own culture is maintained by their wanting to remain separate from the other students promotes some students to continue this type of failure and it is repeated within their families.

The opposite has been said of high-achieving African American students because they are now "adopting many of the attitudes, behaviors, and values most often associated with the mainstream European American culture" and "they are often criticized by their peers but are not fully accepted by White Americans" (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995, p. 904). This clash in identity has posed problems for African American students who have grown up thinking that the attainment of a quality education was seen as not part of the Black culture. Rhode and Ogletree (2004) noted, *Brown* helped change the quality of life for many Blacks. It educated the country about the changing meaning of the United States Constitution and allowed Blacks to claim the constitution as theirs despite the tragic role race played in its earliest formation. (p. 130) Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan, in reference to the constitution being color blind, said:

The White race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. 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. (Irons, 2002, p. 29)

Understanding these profound statements could open the door of academic achievement of minority students by breaking down this barrier in thinking that success in school is for one group and not the other.

Factors that Impact Integration and Cultural Transition and Outcomes of Integration

The research on school integration is somewhat limited. There are few stories that have been told about integration efforts that appear to have succeeded, the elements that fostered and hindered that success, and the outcomes of the experience for those involved. As noted in previous sections, cultural identities of both Blacks and Whites sometimes hindered the process and brought about a sense of loss. There was resistance from both communities to fully integrate the school systems. Many African Americans were content with the segregated schools, but wanted equal resources while Whites were just a content with their segregated conditions in keeping everything status quo. At other times, White flight from the integration efforts caused difficulties. Those Whites that left the school system did not give integration a fair shot, and did not want to give the African American students an opportunity to flourish in an integrated school system.

Herring (2015) reported that the positive aspects of integration through Freedom of Choice were that it brought the community together, allowed for new cultural experiences, allowed for new friendships and relationships to be formed, enhanced appreciation of extra-curricular activities (athletics), allowed for new learning experiences, caring and capable teachers emerged, and equitable opportunities for all.

Morris and Morris (2002) stated that although the desegregated schools had superior facilities and grounds, a wide range of course offerings, and ample instructional supplies and equipment, it did come at a loss for the African American community. What they felt was lost were,

the qualities that communities throughout the country are seeking today which is small neighborhood schools that have strong leadership; qualified and caring teachers; a safe, orderly, and positive environment; a wide range of co-curricular activities in which all students are encouraged to participate; and the active involvement and support of families and the community. (p. 105)

This study sought to gain deeper insights into the experience of integration through the eyes of the students involved.

Conclusion

Bankston and Caldas (1996) have pointed out that “School desegregation has been seen as not simply a means of providing African American students with access to the physical and financial resources of predominantly White schools, but also a means of enabling them to share in social and social-psychological assets of White classmates” (p. 537). Ensuring that both races have an opportunity to learn from each other is important in the education of our students.

Race matters not just for Blacks, in other words, but for every citizen of the United States because of “its foundational role in the making of this country’s history and myths, race, in conjunction with class and geography, invariably shapes educational, economic, and political opportunities for all of us” (Rhode & Ogletree, 2004, p. 97). During the time of integration, two races and cultures came together, and it was important that all students, regardless of race, understood their contribution to improving the educational setting for all students to come.

We are left with the conclusion that race in the United States was created, and it means whatever people decide it means (Jensen, 2005). For students during integration, the idea of race was the foundation of who they were, but it did not limit what they were capable of doing in schools. Being African American did not mean that they were not able to achieve greatness or

success in schools. The negative stereotypes of others did not stop the movement to integrate schools across the country. It was important to realize that race alone did not determine your position in life, but rather the effort that you put into reaching your dreams.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods used to collect data to investigate answers to the research questions generated for this study. The chapter describes the purposes and significance of the study, research questions, research design and rationale for qualitative research, setting, recruitment of participants, data collection, and analysis. Particular attention is given to the role of the researcher. In addition, concerns of validity, reliability and credibility are addressed. Assumptions and limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter ends with a summary to illustrate the linkages among the main sections presented as part of the research design methodology for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the experience of involvement in a Freedom of Choice initiative in a Southern school system, from the perspective of the students involved. The study examined the factors that contributed to student participation in this movement and to its success and determine what personal factors hindered the process. A second focus was to determine the impact on students', both African American and Caucasian, long term identity understandings as a result of their participation in the Freedom of Choice initiative.

Research Questions

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following questions:

- Question 1: What perceived factors facilitated the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 2: What perceived factors hindered the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 3: What were the perceived positive and negative outcomes of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 4: What was the role and perception of racial identity in the participants during the Freedom of Choice initiative?

Significance of the Study

The stories told by the participants and captured in this study are of those who witnessed the integration of schools firsthand, gaining insight into what they learned through this process about their community, school, and most importantly themselves. The friendships gained and the barriers broken can only be described as forging a new frontier in an unknown world. Even though we are looking at people who lived within the same city, the communities in which they were from were seen as totally different worlds. These two cultures, the Black and White races, did find that one thing they had in common was that they wanted to provide the best education for their children. Understanding that integration could not be done in isolation, the two groups showed their forward thinking and willingness to embrace their own differences while learning about themselves through their participation in the Freedom of Choice Movement. Ultimately, the school leaders created what they felt was the best learning environment possible for all students, embracing their growth and sharing their experiences.

There have been limited studies that have focused specifically on the Freedom of Choice movement in schools and the impact it had on students that were affected by the integration of schools. Because there has been very little research done, little is known about the actual people involved so this study provides insights not previously examined that could help us to understand issues of racial identity and cultural identity more thoroughly providing a way to modify the conceptual framework of how students view themselves as individuals and within various subgroups.

Research Methods

Since the nature of this study dealt with the lives of those that participated in the Freedom of Choice Movement during the integration of schools, a qualitative methodology was selected for this study. Qualitative research investigates research questions of how, what, and why in situations calling for in-depth exploration to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014). Qualitative research relies on the participants' views; asks broad, general question; collects data that consists mainly of words; and describes and analyzes these words for themes (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 2014). Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) stated that "qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the holistic picture and creates a depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data" (p. 426). Qualitative research functions under the key assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds; therefore, qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed or how they make sense of the world and the experiences with them (Merriam, 2001).

Qualitative inquiry is used "to stress the unique strengths of this paradigm for research that is exploratory or descriptive, that assumes the value of context and setting, and that searches

for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon" (Marshall & Rossman 1995). One characteristic of qualitative inquiry is the use of descriptive data. The data are collected in the form of words which represent the subjects' experiences and perspectives, and the researcher's goal is to discover and report a rich description of people, events, and conversations. Qualitative researchers tend to inductively analyze data which Patton (2002) describes as "discovering pattern themes and categories in one's data" instead of previously stipulating categories beforehand based on the existing framework. This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of those individuals that integrated a school system through Freedom of Choice before integration was forced by the state of Alabama.

Although there are many different types of qualitative research approaches, the most commonly used include: ethnography, case studies, document analysis, focused interviews, phenomenological studies, grounded theory, and historical studies. This research involved a case study within a particular school district during the integration of schools through Freedom of Choice. Yin (2014) uses a two-fold definition:

A case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real world context when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident; the second part of the definition points to case study design and data collection features, such as how data triangulation helps to address the distinctive technical condition whereby a case study will have more variable of interest than data points. (p. 2)

Creswell (2005) defines case study as "a variation of ethnography in that the researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. an event, a process, or an individual) based on extensive data collection" (p. 439). Case studies allow people to look at the world in a particular way and to communicate the situation to others in an effort to gain knowledge. This type of

qualitative research becomes a road-map of knowledge to promote future study; providing an understanding of a specific situation and setting while evaluating people's lives, and what gives meaning to them (Patton, 2002).

Context

The section begins with background information and a description of the school system where the study occurred. This is followed by the description of the study population and sample.

Community and School District

This study occurred in a school setting in a small Southern city with a population of 19,261 residents in the 1960s. The school system examined was Rose City Schools (RCS) (pseudonym). The city of Rose, nestled in the east central part of the state, had access to a local university and is within an hour's drive of a major metropolitan city. The school system has a unique history in that it was formed as an independent district, later became part of a county system, and then once again became an independent system.

On February 17, 1885, the Alabama state legislature authorized the Rose School District, with an elected school board and the power to levy a 0.5% tax on sales in the town limits of Rose. This new district took over the private Rose High School, and created the first full public school system in Rose. A new brick school building was built in 1899, and the district was re-chartered in 1901 with an appointed school board and right to charge tuition. In 1914, Rose High School became independent of the district by becoming the county's flagship high school, Tinnemeyer County High School (pseudonym), but the lower grades, now known as the Rose Grammar School continued under the control of the Rose School District in the 1899 building. The Rose School District ceased operation in 1931 when the lower grades were moved to

become part of Tinnemeyer County High when that school occupied the current Rose Junior High School building. From 1931 until 1962, schools in Rose operated as part of the Tinnemeyer County School District. Overcrowding that threatened the accreditation of Rose High School and stretched many of Rose schools' facilities to the limit led to the creation of the Rose Committee for Better Schools in 1959, which recommended the formation of a new city school district in Rose, and for the city to provide funds to alleviate the overcrowding.

Rose City Schools (RCS) was established in 1961 after citizens favored becoming a separate entity from the county school district. Prior to 1961, the citizens of Rose had voted to tax themselves for local education at a higher rate than the citizens of the county, and felt that because they were paying a higher rate that these funds should be used exclusively for the children living in the city of Rose. Proponents also felt that Rose schools would not improve as long as they remained in the county system (local newspaper article, 1961). Table 5 shows the configuration of Rose City Schools from 1961–1970.

Table 5

Rose City Schools 1961–1970 School Configuration (Pseudonyms used)

Grade	1961–1966		1966–1969		1969–1970	
	African Americans	White	African Americans	White	African Americans	White
1	Bass Elementary	Robinson, Webb Road, Community Center, Johnsons Mill	Bass Elementary	Robinson, Webb Road, Johnsons Mill	Bass Elementary	Robinson, Webb Road Johnsons Mill
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7	Hafley High	Rose High	Hafley High	Hendrick Avenue Middle	Hafley Middle	Hendrick Avenue Middle
8						
9						
10				Rose High	Rose High	Rose High
11				Rose High	Hafley High	
12					Hafley High	

Because of the segregated conditions that existed in the city, the schools were separated by race, and in many cases most students did not complete high school. African Americans in the South had few options in the early 1900s because of the lack of resources and Jim Crow laws that made attending school almost impossible because of the distance many would need to travel to attend school. According to the 1910 report to the United States Commissioner of Education, there were 141 African American public high schools in the entire country with Alabama only having four dedicated to a high school education (Morris & Morris, 2002). In the rural parts of the South, the classrooms were described as “primitive one-room frame structures, wholly lacking in modern facilities” (Walker, 2000, p. 259). This caused many in the African American community to use churches and other vacant buildings as schools to provide for the students.

Before Rose City Schools formed, the only public school for African Americans in the area was in the form of a one-room building located outside the city. This school served students in grades one through six, and had an enrollment of twenty-six students (Draughon, Hughes, & Pearson, 2012). It would not be until 1929 before a more modern facility would be built for African Americans located closer to the city, and the school was built with funds secured through the Rosenwald Foundation (Draughon, Hughes, & Pearson, 2012). Conceived in the 1910s by Black educator Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee Institute staff, the Rosenwald program represented a massive effort to improve Black rural schooling in the South through public-private partnership (Hanchett, 1988). The name came from philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, and he offered matching grants to rural communities interested in building schools for African Americans. Washington and Rosenwald hoped not only to improve Black school facilities but also to promote Black-White cooperation in those dark days of Jim Crow (Hanchett, 1988). The school provided students with access to industrial training, but also focused on the traditional academic programs and provided some extracurricular activities for students (Lest We Forget, n.d.). The training school continued to operate as the only public school for African Americans in the city until 1958 when an even more modern high school for African Americans was built and continued to be operated under the county system until the city broke away and created their own school system (Draughon, Hughes, & Pearson, 2012).

Implementation Process

Rose City Schools, like many other school systems across the nation, did not initially adhere to the United States Supreme Court's desegregation decision of 1954 when the school system broke away from the Tinnemeyer County School System in 1961. In compliance with

the laws, city schools in Alabama sought ways to solve the problem of how to best integrate its schools.

In May of 1965, Rose City Schools implemented a “Freedom of Choice” plan requiring all school-aged children to indicate the school that they wanted to attend for the next school year. Results of this Freedom of Choice plan suggested that the majority of students, both Blacks and Whites, chose to remain in the school they were already attending. In the first year of integration in 1965, fewer than five students chose to attend Rose High School, the predominately White school. No White students chose to attend Hafley High, a predominantly Black school. Over the next four years, the number of Black students attending the predominately White school gradually increased, but no White students ever chose to attend either of the predominantly Black schools.

By 1969, the number of Black students attending Rose High had not increased significantly. The desired ratio had not been obtained in either school. The time mandated to fully integrate the schools was fast approaching. Therefore, the Rose City School System implemented another plan of action. It was also a mandate that high-achieving African American students in all grade levels attending Hafley High School received notification to report to Rose High School in the fall of 1969. The members of the Board of Education believed that the above-average African American students would be accepted academically and socially by the White students and faculty.

Many of the students were upset, and parents were concerned about their children’s future. After meetings with numerous parents, the final decision of the Board allowed all seniors attending Hafley to remain and complete their senior year making the class of 1970 the last graduating class of Hafley High School.

Key Dates in Rose City Schools

October 3, 1961: Rose City Schools created as they wanted to break away from Tinnemeyer County Schools. (Ordinance Number 246- Rose City Schools Board of Education Minutes)

February 23, 1965: Rose City Board of Education voted to execute an “assurance of compliance” required by the 1964 Civil Rights Act for continuing benefit of federal assistance by executing a formal agreement provided by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The agreement declares that the school board will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination under any program or activity for which federal financial aid from HEW Department is received. The agreement states, in part:

The board agrees that it will comply with Title VI and all requirements imposed by or pursuant to that title, to the regulation of the HEW Department issued to that title, to the end that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which federal aid is received.

May 25, 1965: Freedom of Choice as an option to integrate the school system discussed at the Board of Education meeting. Resolution passed by the board to implement a plan of action.

“I. Freedom of Choice:

- e) Effective with the commencement of the school year 1965–1966, all students in the public schools of Rose, Alabama, in Grades 1, 7, 11, and 12 (Grade 7 being the only transitional grade in the Rose City School System) shall have Freedom of Choice in the manner and through the medium hereinafter stated, to attend any school in the Rose City

School System, regardless of race, color or national origin and enjoy the benefit of all services and facilities available at said school. The Freedom of Choice herein granted is granted to the parent, or guardian of the pupil or pupils involved, or to such person standing in loco parentis to such pupil or pupils, and such Freedom of Choice must be exercised at the time and in the manner herein specified. Teachers, principals and other school personnel shall not be permitted to advise, recommend or otherwise influence such decision. Nor will school personnel either favor or penalize children because of the choice made.

VI. Policy for Years Subsequent to 1965–1966:

The Freedom of Choice provided for in Paragraph II (a), above, shall be extended to the parents, guardians or persons standing in loco parentis of pupils enrolled in not fewer than eight grades in 1966-67, and of all pupils in the Rose City School System thereafter.

Adopted by the Board this 25th of May 1965

May 27, 1965: Letter sent to parents discussing Freedom of Choice option.

May 28, 1965: Rose City Board of Education working on a plan for desegregating Rose public schools. Board chairman quoted as saying “Our doors will be open to all students this fall without regard to race. We will obey the law. We will have some type of freedom-of-choice arrangement, but beyond that I cannot now say what the details of the plan will be.” (local newspaper article, 1965)

August 1965: “Public school desegregation came to Rose Monday, quietly. The event was almost routine. There was no tug of war between opposing sides, no name-calling, no shouting defiance, and no taking advantage of the sensitive situation by any special interest group. Rose acted grown up.”

Rose's Integration Plan for 1965

“Calls for desegregation of grades 1, 7, 11, and 12 the first year. In addition, any pupil in any grade other than these four may, for “compelling academic or geographic reasons,” make application to the [Rose] City Board of Education for assignment to a school other than that to which they may have initially been assigned.”

The bordering city school system plan called for dropping racial barriers in grades 1 through 4 the first year. The Tinnemeyer County plan would cover desegregation of grades 1, 7, 10, and 12 in the coming school year.

June 7, 1967- Minutes of City Board of Education (Rose)

Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made by Mr. McGhee and seconded by Mr. Ball to authorize Superintendent Gaither to prepare a Freedom of Choice report to be filed with the State Superintendent of Education as per Dr. Stone's instruction of April 17 and May 22, and in accordance with the DESEGREGATION PLAN adopted by this board on April 10, 1967. Said report is to be based on upon the DESEGREGATION PLAN adopted by this board and upon the following:

1. The maximum number of requests to be accepted per teacher for grades shall be; first grade, 30; second grade 30, third grade, 32; fourth grade, 32.
2. Eight applicants (this being the number above 32) for the third grade at Robinson who live the greatest distance from the school are approved conditionally, the condition being that sufficient additional requests be received to justify two sections of the third grade at Robinson School. The parents of the eight children are to be notified of the conditional approval as soon as they can be identified.

3. The fifteen (15) applicants for the fourth grade at Robinson be approved conditionally, the condition being that sufficient additional requests be received for this grade to justify a class at Robinson. The parents are to be notified of conditional approval as soon as possible.

The motion passed unanimously.

July 11, 1967

Board meeting included discussion of the freedom-of-choice forms. 18 students were rejected on the basis of overcrowding and distances from schools indicated.

July 1968

A parent addresses the Rose City Board of Education concerned that there are two totally Negro schools in Rose and questioned what plans the board had to break down this segregation. Parent is afraid that if the school system does not begin to totally desegregate the schools that the federal government “will do it for us as it was done in Mobile.”

School Board Chairman assured her that the Freedom of Choice plan will work for Rose. He said that the first year of Freedom of Choice was one of “token” desegregation and that the next year “there was a goodly number to shift to the White schools.” He went on to say “I don’t know to what extent White and Negro children should be forced to go to certain schools.”

1969

Rose City Board of Education approved to transfer up 45 students in grades 11 and 12 at Hafley to Rose High in complying further with the court order. “A substantial number”

of students in those two grades plus all those in ninth and tenth grades at Hafley High School to be transferred under the order issued by U.S. District Judge Frank Johnson.

Forced integration to take place by the end of 1970 with the Class of 1971 being totally integrated with the closing of Hafley High School.

Participants

A purposive sampling was used to identify the population and sample. Purposive sampling is the qualitative research process in which the researcher selects individuals with an intentional purpose (Creswell, 2005). The criteria for selection included students who integrated the schools utilizing Freedom of Choice or those that were at the school when integration occurred during Freedom of Choice.

In purposive sampling, researchers use the process to maximize their insight and understanding of their topic, and they use their experience and knowledge to select a sample they believe can provide relevant information regarding the topic and setting (Ary et al., 2002). Participants were selected based on their participation or involvement with Rose City Schools during the time of integration, specifically during Freedom of Choice. Participants included both African American and Caucasian students that were at Rose City Schools during integration. Since this time period involved two races/cultures coming together during Freedom of Choice, it was important to capture both sides of the coin with regard to race to gain an understanding of what was going on during this time. Creswell (2007) states “the key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information” (p. 39). Because race was the central idea of Freedom of Choice during integration, it was important to hear from both sides, connecting their stories as they developed into adults. Table 6 describes the participants involved in this study.

Table 6

Participant Demographics

Participant	Race	Gender	Grade at Time of Integration	Graduation Year
Respondent 1 (R1)	W	Female	11 th	1967
Respondent 2 (R2)	AA	Male	10 th	1968
Respondent 3 (R3)	AA	Male	11 th	1969
Respondent 4 (R4)	W	Male	7 th	1971
Respondent 5 (R5)	AA	Female	9 th	1971
Respondent 6 (R6)	W	Male	7 th	1971
Respondent 7 (R7)	W	Male	7 th	1971
Respondent 8 (R8)	AA	Female	6 th	1974
Respondent 9 (R9)	AA	Female	6 th	1974

Data Collection

Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The primary data source for this study was face-to-face interviews. Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because many deal with human affairs or actions (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the interview process was used to gain insight to the lived experiences of students during the integration of the school during Freedom of Choice initiative. A list of potential participants was identified through the efforts of a key informant that was a participant during the Freedom of Choice initiative with the school system being studied. An interview script was created based on list of predetermined questions that each participant would be asked. The questions were developed by the researcher to gain insight of

the lived experiences of the participants centered on the development of racial identity using the conceptual framework of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). Questions were grouped into the following categories: background information, Freedom of Choice, race, personal experience, transformation, mentoring, and additional information. Participants were given an informed consent form to complete and were told about the purpose of the study, which participation was voluntary, and they could remove themselves from the study at any time. To better understand their lived experiences and their relationship with their peers, semi-structured and open-ended interview questions were asked. Participants were given an opportunity to reflect on their time in Rose City Schools, and for the African American participants, a chance to discuss their transition from a segregated school to an integrated Rose City High School.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted from 60 minutes to 180 minutes. The researcher recorded all interviews. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Transcripts were shared with the interviewees to provide a member check. Throughout the data collection process, interviews were transcribed, reviewed with common themes and memories noted. Interview data also provided the verbatim quotations from the participants so that the researcher's descriptions and interpretations would more closely reflect the lived experiences of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After each interview was completed snowballing was utilized to ask the participant who else should be contacted to participate in the study. This allowed the researcher to gain additional information-cases for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

To better gain an understanding of what was going on during this timeframe, various board documents and newspaper articles were collected and analyzed. These would be compared to what the participants stated in their interviews and a timeline could be created for

this particular school system. Documents would also be used to show the efforts of the school system to integrate the schools.

Data Analysis

“Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 132). Interviews will be analyzed to determine common themes among the participants and those that are different. The researcher is looking to see what differences exist between the two racial groups during the time of integration to gain insight to their lived experiences.

The constant comparison method and open coding were the two techniques used to analyze and conceptualize the data for this qualitative study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During each interview, the researcher would record notes to capture key thoughts and familiar themes that could be compared to the other interviews. The analysis process consisted of “compiling, disassembling, reassembling, arraying, interpreting and concluding” the data (Yin, 2012, p. 177).

Open coding was used to examine, compare, break down, conceptualize and categorize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process is used to breakdown or reduce data to manageable segments that can be used to generate themes and categories (Schwandt, 2007). Codes were developed from data collected from transcribed responses from the interviews. All data collected from the interviews were used in the coding process. Interview transcriptions were re-read and audio recordings of the interviews were replayed to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Notes were made in the margins for emergent themes and ideas. Borgan and Biklen (2007) state:

As you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' way of thinking, and events repeat and stand out. Developing a coding system involves

several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories. These are a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. (p. 173)

In addition to the analysis of the transcribed interviews, document analysis was used to help formulate a time frame and understanding of what was going on during this time frame. Creswell (2007) included journals during the research study and analyzing public documents such as official memos, minutes, and archival materials as forms of documents that could be included in the data analysis process. Field notes would also be utilized to formulate the researcher's thoughts and comments in relating items back to the conceptual framework. In analyzing the framework, the data analysis would be used to confirm or potentially create a new framework that better represented the participants in this study.

Role of the Researcher

Insider research refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000) so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants (Asselin, 2003). This insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, participants are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered through the interview process. The benefit to being a member of the group one is studying is acceptance. One's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness in your participants that would likely not have been present otherwise. Participants might be more willing to share their experiences because there is an assumption of shared distinctiveness; it is as if they feel you are similar to them because of this shared background.

As a researcher for this study, I found a personal connection in that I am biracial. I was born to a White mother and African American father, and was raised by my paternal grandparents in the same state as the study was conducted. As a researcher, I found a personal connection in this study not only on how racial identity is developed as people grow, but how it is influenced by the situations around us, such as our environment or interactions with others. Also, being an educator in the same area for the past fifteen years, the researcher connected with participants, providing a commonality to the geographical area that was being studied. This helped to build rapport and other opportunity to get the participants to feel comfortable during the interview. Rapport, as defined by Berg (2009), is “the positive feelings that develop between the interviewer and the subject” which helps to facilitate the conversation that is taking place during the interview (p. 130).

Because of the time frame being studied was the early-to-late 1960s, the topic of racial identity could be associated with race relations during this time frame. Because of that, one would expect the majority group, the Whites, to possibly be more reserved in their discussions with race. As a researcher for this study, I found that most of the Whites felt comfortable discussing their feelings during this time period and were reflective on race relations today. Since they did not see my race as Black or White, I feel that this gave them the opportunity to open up just a bit more than if I were perceived as Black. For the African American participants, they heard the connection I had with them because I had African American family members that were a part of integration of schools in Alabama. This gave the researcher another level of connectedness that helped both groups feel comfortable and not threatened during the interview to speak freely. This ultimately provided rich, thick descriptions for data analysis.

Validity and Reliability

The strength to qualitative research is internal validity (Phelps, 1994). The internal validity of this study is high because it is participant driven. The interviews were conducted in a natural setting that the participant chose, in many cases, their current places of employment. All participants were given a copy of their interview transcriptions to validate their responses and make any changes or add to their responses. This method of member checking ensured that internal validity was strengthened and helped to add thick, rich responses for the analysis of the data. In addition to internal validity, it is important in qualitative research that “results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 2009, p.45).

Reliability in a qualitative research is not concerned that someone gets the same results as your study, but that the results from your study is what actually occurred. In this study, using participants that participated in the integration of schools through Freedom of Choice and those that were at the schools at the time of integration through Freedom of Choice were used to foster reliability.

Creswell (2009) stated that “reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape” (p. 209). These field notes were used to develop codes and ultimately the major themes that emerged through the transcribed interviews.

Assumptions

1. Participants selected to participate in this study were representative of the various classes that integrated the school system during the Freedom of Choice movement.
2. The participants answered the questions honestly and consistently.

Limitations

Stake (1995) defined generalizability and in particular natural generalizability as the degree to which research findings are used to gain understanding of a specific situation and then utilize that understanding to make sense of similar situations. Because this case study deals with a very specific school district and potential participants it is difficult to ascertain whether conclusions drawn from this particular case apply to other districts.

The primary limitations for this study were:

1. This study focused on students that participated in the Freedom of Choice movement in a specific school system in the Southeastern United States and findings may not be generalizable to other settings or situations.
2. Not all students involved in the Freedom of Choice movement for this school system were involved in the study.
3. Some participants may not have been willing to discuss negative experiences during this time frame, so some data may not have been gathered.

Summary

Chapter III provided a detailed description of the research methodology that was utilized in the study. The chapter began with a statement of the purpose of the study. This was followed by the research questions, data collection, and analysis procedures. Particular attention was given to key dates in the school system and the role of the researcher to add to the scope of the study. Chapter IV has been organized to present the analysis of the data collected to respond to each of the research questions.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Introduction

As schools began to integrate in the United States in the early 1960s, two cultures (White and Black) that had been divided in school settings and in many aspects of community life, were brought together in school buildings across the country with the passage of the famed *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision. In this decision, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could not legally separate students by race, “officially asserting that our society should be race-blind, and in order to do so, school racial distributions should reflect the distribution of the race in the community” (Moody, 2001, p. 679). No longer was separate but equal acceptable in schools.

Through *Brown* and further actions, the Court ruled that school systems were required to dismantle their dual system of education in which there were separate schools for Whites and African Americans. As previously stated within the review of literature, the road to achieving integration was not easy, and in fact, resulted in the closing of public schools and the creation of new private schools, especially in the South.

However, in an effort to achieve integration, some school systems began to employ Freedom of Choice plans that would give parents a choice in the school that their child would attend, and not forcing them to attend the school that they were zoned for based on race.

In one community in East Alabama, a Freedom of Choice initiative was approved in May 1965 and was to begin with the opening of school that fall. Citizens (both Black and White),

community leaders, school board members, and local clergy came together to forge a new frontier in the schooling of children in the community. Working together, this group integrated an Alabama public school system without incident while other schools across the South were still trying to remain segregated or even closed their doors.

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of being involved in in the Freedom of Choice program from the perspective of the students involved over a six year period. The study examined the factors that contributed to student participation in this movement and determined what personal factors hindered the process. A second focus was to determine the impact on students', both African American and Caucasian, long term racial identity and cultural identity understandings as a result of their participation in the Freedom of Choice initiative.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The primary data source for this study was face-to-face interviews. Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because many deal with human affairs or actions (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the interview process was used to gain insight to the lived experiences of students during the integration of the school during Freedom of Choice experience. An interview script was created based on a list of predetermined questions that each participant would be asked. The questions were developed by the researcher to gain insight of the lived experiences of the participants and were grouped in the following categories: background information, freedom of choice, race, personal experience, transformation, mentoring, and additional information. The questions were designed and asked in a way that would allow participants to respond openly and freely without threat of negative connotation since this time period might not have been a positive time in their life.

Throughout the data collection process, interviews were transcribed, shared with participants for member checking, reviewed with common themes and memories noted. Interview data also provided the researcher with the verbatim quotations from the participants so that my descriptions and interpretations would more closely reflect the lived experiences of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition to the transcripts from the interviews, an analysis of board documents and newspaper articles from this time frame were reviewed and included in the study to give an understanding of what events and actions took place as a result of the Freedom of Choice initiative.

Research Questions

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following questions:

- Question 1: What perceived factors facilitated the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 2: What perceived factors hindered the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 3: What were the perceived positive and negative outcomes of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?
- Question 4: What was the role and perception of racial identity in the participants during the Freedom of Choice initiative?

Setting

This study occurred in a school setting in a small Southern city with a population of 19,261 residents in the 1960s. The school system examined was Rose City Schools (RCS) (pseudonym). The city of Rose (pseudonym), nestled in the east central part of the state, had access to a local university and within an hour's drive of a major metropolitan city. The school

system has a unique history in that it was formed as an independent district, later became part of a county system, and then once again became an independent system.

From 1931 until 1962, schools in Rose operated as part of the Tinnemeyer County School District. Overcrowding that threatened the accreditation of Rose High School and the fact that many of Rose schools' facilities had been stretched to the limit led to the creation of the Rose Committee for Better Schools in 1959, which recommended the formation of a new city school district in Rose which the city was to provide funds to alleviate the overcrowding.

Rose City Schools (RCS) was established in 1961 after citizens favored becoming a separate entity from the county school district. Prior to 1961, the citizens of Rose had voted to tax themselves for local education at a higher rate than the citizens of the county, and felt that because they were paying a higher rate that these funds should be used exclusively for the children living in the city of Rose. Proponents also felt that Rose schools would not improve as long as they remained in the county system.

Participants

Through informal conversations and discussions on potential participants, a total of nine individuals shared their involvement during the Freedom of Choice movement that ultimately integrated the school system during the 1966–1970 school years. The accounts were documented through individual semi-structured interviews. The participants ranged from one that was in the first group of African Americans to integrate the school system, the White students that were already a part of the school system that witnessed integration, and a group of African Americans that were the last to integrate under Freedom of Choice. Of the participants, five were African American and four were White. The African American participants included one that was a part of the first group of African Americans to integrate the school system under

Freedom of Choice in 1965 as a sophomore (R2), one that chose to attend Rose High School for his junior and senior years of high school (R3), one that chose to integrate during her ninth grade year (R5), and two participants that integrated during sixth grade (R8 and R9). Of the White participants, one was a junior that first year of integration in 1965 (R1), and the other three were all in the seventh grade that same year (R4, R6, and R7). Each participant participated in a semi-structured interview at a location and time of their choice. The interviews ranged in time from the shortest conversation of 21 minutes to the longest which was 109 minutes.

The stories of the nine participants were told using their own words. The transcripts were analyzed under a set a common themes for comparison purposes. In addition to the data collected from the participants, primary source documents were used to verify and add to the depth of the study. Primary source documents included board of education minutes and local newspaper articles. Common themes were used to consolidate their stories and determine the impact of the Freedom of Choice initiative within the school system. These findings are organized into the following sections: the factors that facilitated integration through freedom of choice, the factors that hindered integration through freedom of choice, perceptions of racial identity during this time period, the influences on racial identity during integration, and the perceived outcomes of the Freedom of Choice initiative.

Factors that Facilitated Integration through Freedom of Choice

The fall of 1965 would be the first time that any African American students would walk the halls of the all-White schools in the city of Rose. The school system, with its leadership, had developed a Freedom of Choice plan that would allow students to attend the school of their choice provided that there was room available. There were board meetings and community meetings held throughout the city, but there were other factors that contributed to integration

prompting African American students to leave their segregated schools to attend schools with their White counterparts. These factors included family support, community support, compassionate teachers within the school system, and proactive students that recognized the need for both races to come together in school.

Family Support for Integration

Of the nine participants, five were African Americans that chose to integrate the school system through Freedom of Choice. Their stories were similar in that their parents were the primary reason why they chose to integrate the school system. In Rose City Schools, the school leaders developed a plan that would show that the school system was making an effort to integrate. Respondent 2 was one of the first students to integrate the school system through the newly approved plan of the Freedom of Choice movement which allowed parents to choose the school their child would attend. In this case, R2's parents, who were African American, wanted him to attend the all-White high school after spending summer school in the White school. He received a B in the class and his mother wanted him to continue to go to the White school that fall because she felt that he would receive a better education. He shared:

Well my role was kind of forced on me [by my mother]. [Line 70]So when I came home with that [good grade from summer school] she said I need to go back over there [White high school] to see if they are going to have Freedom of Choice. At first I told her that I didn't want to go, but she said I was going anyway. She then went down to a board meeting asked them to let me transfer and they did. [Lines 80–84]

R2 also states how his mother thought he would have better grades if he attended the White high school. R2 stated:

By taking that one class during the summer and I did so well in that one class she felt that I would do better in the rest of them. That was her biggest concern. [getting a good education] [Lines 90–92]

Respondent 8's parents and grandparents impacted her decision to want to integrate through Freedom of Choice. She responded by stating:

So our grandparents and our parents said yes, you know whenever integration comes, yeah because the White schools have better books, you have better opportunities. The older you get versus staying here because you're never going to have an equal education if you have a choice of which one to go to. [Lines 28–31]

In this particular family, integration was something that R8 looked forward to and it was not a question of if we are going to integrate the school system, but when. R8 stated:

Well you know, family structure is probably very different now in a lot of families than there were then, but we all try to captivate what we can, but at dinner that was our most prized time for family discussions. So we would have discussions about trading schools long before we even did. And then after dinner we would be sitting...I can remember winter nights when we were sitting in front of the fireplace and we would be talking about school and what we are going to do and if we are going to do it. [Lines 141–146]

R8 went on to explain why she felt her parents wanted her to attend the White high school:

So I can only tell you that my parents decided because they felt like we would have more opportunities and better opportunities... You are going to have to eventually [go] anyway, so why not go ahead and go now and go ahead and get started and it is going to be so much easier and so much better by the time that it is mandatory. So from that point that was the family and how we decided. [Lines 150–156]

R8 integrated while in junior high school and based on what was happening around the country, full integration of all schools was the next step in the process. Her parents saw that there were better opportunities for her at the White school, and by integrating early on, she would have the benefit of knowing the other students and teachers.

Respondent 3 discussed how his mother saw the need for an integrated education to help her son deal with both groups, White and Black. He said:

I give my mother all the credit, because my mother was like look, you will have to always work with people that you are not going to [like] all the time and you will have to work with Black people and White people, you got to work with all different people.

[Lines 295–298]

Being raised in a family where she had support from her mother, grandmother, and great aunt, Respondent 5 discussed:

Well of course, when the opportunity presented itself, my grandmother and my great aunt they were always actively involved in anything related to voters rights and community development or church related kinds of things. So they were very in tuned and we were too. We were in tuned to what was happening in the country at that time as far as the civil rights movement was concerned. Of course when there was an opportunity to choose whether you are part of integration or not, you can't say that I chose it, my mom chose it for me. [Lines 114–120]

The events throughout the country were pivotal in integration of schools in the South. By seeing what was going on in other parts of the country, this helped prompt those in the African American community to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The need to have an equal access to the White school was important to those in the African American community.

They saw the inequity that was occurring in funding and facilities, and in some cases, they felt that the education would be better at the White high school. All of these factors impacted their decision to want to integrate under Freedom of Choice.

The stories of the White participants (R1, R4, R6, and R7) were a bit different in that they were already at the school when the African American students chose to integrate the school through Freedom of Choice. The support that their families showed were keeping their children in the school system while integration was taking place. This was not true of other areas of the country and even the state as referenced previously in the review of literature. One such example was in New Orleans where the parents of the White students withdrew their children from school because there was now an African American student in the class with their children.

Respondent 1 mentioned her family upbringing and being taught to recognize the talents of others. R1 stated:

Part of that is because daddy was a coach and I was acquainted with people from different races, probably at an earlier age than other students. So I can see the talents and it also allowed me to see the world better. [Lines 375–377]

Having this viewpoint showed how influential her parents were in embracing diversity and the positive impact they had on integration in the community. Respondent 6 also spoke of his parents teaching him about respect. R6 remembered:

Well growing up as a kid you knew that. I did not feel privileged so much, but I was always taught respect for adults. Did not matter what color they were. I was always taught that, you know you, appreciate when people do something for you. [Lines 476–478]

Both of these viewpoints show the importance that the families had placed on education and all the participants chose to stay in the school system and all graduated from the integrated high school.

Community Support for Integration

To help make integration a possibility, it was important that the community showed its support for the school system. Having seen negative reports from Tuskegee and Little Rock Arkansas, this community appeared to be supportive of the Freedom of Choice plan that was outlined by the school system.

Respondent 8 stated that there was a local church that helped to facilitate the integration process in the community with the help of a school organization at the segregated school. R8 stated:

...but when we went through the preparation by 7th grade preparing for 8th grade, and working with the Presbyterian church and having adopted families and all of that, so that would help bridge that communication and that gap as you transition and by 8th grade transitioning by choice not mandatory to the school. [Lines 34–37]

Working with the church and having adopted families that were White, would help to foster the spirit of integration at the school and provide a support system for the African Americans that may have participated to help them transition from their familiar settings at the segregated school to their new home. R8 went on to discuss that although not everyone may have been on board with the idea of integration, through the work of the church, it made things a bit easier for the community. She said (what word can I use so that I don't over use this)

The people at the Presbyterian Church like the lady that I had talked about, how as a family they had to do it and her children may have not been receptive to it. She may not

have been receptive either, maybe her husband wanted to do it, but maybe the Church said we got to have these people and her husband said come on we got to do it. [Lines 1053–1056]

Earlier, R8 mentioned how all of the church leaders in the community were involved in providing a safe atmosphere for the students that were participating in the program to ensure they had a smooth transition. She recalled that:

I can say that our church leaders that were involved without naming anybody for fear of leaving somebody out, but just church leaders all together in the Black community that was committed to making sure we were safe and had a good smooth transition.

This showed the commitment that the church, both Black and White, had toward integration of the schools. Many of the African American participants discussed how important the church was to their family, and it was this foundation to help to define who they were as a race while providing support. Respondent 9 stated:

Church was the center of our life including social life like most Black communities.
[Lines 11–12]

Respondent 2 stated: Oh the church is definitely about the community... [Line 434]

Both of these statements add to the importance that the church had on the community and the influence it could have to promote community initiatives.

Respondent 8 also talked about another partnership that was formed through the school system with Project Opportunity. Project Opportunity, as described in the book Lest We Forget, was developed by the school system in 1963 with the purpose to provide an environment for minority students who were college bound. This organization was instrumental in providing opportunities for minority students to visit college campuses and provide a support system for

those students that would further their education after high school. Respondent 9 fondly remembered Project Opportunity for the educational trips and the help they provided during the summer. She said:

So we traveled during the summer. I would go on those Black college tours and that is when I knew that it was more outside Rose and I didn't want to go to Rose University.

[Lines 68–70]

R9 went on to describe the program:

It is similar to Upward Bound and we had to go to summer school every summer. You went to summer school every summer. You could either work on classes that you needed remediation in or you could take classes and that is what I always did.

Although this was prior to integration, the program helped to prepare the students to be prepared for high school since many were still in junior high school just like R8 and R9 were at this time.

R9 also referenced how Project Opportunity worked with the local church:

You know [we] had Project Opportunity at the school [Black segregated school] that initiated the whole community staff with the church, within the Presbyterian Church and develop that and that was through our counseling program the Project Opportunity and then you had the churches, because the churches as they are today, were very involved in the educational process for families. [Lines 179–183]

This again showed the positive influence that both of these community groups had on the African American students that were integrating the school system. For Respondent 1, she felt that the community was a contributing factor for the positive integration efforts in the city. R1 stated:

I have always said that if we were not in Rose, things would not have been as smooth.

[Lines 37–38]

R1 went on to say that:

We were fortunate that our fathers were at a school [local university, name omitted] that seemed like it had some diversity. [Lines 118–119]

It would be this diversity that would contribute to the efforts to integrate the school system.

Respondent 2 stated:

...but I think the leaders of Rose, the superintendents in the schools knew it was coming and it was going to happen, so I think they got proactive and said look we are going to do it the first year that we are going to do Freedom of Choice and if some Blacks want to come over here and some White students wanted to go that way, that would be okay, but it did not happen [in reference to not as many Blacks and no Whites integrating. [Lines 376–381]

Understanding where things were politically in the country, and realizing that integration was the right thing to do, prompted officials to take this proactive approach which made things much smoother for those involved that wanted to integrate the schools.

Compassionate Teachers

Another facilitator that promoted the integration efforts of the school system were compassionate teachers that the students would get an opportunity to work with while in the schools. Two of the participants, R5 and R9, spoke fondly of their band directors that helped them transition to their new surrounding and provided them a safe haven in the school. It was this outreach of kindness and support that helped them continue at the high school although times were tough. Respondent 5 spoke highly of her high school band teacher stating:

...band is kind of what brought me, that kind of made me feel like there was some value, and honestly throughout my high school career, band was the thing. He was favorite teacher in life. Mr. Holland (pseudonym). Because always from day one he made me feel like I was a part of the class. Nothing special, no extra, but just that I was a part of the class. [Lines 252–256]

This same sentiment resonated from Respondent 9 as she remembered her time in band at the junior high school. She remembered:

So I had an excellent band director Robert Hudson (pseudonym). [Line 44] he was instrumental. He wasn't from Rose so he had a different attitude about what school was like and so he was real nice. [Line 46–48]

She went on to say:

I remember the first day of band and I was not talking to anybody, because all of us little Black kids sat together and I was scared to death. I will never forget that one day I got ready to leave and he was like “come here” and I said “me?” Yeah, and he said can I just see you smile? Because he thought I was mean and so every day he would make it his business to tell me bye, he said “R9, bye.” He would come by and he was encouraging. He was one of those teachers that he became the light in the turmoil when things got crazy up in the main building. [Lines 309–315]

As the next years went on, there were more African Americans choosing to integrate through Freedom of Choice and R9 continued to discuss the impact that the band director had at the school. She remembered:

Well I had joined band more kids were starting to come. More people were coming then so I enjoyed and loved band and band to me was an escape because band made up of

nerds, you know the cute girls was not trying to be in the band and so I like my band director. He made band worth it, because he was such a good man and he cared. [Lines 305–309]

In these descriptions, the one thing that both of these teachers had in common was that they showed that they truly cared for the students, regardless of their race. It was this compassion that helped to ease the transition from going the familiarity of the segregated Black school to the unknown of the White school.

Another quality that showed compassion was the need to show equity in the classroom. This was a turbulent time and because in those first couple years or so, there were very, if any African American teachers at the White schools during integration. Because of this, it seemed as though there may not be support for those integrating the school, but there were several teachers that stood up for the students. Respondent 3 remembered:

I had a guy that was real good, he taught me mechanical drawing and he was an excellent teacher. He was one that was trying to make sure that we as Blacks who were coming into the system were treated fairly and were involved in things.

R2 even remembered an incident in which one of the football coaches did not want to give him the opportunity to play, and it was this same teacher that stood up for the player, saying that he had earned the right to play. R2 stated:

So the mechanical drawing teacher worked with the football coaches when we were out there practicing and I never forget that the coach tried to not let me play and he spoke up and said no he has done everything required, let him have a shot at it. So he was one of the teachers and I cannot remember his name though. He was one of the teachers who

tried to make sure that the playing field was leveled. Everybody got to have the opportunity. He did not try to work from no stacked deck.

R2 also spoke highly of his math teacher that he too was one that was fair in the classroom. R2 stated:

Mr. Daniel (pseudonym) taught geometry and he was also the adviser for the student paper, I cannot remember. But Mr. Daniel did not push it [race] and he did not do anything to hinder it either.

Both of these teachers were to be commended for their efforts to ensure that the African American students were treated fairly and equally in all aspects of the school.

Respondent 4 discussed how the principal, assistant principal and guidance counselor were positive influences for the students during integration. R4 said:

I think for the most part in retrospect they probably shared the same ideas that I mentioned earlier, that it is not necessarily the White students or the Black students, but its picking out those that want to make a positive difference you know to help globally if you will.... and pull people together to, you know, make a positive change would be a fair assessment. [Lines 254–258]

Respondent 6 shared:

I think that the teachers always have cared. They would not be doing what they do if they didn't. I think all in all when you look at where Rose is today and probably where most schools are in Alabama. It has got to be better for everybody. [Lines 574–576]

These recollections only further add to the evidence that there were White teachers and administrators that showed compassion and wanted to see all students succeed. This only helped

to facilitate integration during Freedom of Choice, and one would hope that these compassionate teachers would overshadow those that were negative.

Proactive Students

Having a supportive friend in class was one aspect of the school that helped to facilitate integration in the schools. Through the interviews, one participant, R1, was a voice for those that were disadvantaged, especially for those African Americans that integrated the school. In fact, two of her best friends were African American students that integrated the high school.

R1 shared:

... I was the person who spoke up in class if I thought someone was being mistreated and this fueled my sense of I need to take on the world, because I knew this was the way it was supposed to be. [Lines 44–46]

R1 would become the spokesperson for justice for anyone that she felt was being mistreated at the school, both White and African American. When R1 became a teacher she remembered teaching with one her best friend's mom and how special it was to her. This friendship between an African American and Caucasian student truly embodied the positive culture that was being promoted during integration.

Respondent 4 also shared some positive experiences that he had, especially on the first day of school when integration took place. Because his father owned a business in the town, he had grown up with some of these students, and therefore, had built some positive relationships with them outside the school setting. R4 described the first day of school:

I can vividly remember the first day that integration happened and all of the African-Americans came to the junior high and I thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread because I already knew most of them because there were so many that were kids of

the parents that work for my dad. So I can remember on the first day going to the lunch room and going to sit with all the African-American friends that I had, and I remember that that was pretty shocking to a lot of the rest of the kids. [Lines 52–58]

This experience would have given those African American students some comfort in seeing one familiar face that was accepting of them attending the school.

Respondent 8 had one of these positive experiences from the White students at the school. R8 shared:

Um, when you walk down the hall and someone finally remembered your name and remembered who you were, you would drop something and someone would pick it up and give it to you. Those kinds of things made it a lot easier over time. But it also validated that it was the right thing to do, because it helped you realize and see the relationships and that any kind of relationship barriers can be broken. With enough effort, anything could be broken. [Lines 411–419]

This reflection showed that over time, it did become easier to be at the school and gave hope that there were others at the school that would be accepting to the African American students being at the school.

African American students were also proactive in integrating the school community at Rose High School. Several of the African American students were involved in various extracurricular activities, and saw that as an opportunity to showcase their talents even when it seemed as the other students did not want them there.

R5 stated:

I definitely was a part of integrating the band. I think that was one of the areas in the school system that probably is the least integrated. I am proud to have been a part of that process of helping my community to move in that direction. [Lines 752-755]

R8 used the opportunity to become a cheerleader at the integrated school as a chance to break the racial divide between the two groups of students. She remembered:

“...I tried out for cheerleader because I thought that would bring about a more of a social gathering and it did. That is where my closest ties evolved from...” [Lines 243-245]

R8 fondly remembered many of the friendships she made through cheerleading which also gave her an opportunity to serve in many key roles at the school and seen as a role model for both the African American and Caucasian students. She went on to say:

“Once you developed those relationships and all of those barriers are behind you, and everybody embraces people as people, then you don’t see those colors anymore because race is not an issue.” [Lines 782-784]

The African American students took advantage of the opportunities that were being afforded to them in the integrated school to show that regardless of color, they were just as capable as their White counterparts. Although in the beginning there were few African Americans participating in these activities, their proactive nature forged the way for others to join and ultimately increase the number of African American students in key leadership positions in the school during integration. These proactive students, both African American and Caucasian, brought together the school community to show that they could equally contribute to the success of the school.

Factors that Hindered Integration through Freedom of Choice

Although the school system had made an effort to develop a plan on integration through Freedom of Choice prior to mandated integration that forced all dual systems of educating Black and White students dissolved in 1970, the fall of 1965 saw only a handful of students integrating the school system. All five of these students were African American, and in the coming years there would not be a mass number of students integrating under the Freedom of Choice initiative. In fact, no Caucasian student would integrate the segregated African American schools in the city. The perceived factors that hindered integration through Freedom of Choice included teacher racism/bias, student racism/bias, and resistance from African Americans to integrate which was evident in the low numbers that chose to attend the White schools.

Teacher Racism/Bias

Although there was community and teacher support for the integration of the school system through Freedom of Choice, unfortunately, there were some teachers that showed they were not fully supportive of the efforts to integrate the school. Both White and African American participants shared their stories of negative experiences they had with some of their teachers.

Respondent 1 vividly remembered not enjoying her time in the school system because of the teachers. In fact, she recalled one incident in particular involving her history teacher. She shared:

When President Kennedy died and this is Rose City Schools, my civics teacher was called out of the room, came back in and said I have an important announcement. She said President Kennedy has been assassinated and she said I've been waiting for someone to take care of that man. [Lines 123–136]

Although this incident would take place two years prior to the integration of this school system, it did speak volumes to R1 in how that particular teacher felt about the Civil Rights movement that was occurring at that time which would have included the desegregation of schools across the country. R1 went on to say:

I always felt like the students did a much better job adapting than the teachers did. [Lines 38-39]

R1 also shared:

I have memories of being in trouble a great deal as a teenager. I think that is part of what led me into teaching, the cause that all kids need to be respected.... [Lines 76-77]

R2 had similar feelings of disrespect from the White teachers. He shared:

The transition there was not real smooth.... Then going to your classroom, my history teacher was named Ms. Edwards and she could never pronounce the word Negro, because she would always say the “Nigrass” [Lines 66-70]

This showed that not all the teachers at the school were embracing the changes that were occurring at the school and were not showing respect to the other students.

Respondent 2 remembered how compassionate his teachers were at the segregated Black schools. He stated:

In the elementary school the teachers seemed to be more compassionate and caring for you and there was concern about you really learning. [Lines 50-51]

He went on to say:

She seemed to be more caring about you as you learned things that would help you in life. [Lines 54-55]

At the White school, this feeling of compassion and caring was no longer there. R2 shared:

The teachers were kind of like nobody verbally mistreated you, it was kind of like hands off. I will only talk to you if I had to talk to you. [Lines 117–118]

This was not the same atmosphere that had been fostered at the segregated school. This same type of behavior was experienced by Respondent 9. She remembered how a teacher would not call on her in class. In fact, she went on to say:

I spent an entire year in that class raising my hand and my teacher never called on me.

[Line 29]

Respondent 5 had a similar experienced and shared:

...and I just remember being in that room and not really being noticed or recognized by the teacher necessarily, but the remarks and the things that came from the students more than anything else. I do remember in that classroom at the point that I began to get comfortable, there were questions asked. I remember raising my hand so many times and not being called on. The very time that I didn't raise my hand is when I would be called on. So I finally figured out the trick to this and I am not ever going to raise my hand, so whenever she calls on me if I know the answer I know it and if I don't, then I am lost.

[Lines 202–209]

Being ignored by the one person that is supposed to be your advocate is not what students had in mind when they chose to integrate the school system. Respondent 8 shared a similar story:

The teachers weren't very friendly. You can tell by body language and tone. They really did not want you there. They were forced to teach you and you were there and they just lived with it, but they were not going to make any extra effort. [Lines 349–352]

R8 went on to say:

So the difficult part was you knew that you had to live with it and you knew that you could not complain about it, because you made that choice. And so because we had made that choice at home and we talked about at home, there were things that I know I did not tell my parents that had happened at school and I am sure that my sister didn't either, because they would probably want to have pulled us out of school. [Lines 398–403]

This showed how much she wanted to be at the school, but also how difficult that first year was on her as she transitioned from the segregated Black school. Going back in her interview, R8 reminisced about her teachers at the segregated Black school:

They had a passion for teaching and wanting to make a difference in the perception of education for everybody in our classroom. The ones that wanted to learn as well as the ones that didn't. But it is really good and I guess to sum it all up I can genuinely say that they cared and you knew they cared. They really wanted you to do well. They really wanted you to do well so that you could become a teacher or someone in the community to help others, but it was real apparent the caring. [Lines 77–84]

This passion and caring attitude is what many of the students did not get from some of their teachers at the integrated schools. These teachers had been trained as educators of their subject matter, but more importantly, they were the role models that would shape the lives of their students. Unfortunately, there were those that did not want to be a role model to all students, and in fact, did what they could not to interact with the African American students.

This was seen in another response by R8:

It was not evident that my teachers cared about everybody in that classroom. African American students like me that were in predominantly Black schools, they gave up a teacher that genuinely cared about them. I think that is where the motivation and the

desire and the passion for learning has been lost with a lot of our African Americans because it is not there. [Lines 892–896]

It should be noted that there was one incident reported that showed that at least one of the African American teachers had her own doubts about one particular student integrating the schools. Respondent 2, as mentioned earlier, was one of the first students to integrate the school system under Freedom of Choice. He remembers a conversation with one of his African American teachers concerning him integrating the schools that fall. R2 recalled:

I think the biggest problem that I remember were the teachers at Hafley, the adult teachers. I remember one lady [teacher] telling me that I should not be going over there because I was not clean enough to deal with them White folks. The folks are too clean. [Lines 271–274]

This quote showed the bias and thoughts that the African American teacher had concerning this particular student. What other preconceived ideas did she have about the segregated White schools that she was sharing with her students at the segregated Black schools? Although this teacher exhibited bias, it did not stop this particular student from integrating the school system, but her negativity could have swayed the thoughts of others. Respondent 5 remembered having African American teachers at the integrated high school, and it was not a pleasant memory for her. She shared:

I had a couple of African American teachers at Rose High who treated me worse than some of the other teachers did and they had come from Hafley. I know that they were probably angry. They had their own things going on I am sure. But why take it out on me. I always felt there was some carry over from the way the students were treating me through this one particular teacher also. [Lines 324–328]

What changed in these teachers from their time at Bass Elementary or Hafley High (pseudonyms) where the students so fondly remember their other teachers being caring and compassionate? As R5 stated, maybe these teachers were angry that they were transferred to Rose High. For the students, they chose to be there, but for this particular teacher, it would appear that they had no choice.

Overall, teachers have a lasting impact on the students that they teach, and during this pivotal time in the history of this school system, you have teachers that seemed to not evoke the characteristics that you would want to see in a role model. If others heard or saw these examples occurring, then they would not be likely to want to be a part of the school during integration.

Student Racism/Bias

Integrating the schools would bring both African Americans and Caucasians together in a school setting, but not all students were open to those of a different race. It would be these negative experiences and/or thoughts that would cause some not to want to choose to integrate the schools.

From the African American perspective, Respondent 3 felt that there was prejudice in the school which made his time there difficult. R3 went on to say:

The Whites perceived us as local nonworking people, so we pride ourselves on Hafley being a good school... [Line 283]

R3 continued with:

We were walking down the hallway and you hear guys calling you names and cursing and all that kind of stuff. [Line 67] They called you niggers and that kind of stuff and it mostly came from the guys. [Line 236]

Sharing these negative experiences with other students that were not at the integrated school could cause other African Americans not to want to leave their segregated Black school to be put in this situation at the integrated school. It is important to note that although R3 had these negative experiences, his views of the opposite race could have been seen as a hindrance for Whites to want to attend the segregated Black school. R3 shared that his viewpoint was that:

They were crap [Whites]. They were racists and didn't want to have anything to do with us. We were watching TV and seeing all the marches on TV. You watched all of the historical stuff that was going on during that time frame in the Birmingham area and all of those places. I was like I don't need this and until there was a decision made to go over there, I was like okay we are going over here, but I still understand and knew that White people did not like Black people. So you had to prove yourself and prove what you are capable of doing and then let the ball fall where it may. [Lines 402–409]

Respondent 2 was one of the first students to integrate the high school, and he remembered that more negative incidences began to occur as more African American students began to attend the integrated high school. R2 shared:

My first year by myself I never heard the word 'nigger' and I never heard anything derogatory, but then the other Black kids came. Well once that happened then you started hearing things like 'nigger' and you start having folks writing things on the wall and saying things. We had fights and stuff like that. [Lines 325–329]

This racist view was also seen by Respondent 9. When discussing one of her White classmates, she recalled:

She was so racist and you can imagine a person being that young and that little and so racist. [Lines 335–336]

For R9, racism was something that she felt was taught at home. She stated:

.....you know one thing about most Black families don't teach racism. We don't. We don't think about it, you know. [Lines 205–206].

She continued with:

You don't know it unless you are taught about racism and those kids were taught it. It was during a very turbulent time in our country. Little kids don't know anything about what color you are. [Lines 207–210]

Because of these experiences, many African Americans wanted to stay in their own community where they knew people, for the most part, felt as they did. This was evidenced in the following statement by R9:

You know how people they always think that they are important, White people were not important to me. They existed Jason. My world was with all the little girls and boys that I played with and my cousins. At Thanksgiving we would always go to Montgomery to Alabama State to their football games against Tuskegee. So we had our life. [Lines 400–404]

Apprehension and Resistance from African Americans to Integrate

The first year of integration through Freedom of Choice, there were only three African Americans that chose to attend the all-White high school in 1965. This was nine years after the Brown decision from the Supreme Court and two years after the integration of schools in Tuskegee and Mobile. Some would have thought that more students would have wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to attend the all-White high school.

After talking with the participants, they all shared similar stories in the fear of the unknown and the fear of losing the culture and traditions from the Black high school. Some of

the stories revolved around the school system not being ready for integration those first two years.

Respondent 3 stated:

I just do not think that they were ready for it. We probably were not ready for it but we did it anyway. [Line 497]

R3 went on to say:

Now that was some real prejudice stuff going on, but I guess it was because there were not that many students trying to go to Rose. Hafley High School students wanted to stay at Hafley, and they said you can go to Rose High School if y'all want too, but we are not trying to go over there, so it was not a massive move. [Lines 560–564]

These two statements showed how the African American community was not ready to leave their segregated Black school for the segregated White high school. The notion that prejudices were already present in the community could have been another reason why more African Americans chose not to integrate the schools.

Respondent 2 remembered the various activities that would occur during the school day or just how students could easily get involved while they were at the segregated high school. R2 explained:

We used to have basketball games in the middle of the day and our cheerleaders used to dance and sing, but then when there was integration you came into where our White brothers and sisters, their cheerleaders were different so they had to go. [Lines 171–174]

R2 went on to say:

Some of the changes affected us as a Black race. I had one interview one time and I told this guy from this standpoint that I am a minister, a pastor and I think that is why you did

not see a mad rush to integrate the church like it was the school. Because we lost so much of our culture with integration because if you come over you are going to do it our way, but your way is gone. [Lines 167–171]

R2 ended with:

So we lost a lot of our identity and our culture through integration. In Hafley if you wanted to be in the band then your parents would buy you an instrument and then you could be in the band, but when it was integrated, then if you got in the band it was based on a performance test to be able to get in. So a lot of those things really affected our culture and our race that I saw happened with integration. [Lines 176–181]

Seeing these changes occur over one or two school years could have kept others from wanting to attend the all-White high school because things as they knew them were not that same and/or done in the same manner. Respondent 5 remembered losing the spirit that was at Hafley as compared to Rose. R5 said:

We have to adopt this way of doing it as opposed to Hafley. The spirit was definitely was there [at Hafley]. I enjoyed the spirit that was there. The spirit was different [at Rose]. Here [Rose] there was a method to it. I am not saying one is better than the other, I am just saying it was different and kids were expected to conform. So therefore we ended up with not as many [African American] cheerleaders and when I was in the band there were two African Americans in the band and that was me and a guy who played drums. That was it my whole 4 years in high school. [Lines 287–293]

Respondent 9 discussed some an important event at the segregated Black schools. R9 shared:

May Day at the Black segregated school. Because you put so much effort and there was so much ... because people had to actually make uniforms and outfits and that was

mommy. Every year you knew that the 5th grade was going to do the Scottish dance and you had to have your little plaid skirt and the little sash and the little hat. My cousin made a lot of them. The 4th grade was the Indian dance and it was a real big deal. We lost a lot of things that were important to us. We had to learn how to acclimatize. They didn't take on any of our stuff, we took on all of theirs and we had to leave our things behind. [Lines 111–119]

This conformity could be seen as a loss of the African American traditions and culture from the segregated Black school that African Americans did not want to lose at this point in their lives.

This could be summed up with the reply from Respondent 9:

... we gave up everything. They did not embrace any of our culture and it is not just in Rose, it was everywhere else. They embraced our athletes as they always do. [Lines 659–660]

The notion that by attending the White schools would mean that you would lose your identity was an important factor that affected why more African Americans did not want to leave their schools. During this time of integration, it was Freedom of Choice, and it was that choice that many African Americans made in not wanting to leave their segregated high school to integrate the White high school.

Respondent 4 was on the opposite side of the spectrum in that he was a White student already at the segregated White high school. When asked how he would have felt if he were the one to attend the segregated Black high school, R4 stated:

How would I have fit in at Hafley if I had been to Rose High School up until the 11th grade and then they told me that I was going to graduate at Hafley? So that was probably much tougher on them than it was on anybody else. [Lines 353–356]

R4 recognized the sacrifices that the African American students made to leave what they had known for so many years to attend the White high school. The fact that this was a hard decision to make would make likely explain why so few African Americans chose to integrate the school system. Respondent 6 had a similar viewpoint. R6 shared:

It wasn't until long afterwards, looking back on it, to how much that you think golly that had to be tough. That had to be hard and not knowing uncertainties [of integration].

[Lines 387–388]

Racial Identity

Prior to the Brown verdict in 1954, much of the conversation of race had been defined as between White and Black Americans. The two have been on opposite sides of the spectrum with regard to status in the United States. Smedley (1999) stated that “race is a cultural invention, that it bears no intrinsic relationship to actual human physical variations, but reflects social meanings imposed by these variations” (p. 690). She went further to say that “American society has made race (and the physical features connected to it) equivalent to, and the dominant source of, human identity, superseding all other aspects of identity” (p. 695).

In the United States, we would see the development of White or Caucasian and Black or African American as the two major categories for citizens. It would be these two groups of individuals that would be at the heart of integration of schools as the dual system of education had been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Black Racial Identity and the Integration Endeavor

During the Freedom of Choice initiative, African Americans chose to integrate the all-White high schools and left behind their familiar surroundings of the segregated Black high school. They knew walking in the doors of the school that they were different from their White

counterparts. For African Americans, their racial identity gave them strength and helped them endure as they shared a sense of pride in who they were.

Respondent 2 was one of the first African Americans to integrate the schools. He saw his race as strengthening his resolve in this process. He shared:

I would tell my children that I prefer to have been Black than to be White because it is a valuable lesson understanding the perseverance you needed to make it in life. I think that is why when I was coming up we didn't have too many drug addicts and stuff like that because people already knew what it was like to persevere. [Lines 256–260]

He associated his Black race with perseverance due to many of the circumstances that the Black community had already endured throughout history. Although he identified himself as Black, he did not think about being one of the only Black students at the school. It was not until more African American students came over that he could fully understand the impact he made by being one of the first. He shared:

When I first went it really didn't hit me. I think it hit me more later on when all of the other kids came over. But when it was just me it did not register that I was the only Black kid. [Lines 139–141]

R2 added:

I realized the significant fact that I had missed the interaction with students of my color and race that first year and then it kind of registered. [Line 155]

He accepted his racial identity, but often felt alone, not clearly being accepted by either race.

Later in his story, he discussed how he missed interactions with those of his own race.

R5 also experienced some loneliness and feelings that although she accepted who she was, she experienced feelings of isolation and rejection by both communities, due to her

participation in integrating the school system. The African Americans in her neighborhood could not understand why she would want to leave her own community while the Whites are resentful of the fact that she was now a part of their school. This would be a difficult time for her as she just tried to find her place in this situation. She shared:

They are your peers [African American students in your neighborhood] that you have to deal with. People who you think are accepting of you, are rejecting you and then there are these people [White] over here [integrated school] who are clearly rejecting you. I found myself in a no person land. I mean, I felt like I didn't have any friends anyway, except for 3 or 4 other people who were in the same situation. [Lines 159–162]

Some students, while being comfortable with their racial identity also believed that their racial identity was not the only way they wanted to be identified. They wanted to be accepted for their talents and contributions to the school, not just that they were Black.

Respondent 3 discussed how things changed as a result of winning athletic games. He shared:

Once we started playing sports and stuff and the school started winning it was all good. We had a good basketball program now and we were winning and so it was all good. From that aspect some felt that things got a little better within the school itself for the students and referencing to the talent on the basketball court. So then you go to the classroom and you had more teaches trying to work with you and things of that nature and they spent a little more time talking to you also. [Lines 280–288]

Respondent 8 accepted the fact that she was Black, but did not want that to be the only way she was defined as a person. R8 shared:

Initially, um, I think it was a little uncomfortable because they are different from you and you know what is bringing you together is education, but you got to be able to bridge and get past the barriers of race and be able to define race as just that – color, but it does not define who I am, but it defines what I look like. And so being able to get past those kinds of barriers and it just took a while to get to those conversations. [Lines 199–203]

R8 was able to use this to begin to become involved in her new school. She went on to become a cheerleader and a member of the Student Government Association. When describing what it mean to be Black, R8 responded:

Um, I think being Black meant that first of all it is a race. You are a part of the Black race. If you were Black you had to really work extra hard to get to where you want and to accomplish what you really wanted. Whites were inferior to you. If you were Black you had to be ten times better than anybody else. It was not just being a little better, you just had to work extremely hard and go over and beyond to prove that you are either smart or intelligent or capable of whatever it was that you were striving to do. Being Black meant that you are constantly trying to define that I am just as good as that White person over there. That is what being Black meant to me. [Lines 692–699]

This self-reflection from R8 helped to connect with her desire to want to get involved, to show her White counterparts that she was just as good as anyone else in the school. It is interesting to note that identifying with the Black race meant that she would have to work that much harder and lent support to the idea of White privilege that her White counterparts benefited from in the school. Looking back, R8 continued:

I don't really think that really I saw myself more than a Black student at that point, where as I got older I saw myself more as an individual. Now, all during this time I would see

myself as a Black student. So, and probably because I came on board to that school as a Black student and so that's kind of how it was. [Lines 718–721]

Respondent 5 discussed how her racial identity was shaped by how she was treated by the White students in the school and how she in turned treated them. R5 shared:

I will be honest with you, I developed some radical kinds of feelings. I developed some prejudices. I don't know if I could have avoided it because there were things that I saw that I didn't like. There were behaviors that ...we started categorizing people and stereotype people, whatever. I am guilty because there were things that I saw that I knew nothing about and behaviors that I saw that I didn't see at Hafley and whatever, so this is what they do [White students]. And they do. [Lines 636–641]

Respondent 2 credited his mother with the development of his racial identity. When asked did he ever question his own race, R2 responded:

I never did. I give a lot of what I was able to do as a Black man to my mom, my dad was in the military and then he came back and had some health issues, but my mom is a strong lady. She had worked for White people and then she became a beautician. She had part time jobs and tried to maintain our household and help us to get to where we needed to be. She always taught us that you are who you are. People were going to say stuff to you and people are going to call you nigger, but you don't have to respond to that and that is the way I tried to do that. I just try to live my life like that and even when I was in college. [Lines 337–344]

This showed the strong foundation that was built early on from his mother and was true of many of the African American participants. Respondent 9 spoke of the family support, specifically from her mom that she had during this time. She remembered:

My mother made us proud to be Black. I have a reason and there is a reason for everything. God decided that R9 needed to be Black. I never wanted to be anything different. I didn't want to be White, I didn't want to be Jewish, I didn't want to be nothing. I am who I am and I was proud of it. [Lines 435–439]

R9 went on to say:

I am a mutt, because we did our DNA and my marker comes from Mozambique and Sierra Leon and so I know that I am a Black woman who is proud of her race. [Lines 443–445]

And continued with,

I never did [question my own race]. I always wondered how one race of people could control.... I always questioned their motives. I do. How do you live with yourself when you have mistreated people? I never questioned me, I never wanted to be White or anything like that. I am very comfortable in the skin that I am in. Even as a Black woman today I am very comfortable in my skin. I have always been. [Lines 556–560]

R9 finished with: “Say it loud, I am Black and I am proud.” [Line 453]

She is proud of her ancestry and shares how her family was brought to this area as slaves, and she has instilled a sense of pride into her own children so that they never have to feel inadequate about who they are or where they come from.

Throughout the interviews, none of the African American participants ever mentioned a time when they questioned their race, especially during integration under Freedom of Choice. They shared the fact that their families instilled in them a sense of pride for their heritage, and it was the sense of pride that they were then able to share with their White counterparts in a positive manner. However, they did discuss how some of their African American counterparts

viewed them. R9 discussed how she felt when more African American students began attending the now integrated school.

...glad to see all these Black kids come to school at Hendrick Avenue School, I mean I was. But then you were caught between two worlds, because you all over here trying to act White, because you all think you are something, because you all been over here [thoughts that she felt the African American students had about her]. Then you had the White kids that really You know the White kids and the nerdy ones and the so-called upper crust doesn't care for [you], those are the ones that gravitate more towards you and I am still friends with some of those. Then I look at the ones that were supposed to be the upper crust and I am like who are they, but anyway that is life. So I was glad to see all of these Black kids come. [Lines 129–136]

It would be this back and forth between the African American community and White community that those students that chose to integrate the school system would endure during those first two or three years. Respondent 8 remembered feeling that others thought she abandoned her own race when she chose to integrate the school. R8 shared:

Then you are in school and talking to your friends and seeing who in your friends group is going to go and who is not, so then you have that unsettled disheveled kind of relationship with your friends that you didn't know you had, because they didn't want you go, they felt like you would be abandoning your race and that you were wanting to be more White than more Black, so all of those kind of things. So they looked at you from a totally different perspective, but only looked at it from a racial perspective and that they don't want you there; that is why we had segregated schools. [Lines 156–162]

R8 went on to say:

Now they [other African Americans] were not as receptive, they felt like you abandoned your own race and community [through your choice to integrate the White school] so that was hard. And it would not be everybody, but it would really probably be. Even if it wasn't the majority. If you had 5 people out of 20 you would feel that you that they really felt that strongly about it, but you always are going to have those people that are verbal and vocal and say 'oh go back to your [other] Black friends, you don't belong here. You gave up because you did not want to be with us so just go.' [Lines 316–322]

This idea that the segregated schools were there for a particular reason for each race could have added to their experiences as African Americans and Caucasians, and that the schools would be a place where your identity could be formed. Being questioned by those in your own race would be hard because it could leave a cloud of doubt on an individual, but because many of these participants chose to integrate the schools, it showed the strong foundation that had been built early on in their lives. The African American students were proud of who they were, and these negative interactions from both races only showed their resolve and perseverance.

It was obvious from her skin tone that R5 was Black, but because her neighborhood was not in the same area of town as the other African Americans and that she chose to integrate, there was this question to others about her race by those who were of her same race, but R5 proudly identified that she was Black. Respondent 5 remembered feelings of uncertainty from her African American counterparts with regards to them questioning her race. R5 said:

I don't know why people thought I wasn't Black (laughing). That street now that I think about it. There was some nice houses on that street, but then there was some houses on that street that was not so nice either, but we all played together in everybody's yard kind of thing and um...but of course the majority of the Black community lived on the other

side of the track on the west side of the track, I guess. I don't know why that was.... I was always proud to be who I am. [Lines 577–582]

R5 went on to say:

I have never questioned or ever felt ashamed of who I am. It hurts sometimes to be in a situation where ... I would have not expected that from my Black brothers and sisters. I guess I was ready for whatever I had to face at Rose High. So we just went through that and I was disappointed that these folks [African American students] over here would take the attitude especially when we got to the 12th grade. [Lines 585–589]

One area that was of interest through the interviews was the notion of understanding the importance of race. Many of the African American participants recognized this early on, much through the interaction with their families and what they could see in public. Moreover, how one race was seen as privileged over the other. Respondent 3 shared:

Oh when I went to Hafley High School, I saw a lot of that because they would give us the hand-me-down books. We did not get the brand new books, like they are supposed to give. Our books came from old books over at Rose High School, so I saw that aspect. Then when I went to Rose High School we had new books where at Hafley High School there were used books that came from Rose High School. So I saw how the difference of how Blacks and Whites were treated. On one hand Whites live on this side of town and they get the best of stuff and on this side of town you have another high school that gets the hand-me-down stuff and so that was very prominent. It was not an equal situation during that time frame and it was just the point of trying to make it better. [Lines 355–364]

White Racial Identity and the Integration Endeavor

Being White during this time period had its advantages in that the Caucasian students were already students at the school where the African American students would integrate. They did not have to change their location to attend school, but they were now faced with a new group of students that were different from them. Of the four Caucasian participants, three of them had been a part of the community from an early age. Their families were well-respected in the community through their various businesses, and the children were a part of that culture.

Respondent 6 shared:

Well, growing up as a kid you knew that [being White had its privileges]. I did not feel privileged so much, but I was always taught respect for adults. Did not matter what color they were. I was always taught that you know you appreciate when people do something for you. Getting all the way back to the school thing again, you better not have trouble at school or you are going to have me to deal with. But again looking at that strong father figure that so many of the kids don't have. So it was just the way it was. I felt very blessed. [Line 476–482]

R6 continued:

Well I think you recognize it [race] then and it is obviously different and important too. I think you know if you didn't; I never remember thinking and I may have, I don't know. I never remember thinking, hey I am better than anybody else, or whether somebody that I felt like, I was in a better economic situation whether it is White or Black. [Lines 398–401]

R6 reflected on how he came to view issues of race between Black and White when he stated:

I can remember going in a doctor's office and having a Black waiting room and a White waiting room. I did not think about it. It was just kind of the way it was or you go to the bus station and see a Black family.... Colored, they put colored. I did not look at that and I do not think that people really looked at it to say boy that is a colored and a White, I am not going to let anybody drink out of the White fountain. I do not think people really thought about it. I think it is just kind of, well that was the way it was and ever how long whatever. [Lines 234–240]

As an adult, R6 shared that he felt his views on race were the same as when he was a student.

No, not really. I don't think I ever along the way, I didn't think that much about it [race]. Sure it was different. It is like we are here and we are Black or White, we are together and we do things. We are in the same careers. We teach. We sell real estate and we do whatever. We are lawyers and we are doctors. [Lines 586–589]

Respondent 7 grew up with an African American family working for his parents. It was through this interaction that he understood the importance of race. R7 shared:

I was very young when I knew it was different, mainly because my father and my mother had another Black family and the wife her name is Les she was the maid. She would come over and do whatever and hang out and sit there for the kids to come home from school. [Lines 139–142]

R7 shared his thoughts on Blacks by stating that:

I felt like the Blacks were a different class. I saw the water fountains saying White only or colored only. I remember seeing that. The restroom issue. I can remember as a child at the stadium they had a little bleacher set down there and that is where the Blacks the

buildings ground workers sat, so there was a different standard there. That is just the way that it was. I was a child so.... [Lines 168–172]

R4, R6, and R7 all shared that they were in the majority at the school and that their White race had privilege for them with various benefits. Their families were in the middle class and did not depend on others to provide for them unlike their thoughts about African Americans. This thinking contributed to the White privilege that they were afforded because of their race.

Respondent 1 had a different perspective on things as a Caucasian female in this area during the time of integration. Her family was not from this area, but her ideas of race were developed from her parents just like the other three participants, but what she saw was not acceptable to her. R1 shared:

No. No, I do not remember ever feeling privileged. My parents would not have allowed that. [Lines 308–309]

R1 would spend time in Rose, but would spend parts of the year on the west coast where her mother's family lived. This would give her a different perspective from her White counterparts because she had the opportunity to see a variety of cultures in California. R1 went on to say:

I know that this is a cliché. I don't see race. I am not sitting here thinking about x number.... Like I said I feel privileged sometimes because it is forced on me. I can see the privilege, but I don't feel it inside. [Lines 358–361]

This idea of privilege being forced on her was due to the fact that she was growing up as a White student in the South. She recognized this fact, but inside of her, she did not see race, and it would not be until integration that she would have the opportunity to have African American friends. R1 shared:

Like I said, I lived close to the Black high school with their own swimming pool and I am a swimmer. Then we had our swimming pool and I can remember being driven because my mother was a Brownie leader and we did not have any African-American Brownies. When I was a girl scout and that would have been probably in the 10th grade, so I saw the privileged and it struck home that there are two separate pools. Other than that it would be in the 10th grade when I finally got to have some African American friends. [Lines 277–283]

Influences on Racial/Cultural Identity

From the nine interviews, common themes emerged on the development of racial identity among the participants for each race during integration. For the African Americans, it was seen that the family and church played an important role in their identity development. For the Caucasians, their identity development was implied from their family and benefiting from being in the majority in the school system, adding to the concept of White privilege. Respondent 2 shared:

Well, we were taught coming up why certain things was the way that it was. So I realized that some things are that way because of the results of slavery and discrimination so I knew why. They [family] taught us at an early age in life because they wanted us to protect ourselves and there were certain places where we were not supposed to go and certain things we were not supposed to do or say, so I understood that early in life that there was a line drawn between Blacks and Whites. [Lines 246–252]

This quote shows that the family was instrumental in teaching him about his identity and understanding that there were differences between the two races.

Respondent 3 reflected on his upbringing:

You don't assume that all White people are like this and that all Black people are like this either; there are individuals who are just crazy. There are people who you meet along the way that are just super, super people and so that is my whole concept. [Lines 418–421]

He went on to say:

You had the foundation to be a good person and be all that you can be and that is what carried me through college, man.... [Line 528–529]

These quotes showed his understanding of both races and the need not to stereotype either. He learned early on to recognize the good and let that carry you into the adulthood.

Respondent 5 shared:

Our parents would just talk to us all the time about this whole thing, about being twice as good and all that. That was kind of ingrained in us and I remember saying to my children even...and I was so determined that they were going [to] understand their heritage.

[Lines 454–456]

As an adult, R5 has taken the time to teach her own children about their heritage which is African American. The idea that they had to work twice as hard as their White counterparts was a part of the culture that was cultivated during this time because African Americans were not afforded the same opportunities as Whites.

Respondent 8 shared:

Um, I think being Black meant that first of all it is a race. You are a part of the Black race. If you were Black you had to really work extra hard to get to where you want and to accomplish what you really wanted. Whites were inferior to you. If you were Black you had to be ten times better than anybody else. It was not just being a little better, you just had to work extremely hard and go over and beyond to prove that you are either

smart or intelligent or capable of whatever it was that you were striving to do. Being Black meant that you are constantly trying to define that I am just as good as that White person over there. That is what being Black meant to me. [Lines 692–699]

R8 echoed what was said from others in that because she was Black, you had to work that much harder. The notion that because you were Black meant that you had to always define that you were just as good, if not better than Whites, was an important concept in her identity development.

Respondent 9 shared:

Church was the center of our life including social life like most Black communities.

[Lines 11–12]

Respondent 9 went to say:

It was a good thing that my mom had instilled a very positive attitude and self-esteem.

[Line 30]

R9 also said:

My mother knew what was out there and she did a good job of protecting her children from it [racism]. [Lines 416–417]

R9 ended with:

My mother made us proud to be Black. I have a reason and there is a reason for everything. God decided that R9 needed to be Black. I never wanted to be anything different. I didn't want to be White, I don't want to be Jewish, I didn't want to be nothing. I am who I am and I was proud of it. [Lines 435–439]

R9 showed that both the church and her family shaped her as an African American. Just like the others, she was proud of her race. She had a strong foundation from her mother and it was this foundation that helped her during this pivotal time in the city when integration took place.

For Whites, as stated before, they were the majority and were able to stay at their schools during integration. Their viewpoint of race was shaped by what was happening around them and the idea of White privilege in that their race had the power during the time.

Respondent 1 shared:

I know that this is a cliché. I don't see race. I am not sitting here thinking about x number.... Like I said I feel privileged sometimes because it is forced on me. I can see the privilege, but I don't feel it inside. [Lines 358–361]

The notion that privilege was forced on her emphasized that being White had an advantage during this time. R1 recognized that privilege existed, but for her personally, she did not feel it.

Respondent 4 said:

You know, I guess looking back at it, it was, you know, it was obvious, but again growing up in the scenario that I did, I probably had a much different mindset because my dad would open the cleaners at 6:00 in the morning and go home at 7:00 at night and if I wanted to go fishing or anything else he would send one of the guys [African American] who worked there. And it was just a natural thing. [Lines 103–106]

R4 recognized early on the differences between the two races, and because his dad owned a business, it would be the African American workers that would spend more time with him. R4 went on to say:

You know my recollection is that once the classes were integrated, I don't remember there being hardly any turmoil at the junior high. When I got to what then was the new

high school in the 9th grade, two of our class officers who were elected were African Americans. [Lines 81–84]

This quote summarizes the idea of White privilege in that R4 saw things in a positive light although each of those African American students were dealing with negative experiences from teachers and students at the school.

Respondent 6 remembered:

Well you know it had to help. I mean you know my dad owned a business that was a visible business in the community and he owned the Chevrolet dealership. Well your name is plastered on stuff as he is advertising; you know it is just that kind of thing.

[Lines 474–476]

R6 not only benefited from being in the majority, but also benefited from a prominent family name in the community. R6 went on to say:

Feeling like you do have a chance. You can be an accountant, you can do this or do that and they got to buy into it and if they are not getting the support at home which it sounds like the family make up is different for the Black folks and I fortunately early on I was married and had a child, divorced and I am married and have grown children and they are all grown now. But I guess maybe because I had such a strong family that I wanted to be damn sure that I will stay that way with my daughter and so my ex-wife and I maintained a very workable relationship for all of these years.... [Lines 613–619]

R6 shares his belief about the family structure of the African American family being different from his, although he had no real experiences being in the homes of African Americans. Again, this shows how being in the majority helped to shape his identity and thinking that his support at home was better than that of his African American counterparts.

Outcomes of Freedom of Choice

Bringing together two groups of students, African American and Caucasian, was not the easiest of tasks throughout the country and even locally. It would be just over ten years after the passage of Brown vs. Board of Education that the school system would have its first group of African American students to integrate in 1965. Over the next six years, the school system would have more and more students choose to integrate through the Freedom of Choice initiative, but it would never see an overwhelming number of students choose to leave the segregated schools they had come to know. During this time frame, both groups of participants shared positive and negative outcomes that they feel occurred as a result of integration of the school system. In 1971, the school system saw its first totally integrated class when Hafley High School was closed and all the students were required to attend Rose High School.

Positive Outcomes

The 1960s Civil Rights Movement had a great impact on the country as both African Americans and Caucasians were coming together on what seemed to be equal terms. This was true in the schools that were integrating through Freedom of Choice. Both the African American and Caucasian students' shared positive memories of what it meant to have two groups that had been separated by race now work together in the schools.

Quality of education. Respondent 1 always felt that she was a voice for the African Americans, even before integration took place. She shared her feelings on having African Americans attending the school:

It was fun to have other people. I didn't know and to get to know... Just some people who felt like I did. [Lines 154–155]

R1 went on to share that one of her best friends from high school would be one of the African American students that integrated through Freedom of Choice. She remembered her friend telling her why she wanted to come to the all-White high school.

She [my best friend that was African American] actually said that she was happy when they came to Rose High because she felt they would get a better education. [Lines 172–173]

The idea of getting a better education was echoed by other participants as well.

Respondent 2 shared:

By taking that one class during the summer and I did so well in that one class she felt that I would do better in the rest of them. That was her biggest concern. [Lines 90–92]

Respondent 8 discussed the opportunities she would have by attending the White high school.

So I can only tell you that my parents decided because they felt like we would have more opportunities and better opportunities if they said yes we want you to go and we want you to go ahead and get started. [Lines 150–152]

Respondent 5 talks about the impact of integrating the band and leaving a legacy of integration at the school. She stated:

I definitely was a part of integrating the band. I think that was one of the areas in the school system that probably is the least integrated. I don't know whether the school system felt like there they were a part of that. I am proud to have been a part of that process of helping my community to move in that direction. [Lines 752–755]

Athletics. Another positive impact that was made in the school system was in athletics. For many, this was the first time in their lives that they had an opportunity to play with someone

of a different race. In some instances, the African American athletes were the first to be accepted by the Caucasian students. Respondent 3 reflected on his experiences as an athlete:

In the 2 years that I was there you think that everything is the same. The instructors at Rose did not have no rule changes or anything of that nature but they did not make anything any easier. Once we started playing sports and stuff and the school started winning it was all good. We had a good basketball program now and we were winning and so it was all good. From that aspect some felt that things got a little better within the school itself for the students and referencing to the talent on the basketball court. So then you go to the classroom and you had more teachers trying to work with you and things of that nature and they spent a little more time talking to you also. [Lines 280–288]

R3 ended with a positive memory from a White classmate that he had an opportunity to do business with as an adult:

When that young man at the bank told me that we made his senior year that felt good to know that hey somebody enjoyed my talent as an athlete while I was there who was not Black. [Lines 454–457]

This could be an affirmation that although it was on the basketball court, he did make a contribution to the school and it was validated by one of his White classmates.

Respondent 6 remembers what was going on at the collegiate level in the state and references the need for integration in athletics. He recalled:

But again see even back then at Rose University I want to say coach [name deleted] at [university name deleted] might have been....when he got it handed to him playing [university name deleted] and they had some really good Black athletes, then I think he was the one that turned the light on in the athletic situation in this state of saying hey,

there are a lot of Black people here. These got to be good athletes; we need to have him on our team. Then he started recruiting and it is what it is. [Lines 419–423]

Respondent 7 discussed how the two groups came together on the football field. He shared:

The main thing that I remember of my senior year was the first day of football practice and here comes about 20 guys walking down to the practice facility at the high school and what will we do, who will we see, who is the coach? The head coach from Hafley was my running back coach in Rose High School. He was great and his name was Curtis [pseudonym] and he is still teaching basketball and has a basketball team and also took care of Driver's Ed and that has been 40 something years that I have been gone now, so I don't know how anybody can stay that long.... Laughing. [Lines 98–105]

This shows the commitment that the African American teacher had for both groups of students and a testament to his belief in the school system that he is still teaching today. Respondent 4 shared a similar feeling about athletics. He shared:

You know I would say again particularly interacting in academics was one thing, but back to athletics I think you know that direct one-on-one competition, you know be it track, football, baseball and many other sports. I think here before anybody ... before integration, it was obviously an entirely different culture and for the most part you have never played sports against Blacks or have Blacks on your team and I guess just the whole mind set of traveling with and dressing with them and it was unique and different to say the least. [Lines 201–206]

Having the opportunity to play together through sports did bring together two races that before did not see the commonalities that they shared.

New friendships. During integration, the opportunity to make new friends was an opportunity that both the African American and Caucasian students took advantage of in school.

Respondent 8 recalled:

What I do remember that stands out is that my 8th grade year a girl moved from Montgomery, a Caucasian girl who tried out for cheerleading as well and she was a Caucasian and she was not easily accepted by her peers that looked just like her. Because she was not from Rose she was still considered an outsider, so we were both outsiders based on their definition of an outsider. So that made the relationship that we had become stronger because she was trying to develop and get in sync with the group. And here we were, just African Americans just trying to get in sync. So we were all like the odd balls left out, but because of that we gravitated and had a really strong relationship where we would go to each other's house and spend the night and do all kinds of things outside of school and as everybody started seeing that bond it was like it was okay. So we both ended up being you know accepted. [Lines 254–264]

Respondent 7 shared how he developed a friendship with two of the African American students that were on the football team:

There has definitely been a change in my generation with the Blacks, you know as far as relationships and I feel that I have a relationship especially with those two guys. [Lines 183–185]

Negative Outcomes

Although the time of integration in the school system had its positive moments, the participants shared what they felt were perceived negative outcomes of integration for the community.

Rise of leveled classes. Respondent 1 recalls more leveling of classes that had not occurred before integration. R1 shared:

On the negative side and as a 10th grader I probably didn't really look for things, but looking back I think we had fewer levels of classes before integration and more leveling after integration. That is the biggest thing that I noticed. I don't know when that is going to stop. [Lines 238–241]

She shared that before integration, there were only two levels, but after integration, there was three with more African Americans being placed in the lowest level. Respondent 2 shared a similar experience:

I will say this, when I was at Hafley High School and as far back as I can remember we never had anything like special education. There were no special education kids. Every kid was in the classroom participated and we did not have any issues. Special education came about after integration in my opinion.

Respondent 9 shared that she felt as though the African American students were being tracked more into an industrial education instead of the more advanced courses. R9 said:

I think that they were tracking then, but they didn't know they were tracking. A lot of the Black kids I used to tell them, I told you not to take food service because I wasn't working in a kitchen. They had the food service, but I never did learn how to type, sew or cook. My mom taught me how to cook. So I wasn't in those classes. [Lines 59–63]

R9 went on to say how she took more writing classes and other classes that would help her in college because that is where she knew she would be after high school.

Bad experiences. Another negative aspect of integration were the number of fights between African Americans and Caucasians at the school and the negative experiences that were had by both groups of students. Respondent 1 shared:

I was never popular or with the in crowd. Those of us who made up this little faculty group [friends both Black and White] enjoyed our separate section of being looked at differently anyway. [Lines 401–403]

R1 shared that because of her befriending the African American students and standing up for them, she felt that she was never accepted by the White students. She went on to reflect about her teachers and the memories she had of school:

I did not have happy [memories about my time in Rose City Schools]. When people ask me in college to write about the teachers who had an influence on me I have no teachers from the Rose City Schools. I have no teachers who influenced me until I got to Rose University. [Lines 69–71]

Respondent 4 was another Caucasian student that befriended several of the African American students that first year of integration. He remembered:

Oh yeah I heard the term ‘Uncle Tom’ quite a bit and you know for some of those that I didn’t know that you know might make comments like ‘Why are you hanging around those, they really don’t care about us.’ But more often than not, those kids as a matter of fact, there is no reflection on me ... [Lines 172–174]

Respondent 2 shared about his experiences that first year of integration:

I remember that we used to go general assembly like in the auditorium and I can walk down the hall and it was like parting the red sea. I would be coming down the hall and all the other students would go on this side and then some of them on that side and I had

the whole middle of the hall to myself. I would go into the auditorium and nobody would sit on my row or no one sat near me. So it was like we are not going to say anything to you and we are not going to say anything ugly, but also we are not going to socialize with you so it was kind of like that. [Lines 118–125]

The lack of socialization from his White counterparts was a negative experience for him and did not show that the students were ready to become friends with an African American student.

That first year of integration also gave rise to fights among the two groups of students.

Respondent 3 recalled:

So during that first year there were fights, such crazy times. Matter of fact I never missed a day out of school until I went to Rose High School. I had perfect attendance every single year and I was proud of that. There was a major altercation and that caused us to be put out of school for like two days. I missed those two days, but both Blacks and Whites were also put out of school. That interrupted my perfect attendance for that year. [Lines 75–80]

Respondent 6 also recalled a fight that occurred at the school. He shared:

I remember a fight broke out in the hall, but you know the White guys who were involved and the Black guys who were involved in both cases they probably both were bigots. You know it was where these guys who were seniors and they were the tough, you know the guy has been there forever and being tough guys and all of that would say we are not taking any crap off anybody. These Black guys coming in they probably were kind of the same way. [Lines 158–163]

R6 recognized that both groups of students, Black and White, brought their own negative stereotypes into the school, but it showed how each group wanted to say they had the power in

the school. During the second year of integration through Freedom of Choice, there were more African American students attending the junior high school, and the fights continued.

Respondent 9 recalled:

In the 7th grade and 8th grade more Black kids came and that is where you started seeing more of the fights and don't ever let anybody fool you there were fights. There were incidents at Hendrick Avenue Junior High School. Kids were in fights and stuff. [Lines 40–42]

R9 also remembered being called names by the students in PE and it would be PE that some fights would take place. She shared:

Like I said, when they realized that we were not monkeys and I didn't have a tail and we had feelings. Some of us were nice people. Like I told you we had fights in PE and everything and mostly because you had some nutty Black kids too and now you know that. There were bullies and I could never stand it when they said, but you are different. I don't like people to say that I am different. It is not that I am different; I just cycle back and forth between the two worlds. When I am at home I am ... and then when I had to go to other places I was who I had to be, you know? [Lines 349–355]

Loss of parental support. Another negative aspect of integration was the loss of parental support in the schools. Several participants attributed this to the lack of support that the African American parents perceived they received from the schools. Respondent 5 shared:

I think parent involvement, which has always been a really important piece to me. I saw far more parent involvement at Hafley. We talked about our school now, how hard it is to get parents involved. To me parents have always been involved when the schools were

segregated. They had to be in terms of fund raising and whatever was going on. Back then it was a community effort. [Lines 370–374]

R5 went on to say:

I mean our parents were not as involved, because people did not feel comfortable, they didn't feel like they could be a part of [the White school]. [Lines 374–378]

Loss of traditions and culture. Lastly, the loss of traditions and culture of the African American community was seen as a negative outcome of integration. Many of the participants felt that this has had an impact on the African American community and schools today.

Respondent 5 reflected:

...and I don't know what it was like years ago, but I just have a feeling there was just more of a closeness in our community and I think integration had some place some part in that severance somehow. Because all of a sudden we started to feel like we needed to be more like this as opposed to retaining the good in us that we have. [Lines 566–569]

R5 continued with:

I have never attended a historically Black institution, but everybody that I talked to who has always talks about the closeness that they feel with the professors there. It is like it is a family and it is like your mother or father who is there with you pulling for you, supporting you, encouraging you and chastising you when needed. I would have liked to have experienced that. Knowing that somebody cared that much all the way through. I left Hafley and I didn't have that. I do know that I have even heard of that from some students who did go all the way through Hafley. They have a much closer relationship with their teachers than I had with my teachers at Rose High. I did not have that kind of feeling with anybody there. [Lines 806–814]

Respondent 8 had similar feelings on the bond she had with her teachers prior to integration. R8 shared:

It was not evident that my teachers cared about everybody in that classroom [at the White school]. African-American students like me that were in predominantly Black schools, they gave up a teacher that genuinely cared about them. I think that is where the motivation and the desire and the passion for learning has been lost with a lot of our African-Americans because it is not there. [Lines 892–896]

The idea of building relationships was something that seemed to be nurtured at the African American schools, but was not readily seen at the White institution. Respondent 4 saw this when he attended an event for the formerly segregated school. He stated:

At the 1960 reunion of Hafley High School, they put a marker over at the school that they had graduates and they had quite a turnout with graduates from all over the country still living and I guess seeing and went to their reunion at the Conference Center and they all stood up and spoke, but realizing that you know it was in my mind it was a much bigger change for them than it was for us, because they walked away from a school and traditions of what had been going on for however long before Tinnemeyer County Training School and Hafley and just all of a sudden its gone, their history and their plugged in to Rose High school and an all-White scenario and hearing them talk about you know their memories of Hafley and all of those things and then they did like a 10 year reunion spreading 5 years either way and they would have, they had the first class that went to Rose High School and then also the second class and now your just hearing the end of one era and the start of another, it was How would I have fit in at Hafley if I had been to Rose High School up until the 11th grade and then they told me that I was

going to graduate at Hafley? So that was probably much tougher on them than it was on anybody else. [Lines 342–356]

R4 summed up what many Whites probably could not fathom during this time and recognized the strong traditions that had been built prior to integration. It was during this time that he had an opportunity to reflect on his own experiences and how life would have been if things were turned the other way.

One aspect that was echoed from several participants was those traditions from the Black high school. It felt as though their entire school culture prior to integration was gone.

Respondent 3 shared:

Because we lost so much of our culture with integration because if you come over you are going to do it our way, but your way is gone. [Lines 167–171]

Respondent 9 felt that everything from Hafley was gone. She shared:

... we gave up everything. They did not embrace any of our culture and it is not just in Rose, it was everywhere else. They embraced our athletes as they always do. I cannot afford to be racist. I live in an UN family.... You see it.... So I have no choice when your niece is Black Korean and you have another niece whose mom comes from Wisconsin with no Black people in the town, you learn just to love everybody and I love them to death. I think now I focus more as a Christian and I don't see the political part of it, I just didn't see that. [Lines 659–665]

Respondent 7 shared his thoughts of what he recalled were major points of unrest with the students integrating the school. R7 said:

All that I recall is there was some Blacks that were upset about not having their own school and having their own traditions and having the things that they were accustomed to and I think [they] brought them up in the end. [Lines 261–264]

Integrating the schools proved to be decisive point among both communities, even more so in the African American community because they did not want to lose their traditions. They did want to assimilate to the traditions of the White school. This was never more evident in the fact that classmates would not attend their own class reunions or the fact that even after integration, some would still hold separate class reunions.

Respondent 6 recalled how one of his White classmates refused to attend any class reunions because of the fact the class had integrated. He recalled:

You know again, there are a lot of White guys that won't show up. We got one guy that was the vice president of the class and for the life of me he won't return anybody's call and he has been this way for years. He wants nothing to do with anybody in his class. But back along the way, he was one of the most popular guys who was well liked and good guy and genuine and I have known him since I was ... and he won't even take my call and sit there and say Eddie (pseudonym) what's the deal? I do not understand.
[Lines 275–281]

Even more alarming is the fact that one particular class holds two separate class reunions, even though all the students graduated from the same high school. Respondent 5 shared:

I distinctly remember that because my class was the first totally integrated classroom in 1971 and that was a tumultuous year too and I will tell you why. Because students coming from Hafley did not want to graduate from Rose High School and kind of prior to

that the school tried to some things to make the transition, when I say them I am talking about the administration to try to make the transition better. [Lines 262–266]

Respondent 3 made a connection to that same class when he shared:

The Blacks in her [R5] class refuse to have a class reunion with the Whites in her class because they felt like that they lost so much coming over the Rose High School.

Respondent 5 ended her conversation with:

I think we have to pass the story along and there are people living in this community right now who are part of that 1971 graduating class who are not proud enough of the fact that they were a part of that 1971 graduating class. [Lines 541–544]

This statement helps to show that although great strides were made in integrating the schools, there were still aspects that were lost between the two races. Respondent 7 shared:

I think both races lost some of their traditions and I think both races came together with the right attitude and I hope so. This community is thriving whereas cities like Montgomery and Birmingham have had their problems, so we have been able to pull it off pretty good. [Lines 278–281]

Summary

Following the Brown vs Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court in 1954, separate but equal was no longer the law of the land. Schools were faced with the task of ending their dual systems of educating White and Black students across the country. One such initiative to integrate the schools was Freedom of Choice that allowed students to choose which school they would like to attend. Across the country, it would overwhelmingly be the Black students that would take the opportunity to integrate the formerly all-White schools. It was during this

time that race was pivotal in shaping the development of our country and emphasis being placed on the rights of African Americans through the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The African American students had a strong sense of pride in being Black that had been developed early on which made their transition during integration just a bit easier.

Understanding their racial identity and how others perceived them gave them a sense of perseverance and a drive to want to succeed when obstacles were in their way. Through the interviews, the racial identity development of the Caucasian students seemed to be developed from family and implied White privilege in that they were the majority and benefited from that fact.

Over the course of six years during Freedom of Choice, both groups of students learned more about themselves and others to forge friendships with their classmates that are still evident today. Having an opportunity to learn from others who may seem to be different helped many to see that deep down they were more similar. Each participant left a legacy of hope and understanding that can be applied in today's world. Even with the negative feelings that were displayed by others, this was a very important time of growth and shared experiences among the races. It showed the impact that both students and teachers have on developing each of us as individuals.

The researcher sought to provide a recorded history of this experience from the perspectives of the students involved in integrating the school during Freedom of Choice. The research is meant to record a missing part of history that was not readily discussed in regard to racial identity. Having the voices of those that were a part of this history is important in understanding our successes and failures in schools. The next chapter seeks to address some of these questions and provide avenues for addressing them.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

The study sought to examine the experience of being involved in a Freedom of Choice initiative from the perspective of the students involved over a six year period. The study examined the factors that contributed to student participation in this initiative and determine what factors hindered and facilitated the process. A second focus was to determine the relationship between both African American and Caucasian perceptions and role of racial and cultural identity in their involvement in the Freedom of Choice initiative.

An historical case study approach was utilized for this research. Evidence was collected from a variety of sources including semi-structured interviews with nine participants, review of primary source documents, and a review of related literature.

Themes emerged from the data collection process and those themes were used to develop the analysis and discovery categories in Chapter IV of this study. In this chapter, the researcher summarizes the major findings, presents implications for practice, discusses the findings related to the conceptual framework, and proposes recommendations for further research.

Overview of the Freedom of Choice Initiative and Findings

Freedom of Choice was an initiative used by many school systems across the country to allows students choice in the school they wanted to attend. They could stay at the school where they had been assigned based on race or they could chose to attend the other school in the district. In this initiative, it would be the African American students that would chose to attend

the all-White schools in the district as very few, if any, Whites chose to attend the all-Black schools.

This school system chose a systematic approach to integration through Freedom of Choice by starting with students in grades 1, 7, 11, and 12 the opportunity to select the school they would like to attend. That first year, only five African American students chose to transfer from their assigned school with no White students making that choice. For the next two years, the number of African Americans choosing to transfer would increase, but not in numbers that caused a major change in either school. This lack of movement caused the system to develop a desegregation plan to be submitted to the Courts that would have full desegregation for the 1970–1971 school year, ultimately closing the Black high school until it reopened as a middle school for the district.

Question 1: What perceived factors facilitated the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?

The strongest support for the African American students' participation in this program came from the family and community. It was evident that this support made students have a strong identity in who they were as individuals. Their pride in whom they were and what they were doing helped gave them the strength to overcome the barriers in their way. A sense of pride and perseverance were themes that resonated from their stories as they recounted their days in school during Freedom of Choice. They understood that not everyone wanted them at the school, but it was their right to be there and they would take that opportunity to be a part of the school.

It should also be noted that the church was a strong foundation for the African American students as this was a center of the African American family. Having Freedom of Choice

coincide with the events of the Civil Rights Movement was monumental in bringing together some members of the African American community. Whang and Nash (2005) stated,

Compassionate acts reflect caring about others so deeply that we take responsibility for, and do everything in our power to ease suffering. It is not a feeling of pity, superiority or judgment. It is a feeling of togetherness and kinship with all life. (p. 86)

The church community and the people within it recognized the inequities that existed between the two schools, and wanted their children to have access to the same materials and opportunities. Schools increasingly are being asked to serve diverse student populations and give special attention to improving the academic and social outcomes of racial-ethnic minority and low-income students (Desimone, 1999). In today's schools, the inequities that have been identified have centered on closing the achievement gap between the majority and minority populations along with the increased number of African American students being overly suspended out of school. As schools try to address both of these problems, they continue to rely on help from the parents to move students in a positive manner.

Parental school involvement is largely defined as consisting of the following activities: volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, and attending school events, meetings of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and parent-teacher conferences (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Unfortunately, many schools are finding that the family support is not evident, or if it is evident, not seen in a consistent manner. This has been seen through decreased attendance at parent-teacher conferences and/or meetings that the schools have requested. Hill and Taylor (2014) stated that impoverished families are less likely to be involved in schooling than wealthier families, and schools in impoverished communities are less likely to promote parental school involvement than schools in wealthier

communities. With this being said, it is important that school systems continue to find ways to connect with the parents and the community so that a support system can be established to meet the needs of students.

Another factor that facilitated the integration of the schools under Freedom of Choice was having compassionate teachers. It would be these compassionate teachers who greeted students each and every day, and it would be these faces that would give them reassurance that they were in the right place. These same teachers would recognize and celebrate all students for their efforts and not for the color of their skin.

This finding has implications for schools of today. The increased diversity in our schools and the focus on assuring that all children succeed makes it imperative that teachers recognize the fact that although students may come in with different backgrounds, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that they are providing them with the best education possible. It was also evidenced that the teachers provide encouragement and push students to achieve, even when students may not feel that they are capable. Teachers often recognize the potential in a student when others may dismiss them, and it is this quality that makes a great teacher. Whang and Nash (2005) found that "the importance of nurturing compassion is apparent if one understands compassion to be the meeting of the dispossessed in all of one's reality, and committing to work to change the structures which impose suffering, dependency and situations of marginalization" (p. 84). These caring teachers showed that compassion and it made a difference for students.

Finally, having proactive students that recognized that inequities existed between the races, but were not going to follow the status quo helped to impact the relationships forged by students. These students embraced their new classmates and made them feel a part of the school community when others were not so accepting. Having these students around, no matter how

few, proved to make a path for positive relationships and friendships. It did not matter the race of the person, but that they were a fellow classmate and deserved the same opportunities as they had in previous years. School systems must continue to foster this mutual understanding among students of different races and backgrounds through professional development for teachers so that they understand the diversity of their community and student population. This then must be transferred to the students so that they are empowered with the knowledge of mutual respect for diversity among their classmates. It is the teachers' and school's responsibility to encourage the development of this sense of community by designing communal activities to which all contribute. Being a member of a community includes feeling part of a group. Based on the work of John Dewey, teachers and students share membership in this community, and it is through collaboration that learning occurs (Osterman, 2000). In the school, that community consists primarily of students and teachers. In our elementary schools, the teacher may spend more time with the students than they may spend with their parents and/or families, so the students are constantly learning from the teacher, both formally and informally. The teacher is essential in creating this community that embraces all students. It has been said by various people that students do not care how much you know, only that you care about them. This is so true in developing relationships with students and creating a classroom environment for learning to occur. It is also important to realize that in today's schools this diversity is going beyond race, but now includes gender identity, cultural identity, and non-traditional family structures. Whang and Nash (2005) stated,

Compassionate acts reflect caring about others so deeply that we take responsibility for, and do everything in our power to ease suffering. It is not a feeling of pity, superiority or judgment. It is a feeling of togetherness and kinship with all life. (p. 86)

It would be the community, compassionate teachers, and proactive students all working together to take responsibility to ensure that integration would take place and that more African American students would continue to leave their segregated school and attend an integrated school setting.

Question 2: What perceived factors hindered the implementation of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?

From the findings, the major factors that hindered students from participating in the Freedom of Choice centered on racism from students and teachers within the schools. Kendall (2013) defined racism as “any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of his or their color” (p. 21). This was seen at the school level and was representative of what was going on throughout the country. The African American students were subjected to racism from Caucasian students and the Caucasian teachers at the high school. The negative experiences experienced by the five African American students interviewed for the study were indicative of the experiences of other African Americans around the country. Such experiences included images of the nine African American students that were trying to integrate Little Rock Central High School where there were crowds of community members yelling racial slurs and posting signs against the African American students that were simply wanting the same opportunities that had been afforded to the Caucasian students. There were also images from the Civil Rights movement that were being shown on the news reports, in local newspapers, and national newspapers. These sometimes violent images would be what many students would see, and would cause many not to want to participate in integrating the schools.

The notion that one is being treated negatively just because of the color of their skin is what the African American students had to endure during this time of integration. Given the opportunity to stay at a segregated school would prevent this from happening, and therefore,

would help to explain why more African Americans did not want to integrate the schools. The culture of the South had been developed around the ideas of Jim Crow, and it would be these segregated rules that were so embedded in so many Caucasians that they would still hold onto wanting separate facilities for African Americans and Caucasians. It would be this continued culture that would prevent many across the South from wanting to integrate the schools.

Walking into classrooms where you were not wanted by both the students and the teachers would contribute to why so few African Americans would want to participate in the Freedom of Choice initiative. From the evidence, the African American students each described incidents with White teachers and White students in which they were treated unfairly simply because of the color of their skin. In one incident, even a White student recognized the prejudices that a teacher had against the African American students. It would be these type of occurrences that would give others concern and not want to be a part of the integration efforts.

Another factor that was discovered from the evidence was the fact that African Americans did not want to lose their culture and identity from their Black high school experiences to become a part of the White high school. Many noted that as the African Americans transferred to the White school, none of their traditions were integrated into the schools. Although they themselves were integrating as students, none of the culture from the Black schools was brought over to the White schools. The same traditions and norms that were in place prior to integration would remain in place for years to come. African American students and parents did not want to lose their identity and sense of culture by having to assimilate to the culture and norms of the White school. African American students did not feel like they were a part of the White school in the beginning, and most found it hard to find their place in the integrated school. The numbers were not on the side of the African Americans because there

were so few of them, so at any time there was a popularity vote, it would be impossible for an African American to win.

Schools are a place for students to grow and develop into the leaders of tomorrow, and unfortunately, during the time of integration, not all educators wanted to work with all students. Although the school system leaders wanted to have integration to take place, it would be the racist acts and the loss of the African American culture that would hinder the number of African Americans to want to leave their home to move to integrate the White schools.

Question 3: What were the perceived positive and negative outcomes of the *Freedom of Choice* initiative?

It would be just over ten years after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision that the school system began to integrate utilizing Freedom of Choice. Over the next six years, African Americans chose to integrate the school system, and the schools had both positive and negative outcomes as a result. Positive outcomes from the students perspectives centered around the quality of education that was received from the all-White high school, improved athletic programs, and the new friendships that were formed as a result of the two races coming together. Negative outcomes included the rise of leveled classes, increased fights between the two races, use of racial slurs, a loss of parental support, and a loss of traditions and cultures from the African American schools.

The school system had developed a reputation among the county as having a strong academic background within the schools, and this was evident in the perception that the African Americans had about the White schools. Many within the community felt that since the White schools had more access to resources, then they were able to provide more academic opportunities for students. Having these opportunities would better prepare students for a post-

secondary education. With integration occurring at the collegiate level as well, many African Americans were looking to attend integrated institutions and participating in an integrated school could be beneficial.

The athletic arena was a place that truly brought together the two races in the schools. For the first time, African Americans and Caucasians were playing on teams together and breaking the negative stereotypes that had been developed. It seemed that athletics was a safe zone for African Americans to become easily accepted by the White, and in many cases, it would be the athletes that were more receptive to integrating so that they could become more competitive since they would be playing against larger schools.

Building friendships among the races was one positive outcome that all students benefited from because it truly brought together the two races. Although there were so many negative events occurring across the state and the country, the African American students and Caucasian students put aside their differences and recognized that they were not as different as they thought. Although they were different in the color of their skin, they were not different as students in the school.

While there were positive outcomes occurring in the school system as a result of integration, there were some perceived negative outcomes that were developed from the evidence. The increased rise in leveled classes in which African Americans were placed in the lower levels was noted by many of the participants. Some would say that it was because the students were not prepared at the segregated Black schools, and that because of the inadequate supplies, led to this inequity in education. Others would say that it was the racist views that some teachers had that automatically categorized African Americans as not being prepared and the need for them to go into the lowest level.

Adding to this were the rise of fights between the two groups and the use of racial slurs by the Caucasian students. Because there was little preparation that occurred between the two groups, this showed their preconceived ideas about each other which led to misunderstandings and contributed to this negative outcome. Many African Americans noted the decreased involvement of parents in the school as a result of integration. Those African Americans that integrated had great support from their parents in the school, but as integration continued, they noticed that not all African American parents were as involved in the schools.

Lastly, the loss of traditions and culture from the African American schools were noted the most among the participants. As the schools integrated, there was nothing brought from the African American schools into the integrated schools other than the students. The African Americans fondly remembered May Day and school day activities that were held during the school day that were no longer a part of the school once integration took place. Because of this loss, one class of African American students still holds a separate class reunion from their White counterparts at their former high school. They did not feel they were a part of the school because their forced integration after the Freedom of Choice initiative had not produced a larger number of students to attend the White high school. Also, many felt that the teachers at the White school were not as compassionate as those at the Black schools. This caused some of the African American students to be disconnected with the school, and led to the perception that the teachers at the White school were more interested in presenting the content instead of incorporating a level of relationship building in the classroom.

Question 4: What was the role and perception of racial identity in the participants during the Freedom of Choice initiative?

The evidence revealed that for both African American and Caucasian students, their racial identity had been developed primarily from their family, specifically their parents. It would be their parents that modeled behaviors that the students would embody, and in turn, internalize as they became adults. The African American students had a strong foundation in their identity and used this to help them persevere as they had to overcome many obstacles as they integrated the schools. They recognized their skin color classified them as Black, and they were proud to be African American, but it would not be the only thing that should categorize their self-worth or contribution to the school. Even within the African American community, those that chose not to integrate under Freedom of Choice provided negative comments to the African American participants. They were seen as wanting to be White, but that was not the case; they simply wanted the same opportunities as their White counterparts.

One idea that was developed among the Caucasian participants was benefiting from White privilege. Kendall (2013) stated that “White privilege is an institutional set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who hold the power positions in our institutions” (p. 62). In the schools, Whites were the ones making all of the decisions at the local, state, and national levels, and it would be the Whites that would benefit from these decisions. White racial identity had outside influences that largely mirrored the context in the rest of the United States. Many saw themselves as different from the African Americans, and in some cases, saw African Americans as more of a working class group of individuals. One participant even saw Blacks as being beneath Whites, which was the standard thought by many Whites across the South.

Discussion and Reflection on the Findings and Conceptual Framework

The findings of this study as related to racial identity led the researcher to engage in an analysis to determine if the original conceptual framework of this study aligned with the findings or if the framework should be altered. The original framework describe how racial identity is formed based upon the literature. The researcher wanted to determine how this framework related to the issue of racial identity for both African Americans and Whites as they engaged in the Freedom of Choice initiative. The original framework described how individuals attach race in defining themselves along with perceptions of what it means to be Black, and as race becomes more salient, it allows individuals to address problems of racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and systematic racial oppression. As previously noted, the conceptual framework included four primary ideas on racial identity development.

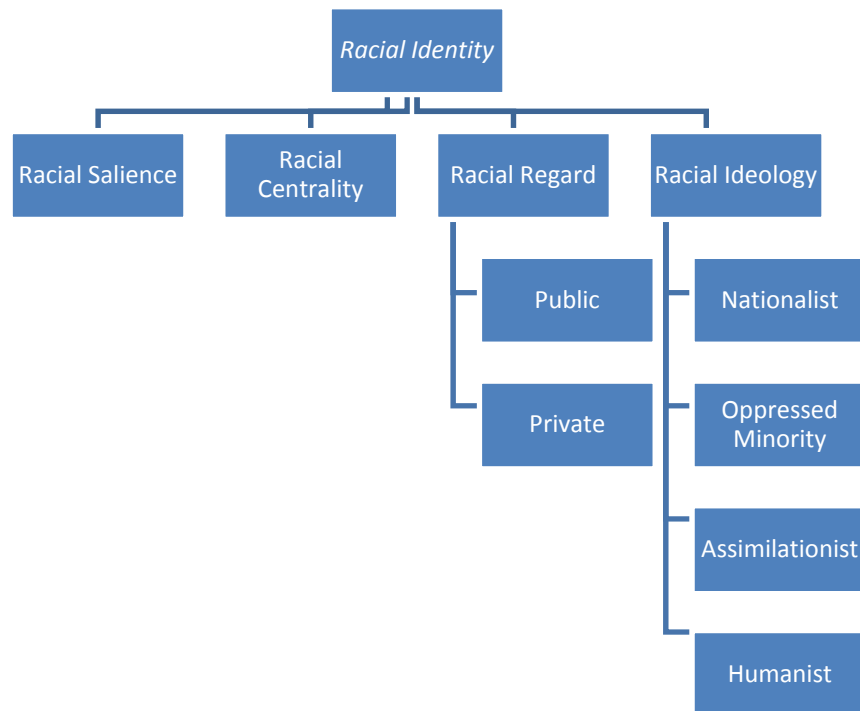


Figure 1. Original Conceptual Framework.

To include both races and show how outside forces impact racial identity, a more accurate representation of the conceptual framework may be represented by Figure 2, created by the researcher. Figure 2 is used to visually represent the key components and outside influences on racial identity development for both African Americans and Caucasians who participated in the Freedom of Choice initiative. It also includes the elements that facilitated and hindered the Freedom of Choice initiative and how they may have interacted with issues of racial identity and with the Freedom of Choice effort, understanding that both national and state influences were present around these efforts. The framework presented seeks to capture the essence of the findings of this study.

For the African American community, identity was shaped through the church, the family, the community, individual pride in the race, and individual perceptions. These five factors influenced what each of the participants demonstrated through their lived experiences during this time. Their interaction within their community helped to build a strong foundation that they in turn, brought to the school to help shape the future of the school system through their experiences during integration. For the Caucasian community, the data revealed that their identity was shaped by their interactions with their family, the community, their individual perceptions, and the concept of White privilege. Just like the African American participants, their family was the major influence on their lives, and because of the values and mores of the time, they benefited from being in the majority that had the power in the country. It was nothing that the participants did themselves, it was that they were White and being White had its privileges. It would also be the idea of White privilege that formed many of their opinions on the Black race.

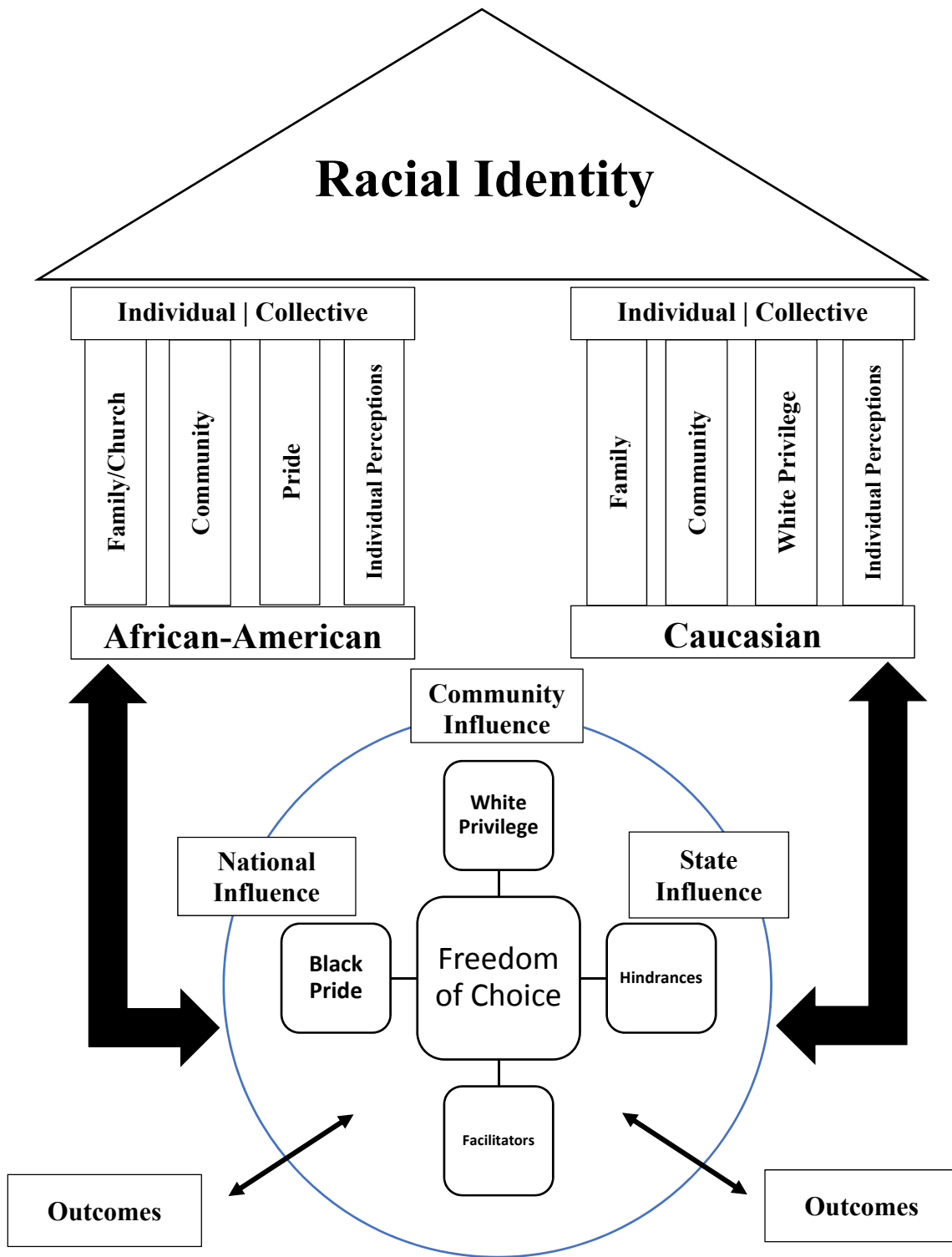


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the *Freedom of Choice* Initiative

As both races developed their racial identity, they had an opportunity to come together through the Freedom of Choice initiative during integration. There were both facilitators and hindrances that affected the implementation of Freedom of Choice as a means of desegregating the schools. The facilitators to Freedom of Choice were the support from the family and the church; this was very evident in the responses of the African American participants. Because they were the ones that were not afforded an opportunity to attend the all-White schools, the African American family and church were instrumental in getting families involved with the integration efforts. The African American respondents shared that it was their family, specifically their parents that made the decision for them to integrate, because it was the right thing to do. The African American community wanted the same opportunities for their children as the Whites had been afforded. Another facilitating factor was having compassionate teachers and proactive students that embraced the idea of integration and the need to have both races working together. These teachers and students opened the doors for African Americans to feel comfortable and safe at the school, and ultimately encouraged them to get involved to become the future leaders in an integrated school.

The negative factors did cause some African American students to not want to integrate through Freedom of Choice, and these included racist teachers and students and a fear of losing their culture through integration. No one wants to walk into a room and not feel welcomed, but there were those individuals in the schools that made their opinions known about the opposite race. Having these negative experiences seen on television, and then to be confronted with them in the school caused many African Americans to not want to integrate. The same is to be said of Whites that feared that being in class with an African American was detrimental to their education; this was why many Whites left the public school system for the private school sector.

Another hindrance that was expressed by the African American participants, and even acknowledged by some of the Caucasian participants, was this idea of losing their culture. The African Americans were not giving up their Black identity, but they did feel as though they were giving up the things that helped to shape who they were in the all-Black schools. When the African American students left their neighborhood school to integrate, the school system did not allow them to bring any of their traditions or ways of doing things into the White school. They simply had to pick up the norms of the White school.

Another loss occurred among the African American participants were feelings of being rejected by other African American students who chose not to integrate the school system during Freedom of Choice. Several of the participants discussed the disappointment they had from their African American peers who no longer wanted to be around them or who chastised them for wanting to integrate the schools. In many instances, they were made to feel as though they had turned their back on their African American community when in fact, they were still living in the same areas they had always lived, but just changed schools. Osterman (2000) stated that “being accepted, included, or welcomed leads to positive emotions, such as happiness, elation, contentment, and calm, while being rejected, excluded, or ignored often leads to intense negative feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy, and loneliness” (p. 327). For the African American students that chose to integrate, they were already seen as outsiders and not accepted by the Whites in the school, but now they are dealing with rejection from those students that they felt were just like them, members of their own community. All of these emotions and experiences, when shared with others, would cause other African American students to not want to leave the comforts of their racially segregated schools. Many students had access to televisions and could see the negative events that were occurring across the country with

integration efforts and the Civil Rights movement, so they were less likely to participate in the Freedom of Choice initiative.

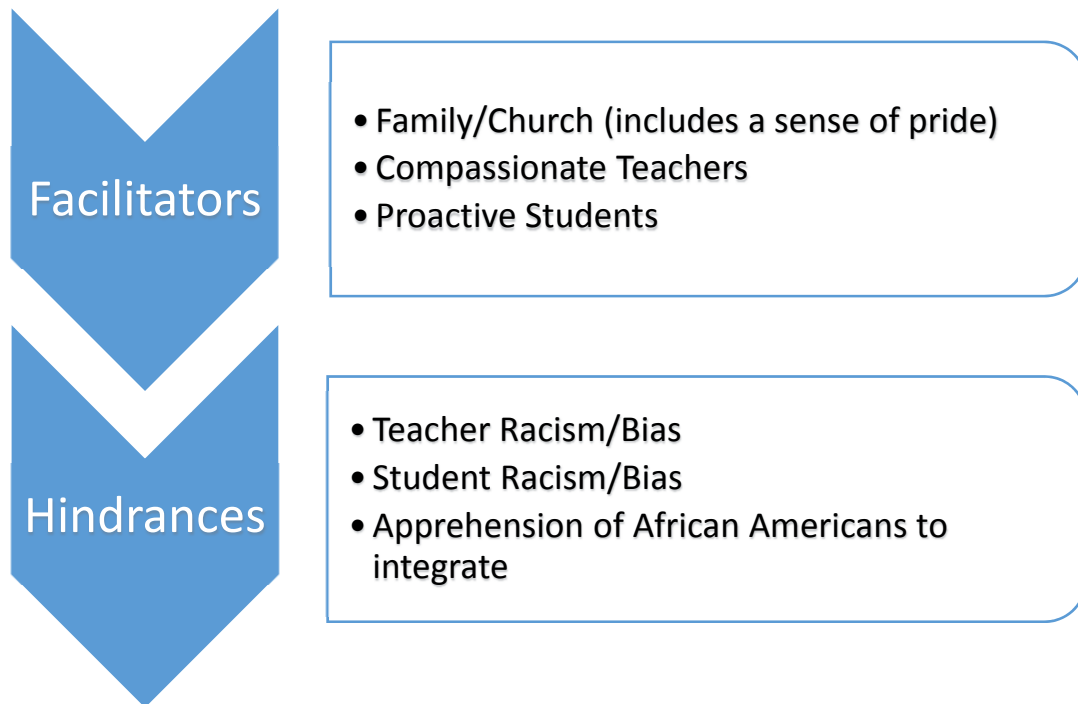


Figure 3. Factors influencing the Freedom of Choice Initiative

Figure 4 represents the positive and negative outcomes as perceived by the participants as a result of their participation in the *Freedom of Choice* initiative.

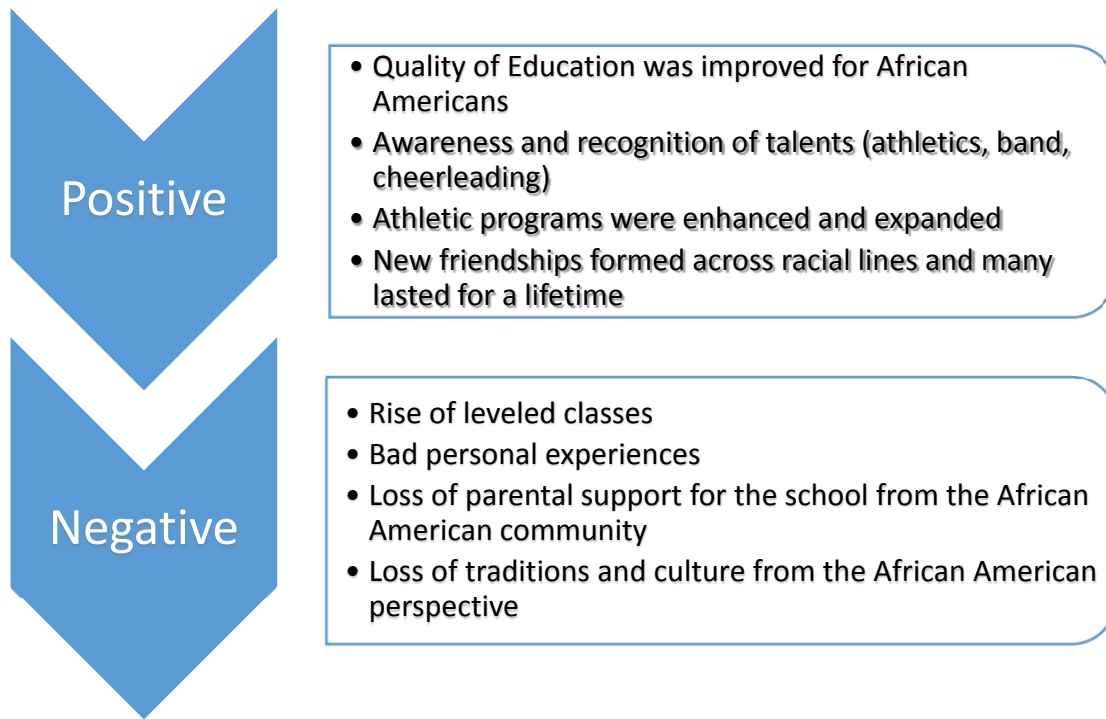


Figure 4. Outcomes of the Freedom of Choice Initiative

Implications for Action

This section addresses the issue of how this research on the implementation of a Freedom of Choice Initiative and the idea of racial identity development can further the understanding of a community's effort to integrate public schools in this community. The stories told by the research participants share a unique perspective that adds to the understanding of implementing an integration plan and the idea of how racial identity was perceived during this tumultuous time. The findings reveal the impact that schools and community have in facilitating identity development in students and the importance school leaders have on implementing initiatives. Nonetheless, only a limited generalization and interpretation can be gleaned from the small sample size of nine participants.

Findings from this study should be shared with teachers, administrators, and district leaders. One important implication for action is to apply what was learned about factors that hindered the integration efforts during Freedom of Choice and share those stories to ensure that the same mistakes are not being made in creating an integrated culture at our schools.

One of the major hindrances that occurred during integration were the racist attitudes that were present by both teachers and students. It is important that schools continue to deal with the idea of racism and teach students about it so that they are not participating in acts that are harmful to other students. Teachers and school officials must share these stories of integration, both the positive and negative, so that students recognize the importance of how these events changed schools for the better, and ultimately students are not creating an atmosphere that fosters racism. Additional professional development must be provided to teachers to ensure they are creating classroom atmospheres that are embracing diversity and are engaging in conversations about racism in the United States. This will also help calm any feelings of fear that students may have when attending the school, especially in areas where they may be the minority.

Lack of teacher support was another hindrance that was discussed during Freedom of Choice. It was hard to imagine that a teacher would chose not to provide support for a student simply because of their race. In many classrooms, teachers are spending more time with a student than that student spends with their own family; and therefore, it is important that teachers are providing support for students. Teachers are nurtures and have the innate ability to move students academically, and it is important that they are providing this for all their students.

A second implication for action is to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators for the purpose of deepening the understanding of racial identity in schools but also a focus on currently trending demographics, such as the

increased presence of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students in the schools. It is important that teachers and administrators understand the critical role they play in nurturing students and protecting them from negative experiences inside the classroom. Just as many of the African American participants retold stories of how their teachers found ways to include them into the day-to-day activities of the school like band and athletics, these teachers forged friendships that allowed the students to prosper in spite of the negativity they may have received from others. These compassionate teachers did not follow behind the status quo of the other teachers; they understood their role as teachers was to educate all children, regardless of race.

Teachers must also be aware of their own bias to ensure that it is not brought into the classroom, and to help students celebrate the differences that they have with their classmates. This lends itself to another implication to help teachers understand and become aware of privilege in the classroom, from the viewpoint of the teacher and the student. Today's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, and students are bringing a variety of experiences in the classroom that have not always been present in years before. The demographics of our communities are changing due to job opportunities or the lack thereof that have caused parents to move to new areas, and in some cases new countries. Because of this, we have a diverse social environment that students must have pride in, and that will include their school community.

A third implication is for schools to recognize that the family structure has changed for so many students in schools today and that more must be done to engage family members into the school community. The family structure has changed in the United States in that many students are being raised by their grandparents or living with other family members other than their parents. No longer can it be assumed that all students will walk into the doors of the school having two parents at home, and that their parents are providing all the necessary support that the

students need. Because of this, it is important that school leaders find a variety of ways to communicate and engage family members throughout the school year. Several of the participants mentioned that they felt that parental involvement from the African American community has declined since integration. With that being said, school leaders must be creative in how they are reaching out to parents. It may be helpful to having meetings outside of the school in areas that the parents may feel more comfortable attending or easier to get to because of transportation issues. This could include having meetings at recreation departments, apartment complexes, etc., so that the community sees that effort that the schools are making to provide two way communication.

A final implication for action is to develop and share the pride that ethnic groups have in their community and the role that it plays in developing students' attitudes and beliefs. Schools are a showcase for diversity, and each culture brings to the table its own unique set of strengths and weaknesses within the community. Creating mentoring programs that help students gain pride in themselves and their heritage is one way that schools can promote cultural awareness. This not only gives students another adult that becomes an advocate for them, but it also engages the community stakeholders back into the school community. By having this partnership, schools and communities are ensuring that the stories of the past are not forgotten and that history is not repeating itself.

Considerations for Future Research

From the findings and analysis of this research, a number of potential research opportunities exist. As the specific stories of the Freedom of Choice initiative were collected from the participants in one southeastern town, the implications from this research and the continuation of the study seemed to broaden. Several topics emerged as areas for consideration.

One area was the impact that outside factors have on shaping a person's racial identity and its impact on long-term racial identity. It was determined from the research that the family and community have an impact on racial identity development, but as students are introduced to their school community as early as age 4 for Pre-K, understanding the impact the school community has on racial identity development could be explored. One recommendation for future research would be to study other school systems that participated in a Freedom of Choice initiative to gain an understanding of their implementation and impact on racial identity. To expand on racial identity, it may also be considered to study how racial identity was impacted from a segregated school's perspective that resisted integration efforts for both African Americans and Caucasians.

A second area of consideration would be the relevance of professional development and team building activities for stakeholders as it relates to understanding the diverse cultures and backgrounds that students bring to the school community. The evidence revealed that there was little or no professional development for teachers related to cultural diversity or race relations with regard to the participants of this study. It is recommended that further research be completed on the benefits of staff training and professional development as it relates to student identity development.

A third area identified as a future research consideration is the process of building stronger connections with the school system and all areas of the community. Respondents indicated that the school system did not go out into the community to build full support for the integration efforts and did not put into place best practices to sustain parental involvement at the schools once integration took place. This is an area that many schools continue to struggle with as they see a decrease in parental involvement as students reach the high school. It is

recommended that future research examine the roles all stakeholders play in the success of the school system. Included in the recommendation is to also examine effective structures in place that include all facets of the community in building strong connections to the school.

A fourth area of consideration would be to explore the ideas of race, specifically focusing on when is race considered negative and when is it considered positive to be of a certain race. Based on the research, it has been noted that race itself is a social construct, so why is it still a major part of how students are categorized in schools. This would also lend itself to discuss racism and the context of the developing racial identity.

A fifth recommendation for further research would be to study the impact that desegregation efforts have had on society, including both public and private schools. As the sixtieth anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education has passed, has our educational system fulfilled the letter of the law by ending separate but equal schools? It is recommended to analyze schools today and determine the impact integration has had on the schools with regard to race relations and the traditions of the school. A comparison of student populations related to racial identity development and traditions of the schools before and after integration, and social interactions, along with comparison to schools that are predominantly one-race is recommended.

This study also provided the researcher with an opportunity to explore the implementation of a Freedom of Choice initiative in one school system in the Southeast and to examine the relationship of racial identity development in students of different races during this time frame to gain insight on their experiences of integration. While the data were found to add to the knowledge of information available on Freedom of Choice and provided awareness on implementation of desegregation efforts for one school system in the Southeast, further research is recommended. The researcher provides the following recommendations for future research:

1. Replicate this study in another school system that implemented a Freedom of Choice plan for integration. Evaluation of the implementation of Freedom of Choice in another school system could provide additional data on perceptions and concerns from other students as well as identify additional factors facilitating and/or hindering the implementation process of Freedom of Choice.
2. Replicate this study using the same methodology but include participants that chose not to integrate during Freedom of Choice. This replication would allow for comparison of outcomes.
3. Replicate this study using the same methodology but include participants that chose to participate in Freedom of Choice, but did not graduate from high school. Analysis of these results could provide additional data on perceptions and concerns as well as identifying factors that hindered them from graduating.
4. Continue the work of this study to focus on how as adults, their participation impacted them as adults, attitudes toward other races and to themselves.

Closing Statement

This study has identified the overall outcomes, both facilitating and hindering, and the impact on and relationship of racial identity development during the integration of a school system utilizing Freedom of Choice in an Alabama community. The voices from the nine participants give just a glimpse of the untold stories many other students have during this important time in the history of education in Alabama and the United States. It is the hope of the researcher that their voices represent the countless others that were not given an opportunity to share their experiences as our country moved toward racial equality. This study only touches the surface of what was occurring throughout the South, but the intention is that the lived

experiences of these nine participants will open the door for more dialogue among the races and capture their lived experiences as a result of this endeavor. So much has changed in our country, but with change, it is also said that some things remain the same. It is important that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. Our schools are instrumental in producing the next generation of leaders, and it is important that these future leaders understand the history from which they come. The stories from this integration effort of these nine participants showed pride, perseverance, and a determination to succeed in spite of the obstacles that may have been before them.

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Appendix 1

Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
FINAL REPORT
FULL BOARD OR EXPEDITED**

For Information or help completing this form, contact: **THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE (ORC)**, 115 Ramsay Hall
Phone: 334-844-5966 e-mail: IRBAdmin@auburn.edu Web Address: <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs>

Revised 2/1/2014 Submit completed form to IRBsubmit@auburn.edu or 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University 36849.

Form must be populated using Adobe Acrobat / Pro 9 or greater standalone program (do not fill out in browser). Hand written forms will not be accepted.

1. Protocol Number: 12-133 EP 1204 2. Actual Study Dates: From: 04/25/12 To: 04/12/15

3. Project Title: Cultural Transitions During Integration in the South: A Time of Growth and Shared Experiences
Among the Races

4. Jason C. Bryant	Student	EFLT	334-703-0339	jcb0023@auburn.edu
Principal Investigator	Title	Department	Phone	AU e-mail (primary)

5. <u>Jason Bryant</u>	701 East Towne Lake Circle, Opelika, AL 36804	jrbryant1@mindspring.com
PI Signature	Mailing Address	Alternate e-mail

Dr. Frances Kochan	<u>Frances Kochan</u>	EFLT	334-332-8618	kochafr@auburn.edu
Faculty Advisor	FA Signature	Department	Phone	AU e-mail

Name of Current Dept. Head: Ms. Sheri Downer

6. Current External Funding Agency (if any): _____

7. Other Universities or IRB approvals associated with this project:

8. If this study been published and/or presented, please list where.
N/A

9. How did your results meet your study goals? Briefly summarize your findings.

After completing and analyzing the eight interviews, a new conceptual framework was developed to show the impact that the family/church and the concept of white privilege had on a variety of the participants during the integration of schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was important in the development of them as a student and even later as an adult. Their experiences showed their growth and the growth of the community during a difficult time in the South as schools were integrating through Freedom of Choice.

10. Briefly describe how you conducted your study (recruitment, consenting, data collection, etc.)

A list of key informants was developed and potential participants contacted for a possible interview. Once the interview was confirmed, participants completed the informed consent after they were given a brief overview of the study. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis and member checking. After all interviews collected, themes were developed and key quotes were used to develop a new conceptual framework to describe the development of racial/cultural identity during this specific time frame.

FOR ORC OFFICE USE ONLY			
DATE RECEIVED IN ORC:	_____	by _____	COMMENTS: _____
DATE OF REVIEW:	_____	by _____	_____
DATE OF CLOSURE	_____	by _____	_____

11. If the study used existing data, approximately how many files or records were accessed? N/A
 (If you used existing data, go to Question #15. Otherwise, the remaining questions do not apply.)
12. How many human subjects participated in the study? 9
13. How many participants withdrew from the study? 0
 If participants WITHDREW from the study, please explain.
14. Were there any unanticipated difficulties or adverse effects to the participants? NO YES
 If YES, please describe.
-
15. Were there any unanticipated benefits to participants or others resulting from this study? NO YES
 If YES, please describe.
16. Were identifiable data collected? NO YES (If no, go to Question #17)
 a. If YES, has it been destroyed? NO YES (If yes, go to Question #17)
 b. If NO (data exists), has the data been de-identified? NO YES (If yes, go to Question #17)
 (Identifiable data includes names, code lists, videotapes, personally identifying information..., but does not include signed consents.)
 c. If identifiable data is retained, please provide explanation (e.g. permission received to retain photographs for publication).
 • If participants' and IRB's permission was given to retain identifiable data indefinitely, a final report can be used to close your file.
 • If you retain identifiable data that will be destroyed later, a "Request for Renewal" must be submitted for this project before the expiration date. Unidentifiable data (e.g., data rendered anonymous by the destruction of written or electronic code lists) may be retained indefinitely by the investigator.
17. a. If signed Consent Forms were required, where will they be maintained until destruction?
 (Consent forms signed by participants/parents/others providing permission or consent for participation must be kept securely on campus for 3 years after projects ends.)
 Forms will be kept with Dr. Frances Kochan, Faculty Advisor.
 b. By what date and by what method will signed Consent forms be destroyed?
 Forms will be destroyed by April 24, 2018
18. Attach a copy of all "stamped" IRB-approved documents used during the previous year.
 (Information letters, Informed Consents, Parental Permissions, flyers etc.).
 (Do not send consents actually signed by participants!)



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

INFORMED CONSENT

for a Research Study entitled

**“Cultural Transitions During Integration in the South:
A Time of Growth and Shared Experiences Among the Races”**

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 4/25/12 to 4/24/13
Protocol # 12133EP1204

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to agree to answer interview questions and recall your experiences as a participant in the Freedom Of Choice Phase of Integration of the Auburn City Schools. The interview process will be a guided interview based on an arranged location and an established format. Your anonymity will be protected. The interview will be taped by digital recorder, transcribed, and each tape will be coded. The tapes will be heard only by the principal investigator and the transcriber. Your total time commitment will be approximately one hour.

Are there any risks or discomforts? There are no foreseen risks associated with this study. All information will be kept confidential. Information will be reported in an anonymous manner and no identifiable information will be used.

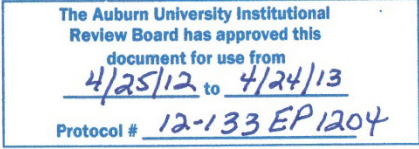
Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to contribute to the knowledge of the desegregation process and historical context of the Auburn City Schools which has blossomed in the areas of academic achievement, athletics, and racial harmony since its watershed year of 1971. Although there will be no direct benefit to you, you can expect the data generated will help to provide descriptive stories and information that will serve as roadmaps for other current historical transitions of various races and ideologies whether voluntary or mandated.

Will you receive compensation for participating? If you decide to participate, there will be no compensation given.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, there is no associated cost.

Participant's initials _____

Page 1 of 2



If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations Leadership and Technology.

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. There will be no identification tags attached to any participant of this study. Furthermore, in addition to the data remaining confidential by the researcher, as a participant one must agree not to speak of any information attained during the course of this study including the revealing of other participants and subject matters discussed. Information collected through your participation may only be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, book and/or presented at a professional conference/meeting. By consenting to participate in this study you give the researcher permission to maintain transcripts indefinitely for future research opportunities stated above.

Participant's initials _____

If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or contact Jason Bryant at 334-703-0339 or via email at jcb0023@auburn.edu. You may also contact Dr. Fran Kochan at 334-844-4460. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

Participant's signature Date

Investigator receiving consent Date

Printed Name

Printed Name



The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from
4/24/13 to 4/24/14
Protocol # 12-133 EP 1204

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

INFORMED CONSENT

For a Research Study entitled

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Participants initials _____

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