

THE SPACE BETWEEN SCHOOL DESEGREGATION COURT ORDERS AND OUTCOMES: THE STRUGGLE TO CHALLENGE WHITE PRIVILEGE

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IN commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*,¹ commentators have focused on two topics: the effect on jurisprudence of this landmark case, and where we are today in working toward equality in educational opportunities.

For the most part, the discussion of the former has been laudatory. Some scholars, journalists, and current leaders have marveled at the ingenuity and bravery of NAACP lawyers.² Others have analyzed and re-analyzed various social and legal factors, including the Cold War and changing racial attitudes following World War II, that may have caused the Supreme Court to rule the way it did.³

Much of the discussion of the current state of equity in education, however, has been far more disheartening. Research demonstrates that public schools are more segregated today than they were thirty years ago.⁴ Other research points to the widening achievement gap between African-American and Latino students

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¹ 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

² See, e.g., Jimmie Briggs, *The Strategist*, *The Crisis*, May–June 2004, at 32–35; Genna Rae McNeil, *The Architect*, *The Crisis*, May–June 2004, at 22–23.

³ See, e.g., Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights* (2004).

⁴ See Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (2004); Erica Frankenberg et al., *A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream?*, *The Harvard Civil Rights Project* (January 2003), at http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/reseg03/reseg03_full.php (on file with the Virginia Law Review Association); Gary Orfield and John Yun, *Resegregation in American Schools*, *The Harvard Civil Rights Project* (June 1999), at http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/deseg/Resegregation_American_Schools99.pdf (on file with the Virginia Law Review Association).

on the one hand and their white and Asian counterparts on the other.⁵

While few commentators have made the connection between greater segregation and a growing achievement gap, and even fewer have contemplated efforts to stem the tide of racial segregation, there has been no shortage of ideas regarding how to equalize student achievement across separate schools. Some argue in favor of tougher accountability measures, and some encourage school finance equity lawsuits designed to bring more money to segregated and poor urban schools.⁶

The collective conclusion emanating from this commentary is as follows: The *Brown* decision was a historic ruling, clearly one of the most significant Supreme Court decisions of the twentieth century. Still, despite the optimism that this case fostered fifty years ago, school desegregation failed as a public policy. Thus, today, we need to find alternative means of fulfilling the promise of *Brown* within more racially separate schools.

Is this a more acceptable way of saying we gave up on *Brown* and now we are simply trying to do right by the promise of *Plessy v. Ferguson*?⁷ What is lost by fast-forwarding history from 1954 to today is a consideration of the daily struggles within local communities to desegregate public schools and how the vision of *Brown* was compromised by many facets of racial politics in the United States.

In other words, if, as some have argued, segregation is but a symptom of the larger disease of white supremacy or racism,⁸ it is clear that efforts to desegregate public schools and thereby eradicate the symptom have been compromised by the ongoing disease. In the process of attempting to alleviate segregation amid a society still firmly grounded in a belief system based on white supremacy,

⁵ See, e.g., Abigail Thernstrom & Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (2003).

⁶ Julian E. Barnes et al., *Unequal Education*, U.S. News & World Rep., Mar. 22, 2004, at 67; Peter Schrag, *What's Good Enough?*, The Nation, May 3, 2004, at 41.

⁷ 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

⁸ See Judge Robert L. Carter, *Comments at Historical Perspectives, a Colloquium at Brown Plus 50: A Renewed Agenda for Social Justice*, New York University (May 18, 2004); Les Payne, *Comments at The Legacy of Brown: The Role of the Media, a Colloquium at Brown Plus 50: A Renewed Agenda for Social Justice*, New York University (May 19, 2004).

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the public schools were forced to swim against a tide so powerful and so pervasive that we should not blame them for failing, but should applaud what progress they made in spite of larger societal forces.

We have just completed a five-year study of six communities that tried to racially balance their public schools during the 1970s.⁹ Through this research we have learned of the details that lie between the court orders (or whatever desegregation policy existed) and the student outcome and demographic data that have been captured in quantitative analyses. In the space between the mandates of desegregation and the results, we found that the schools and communities we studied often unwittingly reproduced racial inequality by maintaining white privilege within the context of desegregated schools. Yet at the same time, these schools provided spaces where students and educators crossed the color line in ways they had never done before and have not done since.

We argue that the school desegregation policies that existed in these school districts were better than nothing, but simply were not enough to change the larger society single-handedly. We illustrate how difficult it was for the people in these schools to live up to the goals of school desegregation given the larger societal forces, including racial attitudes and politics, housing segregation, and economic inequality working against them. We also document how deeply committed some of these actors, both educators and students, were to trying to bring about change.

In this way, our study speaks to larger lessons about the role of schools in society and the uphill but worthwhile efforts of lawyers and judges to use schools as one of very few tools for social change. The desegregated schools of the 1970s embodied both the hope and the disappointment of *Brown's* promise to lessen racial inequality in the United States. We should not view the disappointment as an indictment of the idea of school desegregation or the legal levers that allowed it to happen in hundreds of school districts across the country. Rather, we should use this historical, qualitative data to help us better understand the degree of burden we placed

⁹ See Amy Stuart Wells et al., *How Desegregation Changed Us: The Effects of Racially Mixed Schools on Students and Society*, at <http://www.tc.edu/desegregation> (2004) (on file with the Virginia Law Review Association).

on the public schools to solve a systemic, societal problem that affects every dimension of our lives, from where we live and how much money we make to who we pray with and who our close friends are. Racial inequality and the resultant segregation did not begin in the public schools; thus, we should not expect remedies in the public schools to solve the problem alone. But we can rely on racially diverse public schools—to the extent that current policies allow them to exist—to be important sites in the struggle for a more just society. Lawyers and legal scholars who helped fight for school desegregation and who continue to push for racial diversity in educational settings need to understand this more complex view of the history and reality of school desegregation in the United States in order to move forward with new legal strategies.

I. THE UNDERSTANDING RACE AND EDUCATION STUDY

The findings presented in this paper are drawn from our historical study of six public high schools that were racially diverse in the late 1970s. Our goal was to learn what school desegregation meant to the people who worked in and attended these schools and to consider the way that their local context shaped their experiences and views.

In particular we wanted to know how members of the Class of 1980, in each of these high schools—the first cohort to attend desegregated schools for many years—understood the effect of their desegregation experiences on their lives, including their racial attitudes, educational and professional opportunities, personal relationships, and social networks. Furthermore, we wanted to know how the communities in which the students lived shaped their experiences and understandings.

A. Data Collection Strategy

In order to answer these questions, we designed a three-tiered data collection strategy:

Tier One: Historical Case Studies. The first tier of our data collection entailed historical case studies of the selected high schools and the social and political contexts in which they existed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These historical case studies were based in part on interviews with community members, lawyers,

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elected officials, and educators who were involved in the high schools in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In addition, we drew upon an array of important historical documents, such as school board minutes, newspaper articles, yearbooks, and legal documents, to piece together what was happening in the six high schools during that time.

Tier Two: Interviews with Graduates. The second tier of data collection consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of forty to fifty 1980 graduates from each of the six high schools. These graduates were purposefully chosen to reflect the range of diversity of the students in their class, particularly along the lines of race, ethnicity, social class, residential neighborhoods, academic success and participation in “honors” classes, and level of involvement in school activities and sports teams. We also made a concerted effort to interview out-of-town graduates, either by phone or by traveling to nearby towns. In addition, we have interviewed small numbers of non-graduates, those who either dropped out or transferred out of the schools before graduation. Our interviews with all of these former students were designed to elicit their understandings of how their lives were affected by their experiences in a racially diverse high school. In particular, we asked them about their educational opportunities and friendships while attending high school.

Tier Three: Portraits of Graduates. The third and final tier of data collection for this study involved a much more detailed and in-depth examination of the lives of four to six graduates from each site. Once we better understood the history and social environment surrounding each of the high schools and the experiences of their 1980 graduates, we selected four to six of these graduates who embodied the major themes that emerged from each site. The chosen students also reflected the racial diversity of the class of 1980 at their particular school. Each of the selected graduates was interviewed a second time so that we could construct a “portrait” of their experiences in their high schools.

B. Graduate Interviews by Race

This chart represents the number of interviews conducted as organized by the race of the participants:

White	African-American	Latino	Asian	Mixed Race	TOTAL
136	79	21	2	4	242 +26 second interviews

C. How the School Districts were Selected

Our goal in choosing the six cities or towns in which we would conduct the historical case studies was to find school districts across the country that varied in terms of their region of the country, the racial or ethnic makeup of both the general and school populations, the social class of residents, the size of the district, and the way that the school became desegregated. We wanted each of these districts to have implemented significant school desegregation plans, but in order to better understand the role that context plays in the school desegregation process, we wanted those plans and the communities in which they were implemented to be different in many ways.

We came up with an initial list of about twenty potential cities by asking school desegregation experts from different regions of the country for suggestions. After weighing many of the above-mentioned factors, we chose the following six cities to study: Austin, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Englewood, New Jersey; Pasadena, California; Shaker Heights, Ohio; and Topeka, Kansas. These cities vary not only in terms of their geographic locations, but also in terms of how and why their public schools became racially diverse. In each of these districts student reassignment policies were either voluntarily created by the school board (often to avoid a lawsuit) or court ordered to achieve school desegregation at one or more grade levels.

D. Selecting the High Schools

Each of the six towns had at least one high school that was racially mixed during the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁰ Two of these towns, Englewood, New Jersey, and Shaker Heights, Ohio, only

¹⁰ By "racially mixed," we mean between 40% and 75% of any one race, and no more than 25% off the racial balance of the city or town for any one race.

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had one high school. In the other districts, however, we needed to choose among many high schools. We did so based on the racial and social class composition of the student populations and on the role the schools played in desegregation programs within each district. We applied sampling criteria to not only choose the best high school to study within each city but also to ensure that the high schools across the six sites would be diverse from each other.

We chose the following schools:

Austin High School, Austin, Texas (Austin Independent School District)

- Desegregated via majority-to-minority transfers from several attendance areas.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 15% African-American, 19% Hispanic, 66% white.

Dwight Morrow High School, Englewood, New Jersey (Englewood Public Schools)

- Desegregated by receiving white students from Englewood Cliffs High School via a sending-receiving plan. It was already somewhat integrated as the only public high school serving the racially diverse town of Englewood. Busing and reassignment began at the elementary level.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 57% African-American, 7% Hispanic, 36% white.

John Muir High School, Pasadena, California (Pasadena Unified School District)

- Desegregated originally by drawing from several diverse attendance areas, and in the 1970s via mandatory busing.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 50% African-American, 11% Hispanic, 34% white, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Shaker Heights High School, Shaker Heights, Ohio (Shaker Heights City School District)

- Desegregated as the only high school in a district experiencing an influx of African-American students from Cleveland. Efforts were made in Shaker Heights to integrate neighborhoods, and student reassignment began at the elementary level.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 39% “minority” (mostly African-American), 61% white.

Topeka High School, Topeka, Kansas (501 School District)

- Desegregated via assigned attendance areas; student re-assignment began at the elementary and junior high levels.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 20% African-American, 8% Hispanic, 69% white, 1.4% American Indian, 1.4% Asian.

West Charlotte High School, Charlotte, North Carolina (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools)

- Desegregated via court order to reassign students from white high schools to this historically black high school.
- Racial makeup during the 1970s: 50% African-American, 50% white.

Interestingly enough, both Muir High School and Dwight Morrow High School had enrollments that were less than 50% white by the late 1970s. Both of these schools, along with West Charlotte High School, have lost almost all of their white student population since the Class of 1980 graduated. Meanwhile, Austin High School, Shaker Heights High School, and Topeka High School have managed to remain more stable in terms of racial balance with a shrinking but still significant white population.

E. Data Analysis

As we conducted open-ended interviews with approximately 80 to 100 people at each site—a total of 540 interviews, among them 268 graduate interviews (242 initial interviews, 26 portrait interviews)—and collected historical documents, we began the process of data analysis by writing field notes and analytical memos. Each interview was fully transcribed and coded based on both intra- and intercommunity themes that were emerging. Thus, each theme or subtheme discussed in this and other papers based on this study represents a large body of data, consisting primarily of concurring or dissenting statements from hundreds of interviews. The statements from interviewees that we cite in this paper represent sentiments or understandings that are widely held among the participants in this study.

II. THE POWER OF WHITE PRIVILEGE IN RACIALLY MIXED SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS: THE BROADER SOCIAL CONTEXT OF DESEGREGATION

In the following sections we highlight some of the most powerful cross-case themes to emerge from our study.¹¹ These themes illustrate the distance between the intent behind school desegregation policy, to vindicate Fourteenth Amendment rights for African-Americans and other minority groups, and the actual results these policies achieved. In all of the six school districts we studied, powerful whites were able to maintain their privileged status even in the context of an equity-minded reform movement such as school desegregation. In each of the six communities and schools in our study, policy makers and educators tried to make desegregation as palatable as possible for middle-class white parents and students. On a political level, this made perfect sense. The idea was to stave off white and middle-class flight, which would leave the public schools politically and economically vulnerable. In concentrating on appeasing white parents, however, school districts often disregarded the needs of both students of color and poor students.

Across the school districts studied, we saw the disillusionment of African-American and Latino advocates, educators, and students as they gave up on a “remedy” they once thought would solve many educational problems for students of color. While they acknowledged many gains that resulted from efforts to desegregate public schools and create more diversity within these educational institutions, they voiced clear disappointment about how little progress had been made overall and the price that communities of color had to pay to accommodate the demands and threats of whites.

We realize that some of our findings are not “new” to the literature on school desegregation. For instance, other authors have highlighted many of the shortcomings of desegregation policy that we address.¹² We, however, are attempting to add a new sense of

¹¹ The following sections contain many quotes from students, educators, and others whom we interviewed. All of these quotes are contained in the interview transcripts, which are on file with the authors.

¹² See A.V. Adair, *Desegregation: The Illusion of Black Progress* (1984); Derrick Bell, *And We Are Not Saved* (1987) [hereinafter Bell, *And We are Not Saved*]; Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes*

“dual consciousness”¹³ to the discussion. In other words, we think it is important to celebrate the accomplishments of *Brown* and the role that public schools and the courts have played in trying to right the wrongs of racial inequality in our society, while being very clear about just how inadequate school desegregation policy—as an isolated policy affecting but one of many racially unequal institutions in our society—was in overcoming the legacy of white privilege.

This is not to absolve the schools and educators of all wrongdoing—rather, we are simply examining them within the broader social context in which they were enmeshed and rethinking future policy proposals in light of how desegregation proceeded after *Brown*. As one Latino former school board member in Austin, Texas, explained to us, desegregation amounted to “societal problems . . . being dumped on the children.”

A. What's in the Black Community is Not Good Enough for White Children: How the Burden of Busing Was Placed on Blacks and Latinos

As other school desegregation scholars and observers have noted,¹⁴ usually the historically black or Latino public schools were closed once districts were forced, either by judges, the federal government, or other political pressure, to desegregate their schools. This meant that black and Latino students were more likely to be riding buses longer distances at younger ages than most white students in desegregating school districts.¹⁵

In five of the six school districts that we studied, at least one historically black school was eventually closed. Furthermore, in five of the six districts, black students, parents, and activists felt that their communities bore the burden of achieving racial balance in the

for Racial Reform (2004) [hereinafter Bell, *Silent Covenants*]; Beyond Desegregation: The Politics of Quality in African American Schooling (Mwalimu Shujaa ed., 1996) [hereinafter *Beyond Desegregation*].

¹³ See W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1969), for a discussion of African-Americans' sense of dual consciousness about being both black and American and the tensions and contradictions that result.

¹⁴ See Adair, *supra* note 12; Bell, *And We Are Not Saved*, *supra* note 12.

¹⁵ See Adair, *supra* note 12; Bell, *And We Are Not Saved*, *supra* note 12; Bell, *Silent Covenants*, *supra* note 12.

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schools. We learned from our data that this burden did not merely relate to the issue of inconvenience, such as black students having to get up early and get home late. Rather, the closing of black schools that required students of color to bear the brunt of busing dealt a blow to these communities' pride and dignity. It was as if white society were saying that there was nothing of value in the black or Latino communities.

In Austin, Texas, the first phase of school desegregation entailed the closing of black schools on the east side of town and transferring students out of those neighborhoods to other schools, many with large Latino populations. One school that was closed early on was Anderson High School, a historically black high school with a long tradition and strong ties to the African-American community. Prior to closing Anderson, the federal judge overseeing desegregation in the Austin case made an attempt to reassign nearby white students to the school. As one long-time district administrator recalled, however, when the judge ordered that white students be assigned to Anderson:

[Y]ou know, people [at the school] got revved up for that . . . the black kids did a lot of work on trying to get ready for these [white] kids. And, of course, the [white] kids didn't come. So, there was like total flight, you know. Well, that was a downer as well. That was another unfortunate situation that helped solidify an adversarial deal because feelings were hurt.

In other words, despite the pride members of the black community had in Anderson High School and their attempts to fix it up for the reassigned white students, the white families chose not to abide by the court order. After this act of resistance, the judge rescinded the plan that reassigned white students and ordered a new plan that resulted in the closing of the black schools, including Anderson High School, and the one-way busing of black students out of their community.

The same Austin administrator noted that the alteration to the desegregation plan was both a good and a bad step. The new plan was good in that it was more effective in creating racially balanced schools, but it was bad in that it reinforced the idea that what the black community had to offer was not worthwhile and that black schools were inferior. He said, "Well, when you tell people that their schools are inferior to some degree you're telling them they're inferior."

Many others spoke of the sense of shame and loss felt by members of the black community when white students refused to attend black schools. The manner in which Anderson High School was shut down was particularly insulting. At the time of Anderson's closing, the Austin school board committed to building a new "Anderson" high school in the northwest and mostly white section of the city. Members of the black community thought that the new Anderson should house the memorabilia of its namesake school. But they soon learned that such memories of the old, all-black Anderson High School were not welcome in the new, predominantly white school. As one African-American community leader explained, the people leading the new Anderson High School said that they did not want the trophies or anything else from the old Anderson school. He noted that the "new" Anderson was related to the "old" Anderson in name only, which "insulted and infuriated the Afro-American community, justifiably so."

In the 1970s, Austin also implemented majority-to-minority transfers, a voluntary desegregation plan through which students of any race could transfer from a school in which they were in the racial majority to a school in which they would be a racial minority. This program did not succeed in fully desegregating the district, however, because no white students opted to transfer to historically black or Latino schools. As one local Latino politician noted, "The majority-to-minority transfer rule did not meet the test of integration because all [of] the burden for moving was on the minorities. No white guy would say, 'I want to go into a minority school.'"

Given the history of racial discrimination in cities such as Austin, it is not surprising that white families did not want to send their children to historically black and Latino schools. Most of these schools were inferior to the white schools in terms of resources and facilities. Furthermore, the communities in which these schools existed were more likely to be poor and unfamiliar to whites, particularly the more affluent whites. Still, we know from school desegregation history that such schools, with a great deal of extra support and funding, can be made more appealing to white families.¹⁶

¹⁶ For instance, in Austin several years after the effort to enroll white students in the old Anderson High School, another, newer high school on the east side of the city (in a heavily Latino area) was temporarily desegregated after district officials put additional resources and facilities into the school to attract and retain white students.

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Other sites in our study were similar to Austin in not making such an investment in black schools and thus closing the schools in black neighborhoods, and putting black children on buses in larger numbers and at younger ages than white students. For instance, in Pasadena, the school desegregation plan paired black, Latino, and white elementary schools so that all the students—black and white—from the two schools went to one building for kindergarten through third grade and then to the other school for grades four through six. But all of the kindergarten-through-third-grade schools were in the previously predominantly white schools in the white neighborhoods, which meant the youngest students of color were always sent the farthest. By fourth grade, many white parents had enrolled their children in private schools to avoid sending them to schools in black or Latino communities. As several people we interviewed noted, private schools flourished in Pasadena.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, one of the most comprehensive school desegregation plans in the country was implemented three years after the 1971 United States Supreme Court decided *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*.¹⁷ The Court held that, if necessary to achieve racial balance, school districts should reassign students to schools outside their neighborhoods and bus the students to these schools.¹⁸ Thousands of Charlotte students were bused every day to schools across town, but it was the African-American students from the west side of town who were bused in greater percentages, at younger ages, and for many more years on average than most of the white students. This was partly because of the demographics of the district and the high concentration of black students in certain neighborhoods, but it was also the result of deliberate choices made by the judge, lawyers, and school board to appease white parents and stave off white flight.

According to one of the lawyers who represented the black plaintiffs in *Swann*, the biggest problem with the plan was that

Similarly, as we note later in this Essay, in Charlotte, North Carolina, the school we studied, West Charlotte High School, was a recently built historically black school. In that city as well, district officials provided the extra resources needed to help make sure that white students would show up to their newly assigned high school in the black community.

¹⁷ 402 U.S. 1 (1971).

¹⁸ *Id.* at 29–31.

those in charge “compromise[d] and plac[ed] a greater burden on black parents than we did on others.” He said the federal judge in charge of the case purposely decided to close the kindergarten through third grade schools in the black neighborhoods and put all such grade schools in the suburban areas of the county. This plan was implemented, the lawyer argued, “so that white kids wouldn’t have to go to school in the inner city and that supposedly made it easier for white parents to send their kids to school.”

When asked if he would proceed differently if he had a chance to negotiate the plan again, this particular civil rights attorney said he was not sure, in the long run, that insisting on having elementary schools in the inner city would have been the answer. Such a plan may well have increased the rate of white flight. The attorney noted that by leaving the white students in their own neighborhoods and sending the black students out to the suburbs, the architects of the plan gained broader acceptance of the court order. He noted, however, “we still had white flight, and we may or may not have had as much white flight if we had sent the white kids in to the elementary schools in the inner city.”

Thus, in Charlotte, as well as in Pasadena, Austin, Englewood, and eventually Shaker Heights and Topeka, African-American and Latino children were more likely to bear the logistical burdens of integration. Meanwhile, black communities lost neighborhood schools in the name of appeasing white parents who would otherwise flee the public system. Often these white parents pulled their children out of the public schools anyway, leaving African-American parents, educators, and activists angry, hurt, and frustrated.

Ironically, the high school in Charlotte that we chose to study, West Charlotte High School, is one of the few historically black schools that survived the implementation of school desegregation by enrolling large numbers of white students. Nevertheless, the story of West Charlotte—the extra resources it received in order to attract the white students as well as changes the school went through once the white teachers and students arrived—provides some of the most solid evidence that white privilege can assert itself even within the context of a historically black school.

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B. Together But So Far Apart: Uneven Knowledge of and Access to High-Track Classes

The privilege and political power of white parents and students not only influenced the way school desegregation plans were designed, it also strongly influenced who had knowledge of and access to certain classes within racially diverse schools. We recognize that there were many factors affecting the resegregation of students within desegregated schools, including the often unequal schooling that blacks and Latino students had been receiving prior to desegregation, as well as the higher poverty rates of their families, and even these students' hesitancy to demand access to predominantly white classes.¹⁹ But we also have a great deal of evidence in our data to suggest that white students were given more information about and easier access to the upper-level classes.

From blatant tracking practices that labeled students as "gifted" or "non-gifted" as early as kindergarten and then channeled them through the grade levels in the "appropriate" classes, to more subtle forms of sorting students that used teacher recommendations to decide who got into the best classes, the schools and districts we studied managed to create incredible and consistent levels of segregation within each school. As with the more frequent busing of black students, the preferred access to upper-level classes given to whites was in part a strategy to appease white parents. The time-frame we are studying is important in this regard because it was the late 1970s when the Advanced Placement ("AP") program was just becoming prominent, especially in high schools serving students from upper-middle-class backgrounds.²⁰

At all six of the high schools we studied, students talked about seeing many of the same students in all of the upper-level classes. "Schools within schools" was a phrase that was used often to de-

¹⁹ See Susan Yonezawa et al., Choosing Tracks: "Freedom of Choice" in Detracking Schools, *Am. Educ. Res. J.*, Spring 2002, at 37.

²⁰ See *The Comprehensive High School Today* (Floyd M. Hammack ed., 2004). Hammack notes that Advanced Placement began in 1954 and was ubiquitous by 2002. Floyd M. Hammack, What Should Be Common and What Should Not? James B. Conant and U.S. High School Reform, *in The Comprehensive High School Today*, supra, at 6, 19. Jeannie Oakes and Amy Stuart Wells note "AP had become widespread by the 1980s, primarily in wealthy school districts." Jeannie Oakes & Amy Stuart Wells, *The Comprehensive High School, Detracking and the Persistence of Social Stratification*, *in The Comprehensive High School Today*, supra, at 87, 87-113.

scribe the special, predominantly white configuration of advanced classes and students within desegregated schools. A white, 1980 graduate of Shaker Heights High School noted that while it was not always the exact same twenty students in every upper-level class, "it would be very unusual to see somebody, like a new face in one class that you didn't see in any other class."

At Dwight Morrow High School in Englewood, New Jersey, which was only about 36% white by the time the Class of 1980 arrived, a high-track white student commented that the more "academically stringent" the class, the fewer black students there were enrolled. He noted that in his AP biology class, there were one or two black students, and in calculus there was only one, even though the school was almost 60% black. When asked if the racial makeup of the upper-level classes was something that students at Dwight Morrow talked about, this white graduate stated that "there was like two societies going on at the academic level."

The graduate also recalled that many African-American students in the lower-level classes lacked the information they needed to go on to college, including when or why to take the SATs. In contrast, white students were very well informed regarding what it took to get into college. The graduate commented: "There were people that knew that you're gonna do this stuff, and they just kind of marched along and did it, and there were other people who were totally out of it. Most people were just not included in it." A powerful theme emerging from Dwight Morrow was that the African-American graduates seemed to have much less understanding of the tracking system overall. At the same time, white students, whether they were in the most advanced classes or not, tended to be more aware of where they and their classes fit into the hierarchy.

The situation was similar at other schools in our study. For instance, a Latina graduate of Austin High School noted that looking back at her high school years, "I was never aware that there was maybe like an advanced, upper-level class for those that made As, and they were all predominantly white. I think they kind of put those students all together; they were making all As, and they were going to go with a certain instructor, and all be in the same room, together."

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While this lack of information about the tracking hierarchy on the part of students of color and the lack of discussion regarding the resegregation by classroom of desegregated schools were powerful themes across the schools we studied, there were exceptions. For instance, a white graduate of Shaker Heights, who recalled that her advanced classes were about 95% white, remembered talking with one of the few African-American students in her AP Government class during her senior year. She said that she and the black student would walk home together every day, and occasionally they would talk about how there “were too many white males” in the AP classes:

I recall that there was a lot of discussion. . . about too many white males in government, and we’ve got to change that, and whether it’s females or other races, we’ve got to change that. It was almost like we felt . . . we knew we were on the cusp of being the next generation of lawmakers or whatever we wanted to be, and we felt a great strength and anticipation at the ability to really be different and do something. . . I just really remember that, we were all just so excited.

Despite such optimism, it was clear from our data that in many instances students had been “tracked” into their gifted slots well before they got to high school. As an English teacher at Muir High School in Pasadena noted, the honors level classes were comprised of mostly white students primarily because such within-school segregation had existed in the middle school. Prior to the 1970s and court-ordered desegregation, the students of color had not had the opportunity to participate in the middle school honors program in large numbers. Thus, the teacher at Muir noted, “it followed that they would not be in the high school program for five years because you have to bring them up, you know, through the rest of the levels of honors, so they’re prepared to do honors.” But the teacher stated that after five or six years, while she did begin to see more African-Americans in the honors level classes, not many Latino students enrolled in them. She added that today, students are still “grouped and tracked” in the third grade into honors classes, a practice she referred to as “criminal” because by high school, good students are hesitant to take the honors classes if they have not previously been labeled as “honors” material.

A former English teacher from West Charlotte High School told us perhaps the most revealing story about tracking and race. When the now-retired teacher was in her first year at West Charlotte, the school was still all-black. This teacher and a small cohort of colleagues were among the first white teachers to be assigned to the historically black school. This teacher talked about the students in the all-black honors classes at West Charlotte as being very “bright,” some of the best students and the best classes she ever taught. She said that at the time the school became desegregated the high-level black students were as good as the high-level white students who came into the school and took the black students’ seats in those honors classes. The teacher said that she often wonders, “[w]hat would have happened to those [high-achieving black] students [without desegregation]? What did happen to them when the school became integrated and the high-level classes were predominately white?”

Across the racially diverse high schools in our study, at least two separate and unequal academic spheres existed. While many students of color felt that they did not have enough information about the different academic options, many of the white students who had been identified as gifted since they were in elementary school saw the upper-level classes as their manifest destiny.

C. Colorblind Curriculum for Colorblind Schools: We Do Not Talk About Race Here

Students of color were further marginalized within desegregated schools by a commonly held belief that race did not matter and that the goal of desegregation was to create a “colorblind” society.²¹ This ideology was promoted in at least two ways. First, the late 1970s curriculum in the schools we studied endorsed a white, Eurocentric view of the world, very close to the same curriculum that had been taught for years in these schools when all but West Charlotte High School had been predominantly white.

²¹ For a more in-depth discussion of these issues from our study, see Anita Tijerina Revilla et al., “We Didn’t See Color”: The Salience of Colorblindness in Desegregated Schools, *in* *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance* 284 (Michelle Fine et al. eds., 2d ed. 2004).

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Second, neither the students nor the educators in these schools talked about race or racial issues in their efforts to work with one another on school activities or in less formal social interactions. The absence of discussions of race meant that students and educators could not learn from one another's experiences in confronting and resolving racial concerns. The ability to learn from one another would have been particularly useful given that many educators and students were working and learning with people of different racial backgrounds for the first time. Thus, while cross-racial tensions, concerns, and discoveries were occurring all the time, no one was talking about them. Beyond what was going on in the schools, the broader issues of racial inequality and injustice that were (and are) rampant in these local communities were not part of what students were grappling with during school hours. Discussions of such racial conditions might have helped to build important bridges across groups of students who were not only different in terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, but in terms of their social classes as well.

The lack of a dialogue about race combined with the maintenance of a "traditional" Eurocentric curriculum became a de facto assimilationist project. Students of color were required to "fit" into the norms of the schools, including rules and understandings about what was right, smart, and appropriate.²² Many African-American and Latino students were left to feel that the teachers did not value their input or perspective. When values, racial norms, knowledge, and history go unchallenged, so does the privilege of one racial or ethnic group over another.²³

²² See, e.g., Van Dempsey & George Noblit, Cultural Ignorance and School Desegregation: A Community Narrative, *in* *Beyond Desegregation*, supra note 12, at 115–37.

²³ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* 12, 89–120 (2001); see also Signithia Fordham, *Racelessness in Private Schools: Should We Deconstruct the Racial and Cultural Identity of African-American Adolescents?*, 92 *Tchrs. C. Rec.* 470 (1991); Janet W. Schofield, *Black and White in School: Trust, Tension, or Tolerance?* (1989); Janet W. Schofield, *Promoting Positive Peer Relations in Desegregated Schools*, *in* *Beyond Desegregation*, supra note 12, at 91–114.

1. Curriculum—Rarely a Multicultural Moment

One of the more surprising findings from this study was just how little the curriculum in the racially mixed schools we studied had changed during the 1970s, considering that the racial makeup of the students had changed a great deal. For the most part, the schools offered a white, Eurocentric perspective on the world. When changes were made to the curriculum, they were usually marginal changes, such as the addition of electives or a special assembly, in reaction to racial unrest or specific demands by students of color. Even in Topeka, Kansas, a city at the heart of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, 1980 graduates do not recall learning much about race or racial inequality in school. One Topeka High graduate who is now a lawyer noted that she had no idea how important the *Brown* decision and the Topeka-based case were until she went to law school many years later.

At Muir High School in Pasadena, the graduates and educators reported that for the most part, the curriculum did not reflect a diversity of perspectives. The lack of diversity was the result of several factors, including the fact that teachers at Muir had a great deal of autonomy in their classrooms and there was no systematic effort at Muir to expand the core curriculum in the 1970s to include nonwhite authors. Students' exposure to a more multicultural curriculum was entirely dependent upon the individual teachers and student experiences were thus not consistent. While a few teachers made a concerted effort to include nonwhite authors and perspectives, the vast majority of teachers were far more traditional. As one former counselor at Muir said, "[a]s far as the teaching goes, [desegregation] didn't really start to affect the canon until about the mid-1980s, so we were still teaching the Dead White Man for a long, long time."

The absence of overt discussions of race in the curriculum profoundly affected many of the graduates of color we interviewed, particularly those who had been taught different lessons in their homes and communities. For instance, one African-American 1980 graduate of Austin High School spoke about the difficulties he had accepting and relating to his high school history teacher: "He was a good teacher, it's just that I didn't believe in what they was teaching. Cause everything was white. . .and I used to get so tired and frustrated. . .sitting and listening what all these great white people

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[had done].” The lack of diversity in the curriculum contributed to the distrust that many students of color felt toward their white teachers.

When the teachers did stray from their Eurocentric base to add something more multicultural, they were often in uncharted territory, which tended to leave them less certain about how to present and teach the material. A good example of the difficulties many teachers had in presenting multicultural materials was conveyed to us by an African-American graduate of Dwight Morrow High School in Englewood. The graduate recalled the time her white English teacher required them to read *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison,²⁴ a story about a black girl who wants blue eyes. In the story, someone tells the girl that if she killed a dog, she would be given blue eyes, and the girl consequently kills the dog. The graduate recalled:

And so, you know, I raised my hand and I said, well, you know, when she killed the dog she kind of killed her own beliefs in everything that was ugly about herself and dah, dah, dah. [The teacher said] ‘No, I think you’re reading it too deeply’ . . . you know, I mean, and that was the type of reactions that I would get out of this woman.

This particular graduate’s mother had demanded that the school place her daughter in the advanced classes after the student had been placed in regular classes despite her high grades. Thus, this graduate was often one of a very few African-American students in advanced classes. Through her experience in these classes, she quickly learned that race was a taboo subject, even though so much of her daily experience was grounded in race.

2. *Shhhhh—Don’t Talk About Race!*

Educators in the schools we studied were often bent on *not* talking about race, either within their classrooms or as part of the extra-curricular activities they were sponsoring. There were different reasons given for this lack of discussion about race. For some interviewees, it seemed as though talking about or acknowledging race was bad in that it was un-American or racist. A former West

²⁴ Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970).

Charlotte teacher, a white woman, exemplified this: “[I]t just seemed like color didn’t seem to make a difference to anyone. We just, again, viewed people as people. Not emphasizing, I guess would be the fact. . . I mean, we emphasized the fact that *we were not emphasizing* color of skin.”

A white graduate of West Charlotte echoed the thoughts of this teacher and many others whites interviewed for this study: “[A]t West Charlotte we focused on how we were alike. . . That is one of the reasons we didn’t focus on cultural diversity.” What is most interesting about this insistence on “sameness” is that it was often discussed by the same people who, in other parts of their interviews, focused on how much they learned about people from different backgrounds by attending racially diverse schools.

The lack of discussion about race was also due in part to a desire to avoid racial conflict. In some schools, most notably Topeka High School, Austin High School, and West Charlotte High School, there had been a great deal of racial tension and black-white fighting in the early and mid-1970s. In our interviews, nearly every student and educator we interviewed from these schools talked about the racial turmoil that preceded the Class of 1980’s arrival. School-level administrators and teachers were determined to keep things calm. The idea of opening up issues of race or working through racial differences with students was therefore not particularly inviting.

A white English teacher from Austin High School explained that by the late 1970s and 1980s, the initial controversies and racial animosities had quieted down and no one wanted to stir the water. She recalled that when African-American students first came to Austin High School in the early 1970s after the old Anderson High School was closed, they were extremely unhappy because many of them had been highly involved in Anderson high school and in charge of extracurricular activities. When they came to Austin High School, those clubs and offices were already filled. The teacher noted, however, that by 1980, “everything was all over, anything controversial or any unhappiness, you know, that was all settled, and we were settled in as a school.” Interviews with the Austin High School graduates of color present different views on this issue, but the point is that from the perspective of the educa-

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tors, there were no racial problems, and thus there was no need to deal with racial issues.

While many white educators denied that race was an issue, some of the same people, along with many other interviewees, particularly people of color, also talked a great deal about just how salient race was in their day-to-day experiences in these schools. For instance, as we noted above, race clearly seemed to matter in terms of who ended up in which classes. Furthermore, in two of the schools we studied, Topeka and West Charlotte, there were fairly strict quotas regarding the racial make-up of popular student awards and offices, such as homecoming courts, student government, and cheerleading squads. There was an awareness of such quotas, which in many instances benefited white students more than black or Latino students, and an acknowledgment of their impact on students' experiences in high school. As one white West Charlotte graduate noted, although there were no explicit discussions of race in her high school in the late 1970s, issues of race were everywhere. When asked whether or not race was discussed in school, she replied:

“Discussed,” like...like we discuss things now?... No, there were no discussions of that. But, but was it a known fact that we had three white candidates, three black candidates, and three at-large [for student government elections]? Yeah! And—I don't even remember the ballot, but the ballot probably said it! I mean, you know, I-I don't know. But did we sit around and have round tables about... how to be better people and like each other and live together in harmony and all that stuff? No! No. But were there white kids in the Gospel Choir? Yes!.. And we'd have, you know, the black guys come to the Choir with cornrows, and [the African-American choir teacher] would tell them... “get rid of those cornrows, you know? Just because you're a black boy—don't be wearing those cornrows.” So... was there a discussion? No. But was race everywhere? Yeah!

Thus, while race was not regularly discussed in these schools, it was *lived* in a very real and intuitive sort of way. With no forum or dialogue in which to make better sense of the racial differences they experienced every day, many of these graduates walked away from high school with fairly superficial understandings of race and

its role in American society, understandings which would not lead one to challenge the racial status quo.²⁵

D. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecies of Becoming a “Bad” School: Challenge White Privilege and There Goes the School . . .

Finally, one more finding related to the way in which the promise of *Brown* remained unfulfilled in the context of a highly unequal and stratified society is that the reputations of the six high schools we studied tended to rise and fall with the demographic changes of their student bodies. Echoing the rationales for closing black schools in the 1960s and early 1970s, we found that the public’s perception of racially mixed schools tended to deteriorate as the racial makeup of those schools became predominately non-white and the enrollment of upper-middle-class students declined. This phenomenon was particularly marked for the two schools in our study that had shifted from majority white to majority non-white in the late 1970s: Muir High School and Dwight Morrow High School. Two additional schools from our study, West Charlotte High School and Shaker Heights High School, have faced the same issues more recently because they have become majority nonwhite schools in the last ten years. Austin High School, meanwhile, has managed to maintain its majority white student population, though barely. Topeka High School has been the most racially stable.

In this section, we will highlight the experiences of Muir and Dwight Morrow because the white flight from these schools peaked during the era we studied. We think the lessons learned from the experiences of these two schools have a general relevance because, according to our interviews, West Charlotte had similar experiences in the more recent past, and both Shaker Heights and Austin High School appear to be facing some of these issues today.

1. Increasing Racial Diversity, Declining Reputations

Both Muir and Dwight Morrow high schools had maintained reputations as “good” and even “elite” schools as recently as the early 1970s, before they began to lose their wealthiest white stu-

²⁵ See Revilla et al., *supra* note 21, at 294.

dents. For instance, both of these schools were more than fifty percent white in the late 1960s, but they were rapidly losing their white populations by the late 1970s. As the African-American and Latino populations began to increase in the two schools, people in the local communities began to question their quality. Former educators and graduates of these schools talked about these changing public perceptions and said that their schools had been unfairly maligned by both the public and the media. Both educators and graduates firmly believed that the declining reputation of their schools had little to do with the quality of programs offered, since those had not changed, especially for students in the upper-level classes. For instance, Dwight Morrow High School shifted from a predominately white student population in the late 1960s to a predominately African-American student population by the late 1970s, and as wealthy white parents from both the city of Englewood and Englewood Cliffs began to pull their high school students out of Dwight Morrow, there was a real sense that the quality of the school was in decline, even before the teaching staff, course offerings, or Ivy League acceptances had changed. A former Dwight Morrow teacher observed, “[a]s the population in the school changed, that’s when the reputation began to change. As there was a change in the population then they said, ‘Oh the quality of education is not as good.’” A Dwight Morrow guidance counselor, when asked why this change in perception had occurred, noted:

I think a lot of it is just racism, I really do, because even—I mean I was in Teaneck High School in 1959 and Teaneck and Englewood and Hackensack had the only Black kids in the whole area, and you’d always hear something about Teaneck, Hackensack or Englewood. Now this is at a time when the schools were academically superior schools, so it wasn’t like you could point [to]. . . the academic part. And I just think it snowballed until you had the white flight and there was always this perception.

John Muir High School in Pasadena suffered similar public perception problems as its African-American and Latino student populations increased. Muir had once been the crown jewel high school of the Pasadena school district, serving the children of wealthy white West Pasadena and La Canada families. After La Canada seceded from the district and built its own high school,

Muir lost a large number of white students, and at that point its reputation began to decline. Many educators believed that this reputation was further hindered by the school's geographic location in the heart of what was becoming a heavily black area of Pasadena. As one former teacher explained:

Muir was known in the community as *that* school on *that* side of town. Strictly racial. . . At one point if you drew a line down the middle of this town. . . it was pretty much Black and White on either side. And in those days there weren't a lot of Latinos. . . So [Muir] was pretty much, you know, a ghetto school, if you will, — this was the mindset. There are people in this community that still think that way.

According to another teacher who taught at Muir in the late 1970s, there were a lot of rumors being passed around Pasadena about what a dangerous school Muir was. He recalled that people were saying, “[T]his is a very dangerous place and people get knifed there all the time, they have shootings, they have this—that wasn't true. If that was true I would have transferred to another school. I mean, I'm not suicidal. . . And these stories just passed through the community.”

The rumors and perceptions of these schools were far removed from the educators' and students' daily experiences. While many teachers and students blame racism for the misperception, our respondents were also quick to point out that the local media fed these misperceptions by consistently covering minor racial incidents at these schools. The media also ignored the positive things happening there, as well as the problems in the more predominantly white schools.

2. The Media and Public Perceptions of Racially Diverse Schools

In Englewood, most of the educators and Class of 1980 graduates that we interviewed spoke of the negative reporting by the local news outlets, particularly the local newspapers. As a white graduate noted:

I think it was more this notion that the media was making [Dwight Morrow] out to be a bad school, that it was a problem school, that it was a dangerous school, and I just felt that it was

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being portrayed inaccurately. While, I didn't deny that there were problems and there were squabbles here and there, I think they were minor and I think if it happened between two white people in an all-white school no one would have made a big deal about it. But because it happened between a black and a white person. . . people read a lot more into it. . . I think things were being portrayed inaccurately and the media was kind of fueling things, it wasn't giving the school a chance to really kind of show how good it was and that people really did get along.

A long-time African-American teacher at Dwight Morrow also found the news coverage inaccurate, which reported that girls were raped and guys carried knives at the school:

In the thirty years that I've been here I've never seen a guy carrying a knife or a gun. I mean, there have been idle threats, people have gotten beat up—that happens in any school—but to say that it was a place that was violent, it's not true at all.

A white teacher at Englewood noted that the local newspapers not only highlighted negative incidents in the community's schools, but downplayed anything positive that went on there:

I remember one year our math club won the state championship, and it was a paragraph on like page 28 of the [the local paper]. But on the front page. . . was, "Student At Dwight Morrow Brings Knife to School." And no one ever even acknowledged that this math club had won the state championship.

Similar frustration with the media was expressed by the educators and graduates of John Muir High School. They complained particularly about coverage from the local newspaper, which they believed favored the high school in the white area of town, Pasadena High School ("PHS"), over Muir. A black 1980 graduate of Muir, like many of his classmates, observed that Muir always got a "really bad rap" in the local paper. He argued that while his school received a lot of negative publicity, most people did not hear about anything bad that happened at PHS. A white graduate echoed these sentiments, noting that "Any-any-any negative publicity that they could scrape up from Muir, they would! And did!" Meanwhile the graduate's wife, also a Muir graduate, said, "[i]f there was a

fight at PHS, it was a small mention. . . You know, in the back of the paper. If it was a fight at Muir, it was front-page.”

As an African-American former teacher noted, “I think Muir has always gotten a bad rap” because of where it is located or because it was more black and Latino than other schools. She told us that the reports of violence and other disturbances were wrong:

I was never afraid to work here. . . There were some experiences that maybe weren't so hot, like breaking up fights and making sure things did not happen, but those are normal things connected with education, but as far as it being the roughest and toughest, I don't think we had any more incidents than the other high school, it was just that Muir was always highlighted.

This teacher told us about a group of Muir teachers who went so far as to have meetings with the local newspaper staff to try to convince them to stop their negative reporting. The teachers were not successful.

3. Self-Fulfilling Prophecies Amid the Absence of White Privilege

Today, more than twenty years after the period we studied, our interview data suggest that perhaps both Dwight Morrow and John Muir have become more like the schools that newspapers were reporting them to be in the 1970s: troubled by gangs and concentrated poverty. Total enrollment in both schools is down, there are virtually no white students left, and the range of course offerings has dwindled, leading to a more watered down curriculum. Average test scores are also down, leaving both high schools ranked very low on their state assessments.²⁶

Perhaps these two high schools, along with predominantly black West Charlotte High School, stand as a testament to the old adage that “green follows white.” One of the primary motivations behind pushing for desegregation was that schools with large percentages of white and wealthy students are more likely to have resources, the best teachers, and a more challenging curriculum. Either

²⁶ Amy Stuart Wells & Jennifer Jellison Holme, No Accountability for Diversity: Standardized Tests and the Demise of Racially Mixed Schools, *in* How Brown Lost Its Way: School Resegregation in the South (John Charles Boger & Gary Orfield eds.) (forthcoming); Resegregation of the American South (John Boger et al. eds., 2004).

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through parental donations or political clout, such schools usually secure sufficient resources to make their schools the very best. Once those white and affluent families left, over time, predominantly black and Latino schools too often came to resemble the poor reputations that preceded their decline.

The greatest irony we learn from studies such as ours is that from the perspective of African-American and Latino parents, students, and educators, it is hard to live with white privilege and hard to live without it. In other words, because white privilege pervades so many aspects of our society, schools with large numbers of white and affluent students are likely to be the most prestigious. When these schools also have significant numbers of black and Latino students in them, they are likely to be fairly segregated by classrooms, with white students comprising the majority of the students in the upper-level classes. At the same time, once the white students leave and upper-level classes become more integrated, the reputation and eventually the quality of the schools decline because the resources and status decrease.

Interestingly, the three schools from our study that have lost the majority of their white populations were the three schools most likely to challenge, albeit rather meekly, the automatic privilege of whites and the status quo within their schools. For instance, of the six schools that we studied, Muir and Dwight Morrow had moved further along the path towards instituting multicultural curriculum than the other four schools, and it was in Englewood and Charlotte that African-American parents and activists challenged the tracking system.

In the end, such challenges appear to be pyrrhic victories, as these three schools have lost not only their white students but also the prestige and status in their communities that they once enjoyed.

*E. Racially Mixed Schools Need Much Attention and Care:
Summing it all Up*

Putting these six racially mixed high schools from the late 1970s into their broader social, political, and historical contexts has proven to be a valuable exercise, one that helps us rethink the current, overly simplistic debate about the “success” or “failure” of school desegregation policy in this country. Indeed, rather than

portray the struggles of these schools as evidence that we have fallen short of the ideal of a racially more equal and just society, we want to point to these stories as evidence of both how far we have come and how much further we need to go.

Much of the burden of righting the historical wrongs was placed on the public schools, while much of the rest of the society, except for the military, continued along its separate and unequal path. If white privilege was not strongly challenged in other realms of our society, we should not be at all surprised that it was barely challenged at all in racially mixed schools. What we have learned from our six districts and schools is that, despite what many adults thought back in the 1970s, their journey toward equal educational opportunities was not complete once white, black, and Latino students walked through the same school doors; it had only just begun.

A white school district administrator in Charlotte, who was one of the many principals of West Charlotte High School in the 1970s, reflected on how different the understandings of the goals of school desegregation were in the 1970s. He said that back then there was a tension among liberal white educators who supported desegregation and racial equality in theory, but who also wanted to teach the predominantly white high-track classes. Many of these educators were not ready to close the black-white achievement gap at that time. The administrator noted:

Our moral issue [in the 1970s] was to get two groups of people together who had never been together before, and let them succeed, or let the institution succeed as a result of creating that kind of grouping. I think the moral dilemma today is, you got to go deeper than that. It's not enough just to put two groups of people together. Those two groups of people had to be put together and come out on equal terms. I don't think that was in our thought process at the time.

Another central paradox is that by the time educators began to figure out how and what they could and should try to accomplish in racially mixed schools, the number of such schools was declining. For instance, shortly after we conducted our interviews, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools ended their court-ordered school deseg-

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regation plan, and West Charlotte High School, as we noted, is now predominantly black once more.