CREATING A SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM FOR THE HIGH ACADEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL STUDENTS: ALL MEANS ALL

by

KAILI BAUCUM

A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School – Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Joint Graduate Program in Urban Systems

written under the direction of

Alan Sadovnik

and approved by

_____

Professor Alan Sadovnik

_____

Professor Jeff Backstrand

_____

Professor Dula Pacquiao

_____

Larry Leverett, Ed.D.

Newark, New Jersey
October, 2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Creating a School-Based Program for the High Academic Achievement of All Students:
All Means All

By KAILI BAUCUM

Dissertation Director: Professor Alan Sadovnik

For decades, educators have struggled to find ways to deal with the academic

achievement gap between black and white students. This quest is further exacerbated by

the disparate outcomes between middle class black students and their white counterparts.

In addition to being troubling, this threatens the upward mobility of black families. This

research uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) and logic modeling to design a program model

to improve minority student achievement in a mixed-race, affluent, suburban high school.

Arguably, a more nuanced understanding of the ways schools interact with both white

and black students will render better designed interventions resulting in more equitable

outcomes. As such this research aims to explore the following questions: (1) what

theories are most promising for improving minority student achievement in a mixed,

suburban school district? (2) Given these theories, is there a "best practice" model for

solving the problem? (3) What social, educational and community systems are required

to implement this model? (4) What are the possibilities and barriers within the current

system for this to occur? This mixed-method study will track the achievement patterns of

an affluent, integrated district's black students over the past 10 years. Interviews with

students, teachers, and administrators will be used to (1) identify the opportunities and challenges to implementing a minority student achievement program and (2) better understand the student experience in a mixed-race high school. This study will contribute to our understanding of the achievement gap in affluent, mixed suburban districts; a phenomenon which has been treated as a subset of the greater achievement gap discussions though it requires a different approach. By employing CRT, this research attempts to redirect the achievement gap conversation, offering a more critical lens to address improving minority student achievement.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Betty Baucum, Alfred Eugene Baucum, Aunt Rheta and Clarence Brown.

Acknowledgements

Mommy and Daddy, thanks for the calls and the dinners and the encouragement and, my newest favorite, the envelopes! Your unwavering support made this possible. Thank you!

Kimm, you are the best oldest sister EVER, you taught me how to read so this is ALL YOUR FAULT! Thanks!

Keri, my favorite ball of fire and baby sister, you showed me a different kind of dreaming. Thank you!

Kaelyn, you are just my favorite person in the world. I love you so much, thank you for being you Scoot!

Alan, Dula, and Jeff, thank you for all the pushing, feedback and support. I only hope that my scholarship will eventually make a contribution to improving the educational experiences of black and brown children in this country. Thank you all!

Dr. Leverett, thank you for being such a great sponsor, advocate, boss and mentor. You've contributed so much to my development, I'm appreciative beyond words. You are truly an equity warrior! Thanks!

Emily, WOW, finally!! From knitting to Tres Leches, Smashburger to fireworks…this has been amazing! I probably could have done this without you, but I sure wouldn't want to. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

None of my grandparents went to college, and yet I get to stand here and defend a Ph.D., an honor I don't take lightly. An honor I share with those before me, for they made this possible.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Martinsville, New Jersey is a racially integrated suburb known for its liberal,

affluent residents, and provides a rare opportunity for people to live in an integrated

community, despite being located in one of the most segregated states in the country[1].

Though Martinsville is racially integrated, critics often point out that the settling patterns

of its black and white residents resemble more of a checkerboard pattern than a "salt and

pepper" one since communities within the town are still very segregated (Kirwan Institute

for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, 2009). Among these

segregated communities exist pockets of poverty, usually exclusive only to black

neighborhoods.   Despite this, Martinsville is still grouped with a small number of towns

nation-wide which maintain a good level of racial balance in their schools. Examples of

other such towns include Shaker Heights, Ohio; Amherst, Massachusetts; Ann Arbor,

Michigan; South Orange/Maplewood, New Jersey; Madison, Wisconsin; and Princeton,

New Jersey (Minority Student Achievement Network, 2009). Though these towns were

not always officially affiliated, many united due to their trouble in one specific area: a

growing academic achievement gap between the black and white students in their

respective school districts.   In 1999, 15 multiracial suburban/urban school districts came

together to create the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) to pool their

resources in order to research and share best practices to close the gap between white and

black students; Martinsville was one of the founding districts (Minority Student

Achievement Network, 2009).

---

[1] http://www.realizethedream.org/reports/states/new-jersey.html

Following the Brown decision, Martinsville, like many municipalities, was forced

to deal with segregated schools. To avoid contentious, and potentially violent, public

arguments—which promised to compromise Martinsville's hard fought ideal suburban

oasis image—Martinsville opted to desegregate their schools. Rather than mandate

desegregation, as many other towns around the state and country were doing, Martinsville

designed a magnet program integrate their schools by enticing black residents to send

their children to newly integrated schools in white neighborhoods and white residents to

send their children to newly integrated schools in black neighborhoods. The result is still

in place today and has become a gem for Martinsville, as well as a nation-wide example

of how to use policy to achieve social goals[2].

Martinsville's magnet school program established themed-based elementary and

middle schools to encourage (and in some cases, justify) parents sending their children to

a school outside of their neighborhood. "Martinsville children do not necessarily attend

the school closest to their homes. There are no 'neighborhood' schools. Provided there is

space available and that racial balance is maintained, the magnet schools provide wide

flexibility of educational choice, and ensure that the entire township is the 'neighborhood

(2006-2010).'" This system has been maintained since 1977 and continues to provide the

town of Martinsville with integrated public schools (see Appendix A).

Despite Martinsville's stated commitment to diversity, remarkable efforts to

integrate schools, and programmatic efforts to increase minority achievement levels,

---

[2] While Martinsville has come to value its magnet program for the resulting student achievement, the original goals of the magnet program were to fulfill court-mandated desegregation orders. There were academic incentives provided by the themes to entice parents, but the goal was to integrate the schools (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

there still exists a marked achievement gap between the performance of white and black students across the Martinsville Public School district (see Appendix B).

Many explanations have been put forth to explain this phenomenon ranging from cultural deficiencies to oppositional culture. There has been a large amount of research done on the academic achievement gap between black and white students. However, often times these comparisons treat black students as a monolithic population, not looking to analyze the impact of socioeconomic status on this phenomenon. Research on the achievement gap often fails to take an in-depth look at black middle class families, following a general trend of recent scholarship, which has excluded discussions of the black middle class (Pattillo-McCoy, Black Picket Fences, 1999). Increasingly, there is a need to look at the ways class and race intersect with respect to the achievement gap. Lew found that "minority students may be adopting and negotiating a set of different cultural repertoires depending on the given social, economic and school context…That is, the role of race, class and culture on school achievement among minority students may be more nuanced and multidimensional that what has been previously argued" (Lew, 2006). As such, to fully understand the academic achievement gap between African-American and white students in an affluent suburb, we must look for a more dynamic explanation as current theories may not be fully relevant in affluent, middle class schools.

Statement of Problem

The African American community has long understood education to be the lynchpin to upward mobility (Anderson J. , 1988; Perry, 2003). For generations, blacks have fought for quality schools for their children; and while many victories have been won, academic disparities continue to exist between black and white students. With schools being doted as the "great equalizer," this pattern is troubling, not just in principle,

but because it threatens the upward mobility of an entire segment of our population, systemically excluding blacks from taking the same road to class ascension as other Americans. School systems continue to pose barriers for African Americans by not valuing the capital blacks bring to school and instead causing many to assimilate or code switch in a way required of few other groups. To succeed in schools, blacks are frequently required to suppress their own culture and adopt the norms of, or acceptable to, the dominant culture; in America, white, middle-class, protestant culture (Perry, 2003; Lareau, 2003; Anderson E. , 1999). This is a compromise blacks willingly made and make, when it is deemed to meet the promise of mobility (Carter, 2005). However, the other half of the negotiation contract continually remains unfulfilled. The academic achievement gap in communities like Martinsville clearly shows that capital is not yet strong enough to over-compensate for being black.

In America, the promise of middle-class is vast; offering exposure to middle-class amenities, security, upward mobility and status. For so many groups in America, to obtain middle-class standing is to have "made it." The suburbs were created for the middle-class; providing a space for middle-class values to flourish, extolling the virtues of the dominant class and keeping out the undesirable practices of the non-dominant groups in the cities (Jackson, 1985). Fundamentally, the promise of middle-class suburban living is safety from the challenges of lower-class living, and the key to status protection is the accumulation and transfer of social and political capital. Understanding this promise, blacks looked to middle-class living as the opportunity to give their children a better future by way of association, exposure and education. However, middle-class living has not offered African-Americans all of the protection they intended. Arguably,

the greatest disappointment has been the struggle for high academic achievement from African-American students in middle-class, suburban schools.   This is the reality in Martinsville. Despite their stated commitment to closing the achievement gap, Martinsville's programmatic approach has not delivered on its promise to eliminating the disparate academic outcomes between black and white students.

Research Questions

On February 2, 2009, Ms. Kelly Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, made a presentation to the Martinsville Board of Education detailing the district's progress on minority student achievement (Johnson, Minority High Achievement Report, 2009). She specifically points to Dr. Edmund Gordon's philosophies as the key "roadmap" for the district's approach to closing the academic achievement gap between the district's black and white students, quoting Dr. Gordon's advice that districts "focus on providing supplementary educational programs comprised of both in district programs and community partnerships" (Johnson, Minority High Achievement Report, 2009).

Mrs. Johnson points to 8 initiatives, both in district and community partnerships, to show "What's Working" in the Martinsville Public Schools to close the achievement gap between black and white students. Despite this effort, the achievement gap remains; leaving a lingering question about maximizing the effectiveness of programs aimed at closing the achievement gap in Martinsville and similar places. As such this research aims to explore the following questions: (1) what theories are most promising for improving minority student achievement in a mixed-race, suburban school district? (2) Based on these theories, is there a "best practice" model for solving the problem? (3) Based on these theories, what social, educational and community systems are required to

implement this model? (4) What are the possibilities and barriers within the current system for this to occur?

Theoretical Framework

Martinsville's programmatic attempts to close the academic achievement gap by improving minority student achievement were influenced by Dr. Edmund Gordon's theories of supplemental educational programs (Johnson, Minority High Achievement Report, 2009). Dr. Gordon's view of supplemental education programs rests on Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Capital. In Gordon's discussions of supplemental education programs, he often uses minority and poor students interchangeably, arguably because many African-American students have had limited access to dominant capital and therefore would benefit from supplemental educational programs (which Gordon argues should manifest the benefits of children raised in homes with dominant capital). However, in Martinsville which has a strong, black middle class community, we must look beyond just capital for explanations and solutions to the achievement gap. The inability or unwillingness of an institution to value cultural capital despite the carrier requires us to examine and evaluate Martinsville with a keen eye on race, racism, racialized structures and interactions. As such, this research will ultimately employ Critical Race Theory to ensure that race is at the center of the discussions about Martinsville's minority student achievement programs.

Capital Theory

Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2007) is a Reproduction Theorist, looking to describe how social inequality is reproduced through schools. Bourdieu argues that differences in school outcomes are attributed to the possession of certain types of valued of capital.

Capital is best described as "social energy." Bourdieu believes there are 3 types of capital: social, economic and cultural. Through his studies, he found that through the transmission of capital, the elite are able to reproduce wealth (Bourdieu, 2007). Schools are structured around middle class norms and habitus thereby accelerating students who bring middle-class cultural capital with them and undervaluing any other forms of cultural capital (specifically that of lower or working class families) (MacLeod, 1987). Bourdieu offers this as an explanation for why some students perform better in school than others.

Because of the value of capital and the access it provides, the fundamental question is how one attains capital and how capital is transmitted. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is most effectively transmitted through transmission from parents—who embody dominant cultural class—to their children.

Schools reproduce cultural capital by providing the structure where cultural capital can be converted into economic capital. Schools guarantee that academic credentials will have economic value, thus creating a "de facto" conversion rate between the two. Since schools value those in possession of dominant cultural capital, and those born into the dominant culture have greater access to dominant cultural capital, social class becomes—and is sustained as—an indicator of success. This contrasts with the narrative that schools equalize this. Rather than explicitly state the ways dominant cultural capital aids those with access to it, schools appear to be meritocratic where, "academic performance is apprehended as the result of individual ability by both high and low achievers…It implants in those it marginalizes a set of cognitive and evaluative categories that lead them to see themselves as the causal agents of a process that is

actually institutionally determined" (Bourdieu, 2007). Thus those who do not achieve social mobility are more likely to blame themselves for their failed efforts instead of looking at society as whole.

This point is particularly poignant in the United States where the pervasive narrative is that of opportunity; whoever is motivated can enhance their lives and the lives of their children through sheer hard work. Education continues to be the most effective way for an individual to become more upwardly mobile (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). However, what happens when this path is loaded with barriers making it increasingly difficult for some groups to progress? Bourdieu argues that schools are essentially staging grounds for capital to be learned and traded, making school only a partially academic endeavor.

Types of Capital

> The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given…It is the product of an endless effort at institution, of which institution rites—often wrongly described as rites of passage—mark the essential moments and which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits. In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term. (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 88)

Bourdieu calls capital "accumulated labor" (Bourdieu, 2007) which essentially provides those who possess it a currency to operate in society. "It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces

capital in all its forms" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 83). There are multiple forms of capital, though Bourdieu focuses on three main forms of capital: social, cultural and economic. These three forms of capital are most relevant when discussing education. Social capital is "made up of social obligations, which is convertible…and may be institutionalized" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 84). Social capital speaks to the ability to rely on networks of people to advance economic priorities. Cultural capital represents a way of being, a set of practices or habits which can be converted into economic capital in some instances. Cultural capital can be present in an embodied state, i.e. "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 84); an objectified state, in actual objects valued within a culture, i.e. art, books, furnishings, antiques, etc.; or an institutionalized state, "a form of objectification…which confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 84), i.e. academic qualifications or a prestigious job title.

Bourdieu argues that economic capital is at the heart of all forms of capital, though this may not always be apparent; and actually, it is in the interest of those in power to keep this truth from being flaunted. A clear, open conversion between types of capital risks accessibility for too many, rather, those in power prefer to control the flow and value of capital. For example, the value of an academic degree is not consistently calculated for all who obtain it. There are many factors which influence converting a degree (cultural capital) into money (economic capital).

> When the subversive critique which aims to weaken the dominant class through
> the principle of its perpetuation by bringing to light the arbitrariness of the
> entitlements transmitted and of their transmission is incorporated in

institutionalized mechanisms aimed at controlling the official, direct transmission

of power and privileges, the holders of capital have an ever greater interest in

resorting to reproduction strategies capable of ensuring better-disguised

transmission…Thus the more the official transmission of capital is prevented or

hindered, the more the effects of the clandestine circulation of capital in the form

of cultural capital become determinant in the reproduction of the social structure

(Bourdieu, 2007, p. 93).

As such, for individuals lacking social and economic capital, cultural capital—usually in

the form of academic degrees—is the most promising way toward upward mobility.

Furthermore, since schools value the cultural capital (in all forms) of the dominant class

in the United States (white, middle class); to optimize one's schooling experience, one

ought to display as many aspects of white, middle-class capital as possible. Edmund

Gordon goes as far as to say that the possession of dominant cultural capital is *required* to

make schools work; which is why Gordon advocates the use of the supplemental

education programs to provide access to dominant capital for students who desperately

need this capital—so that their schools will work for them (Gordon, Bridglall, & Saa

Meroe, 2005).

Capital theory falls short as an independent theory to explain and explore the

academic achievement gap in a town like Martinsville which is full of middle-class and

affluent blacks, possessing and exchanging dominant capital. Yet the achievement gap

still exists, meaning two things. One, school is not just responsible for replicating

societal inequality but creating it, but not in the ways previously mentioned (where

schools create inequality by reducing exposure to dominant capital). Two, it appears that

schools actually create social inequality by refusing to acknowledge dominant capital when it comes from black students, thus restricting access to a great education—the great equalizer in this country, the road to the American dream and the prize and protection of American middle-class living. So although the use of supplemental programs is about exposing students to dominant culture, in the case of Martinsville, we must look beyond this to fully examine the educational outcomes in Martinsville.

Critical Race Theory

Introduction

The term *achievement gap* has become a cliché, burdened with a set of beliefs and assumptions about the causes and solutions; so much so that the trajectory of most conversations about the achievement gap are pre-established leaving little room for an alternative vision, counter-narrative, or challenge to the status quo or discourse. The claim that closing the achievement gap is the "civil rights issue of our time" not only demonstrates a co-opting of the conversation by liberals, but also seems to turn the conversation into ambient noise. In the same way that the wars on poverty and drugs did little to undo these social problems, discussions about the achievement gap seem to have strayed away from an honest look at structural inequality and have instead turned minority student underachievement into a "fact of life," a societal ill that has been named and established as an unintended consequence of seemingly unrelated, unintentional social happenings (Parker & Lynn, 2002). The tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a much needed framework through which to look for institutional connections to explain current outcomes, be explicit about the social construction of race and the historical impact of racism (Dixson A. D., 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). As such, this research will employ CRT as the theoretical framework.

CRT is "a legal theory of race and racism designed to uncover how race and racism operate in the law and in society…a tool through which to define, expose, and address educational problems" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 7). CRT originally emerged as a legal framework by a group of legal scholars in response to the Neo-Marxists Critical Legal Studies movement, which emerged in the 1970s, and which failed to fully acknowledge the impact of racism in the United States legal system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado were among the original framers of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). "Critical Race Theorists understand the process of racialization (i.e. of creating social divisions based on race) as a historical one. To say that race as a concept has historical significance means to link contemporary racial inequality with past historical practices….It included the development of an ideology, and processes of spreading that ideology (mostly through education) to justify colonization" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, pp. 3-4). Accordingly, Critical Race Theorists are not only interested in creating equitable structures, but also in bringing to light the impact of past racial transgressions so that modifications are possible (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). A key notion of CRT is to challenge sixties- and seventies-based ideology which viewed and discussed racism in ways which did little to challenge the status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By viewing racialized behavior as unpredictable, infrequent events rather than as foreseeable and embedded, there was little opportunity to be more critical about racism in America and dismantle the institutions and structures which gave space to racialized acts of powers (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Furthermore, to the extent that scholars and society deluded themselves to believe that racist behavior

were one-off occurrences, they allowed a co-opting of the radical, African-American tradition of race-consciousness replacing it with an imagined theorem of colorblindness as the contemporary way to view and discuss race (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

In 1994, educational researchers Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, IV introduced CRT to the educational community as a useful theoretical frame for examining the role of race in schools (Dixson A. D., 2008). CRT was established as both a way of criticizing and understanding the pervasiveness of race and racism in the U.S. legal system and as an inherent call to action to alter the very understanding just established (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Dixson A. D., 2008). Following Ladson-Billings and Tate's initial use of CRT in education in 1995, CRT emerged as a powerful theoretical and analytical framework within educational research (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson A. D., 2008; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). Many Critical Race Theorists would likely agree with Bourdieu that schools are institutions that reproduce social inequity and disparate academic outcomes between white and black students (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). However, CRT in education goes further, offering a "framework to analyze…the ways in which the subtleties of race and racism can be illuminated. Moreover, through uncovering covert racism practices and the policies that support them, educators, students, families, and communities are able to devise strategies to counteract, resist, and/or forestall those practices' and policies' effects" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, pp. 29-30). To research Martinsville's supplemental education programs, created and/or employed to improve

minority student achievement, without utilizing CRT nearly ensures that surface level

answers will support the incongruent outcomes being produced by the status quo.

CRT: Theory and Tenets

There are six fundamental tenets to CRT: (1) racial realism or the permanence of

racism (2) interest-convergence, (3) voice/counter-story, (4) whiteness as property, (5)

critique of liberalism and colorblindness, and (6) restrictive versus expansive view of

equality (Dixson A. D., 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Racial Realism/The Permanence of Racism

This tenet of CRT argues that given the history of race in this country, racism

must be seen as embedded in our society. This clearly counters the notions that racist

acts are abnormal, despicable, isolated events from those "acting out." Instead, "the

permanence of racism suggests that racist hierarchical structures govern all political,

economic, and social domains. Such structures allocate the privileging of whites and the

subsequent *othering* of people of color in all arenas, including education" (DeCuir &

Dixson, 2004, p. 27). This tenet acknowledges both the social construction of race as

well as the very real impacts of racism (Dixson A. D., 2008; Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Furthermore, this tenet stipulates that attempts to say race no longer matters is part of an

ideology that "justifies and legitimates racial inequality in society" (Zamudio, Russell,

Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p. 3).

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence says that whites only concede when their interests converge

with the interests of black people. Bell traces this argument back to the Civil Rights

movement, exclaiming "that these basic rights came only inasmuch as they converged

with the self-interests of whites. We would add that these concessions were offered to

the extent that they were not seen (or exacted) as a major disruption to a 'normal' way of life for the majority of whites" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28). Thus the two components of interest convergence are not only a convergence of interest, but also maintenance of the current status dynamic, such that whites—even in the midst of compromise for social equity—retain their dominant position in the social hierarchy.

Voice/Counter-story

Crucial to understanding this tenet is the notion that it is difficult for the dominant group (in the United States this is white people) to get a firm grip on what it means to be non-white. Through storytelling, Critical Race Theorists hope to accomplish two objectives. The first is to create a compelling narrative that adequately and accurately communicates the power dynamic, or what W.E.B. DuBois termed the "double consciousness" that is to be a minority in America. The second objective is to release the minority story from the hands of the dominant power broker. Critical Race Theorists believe that storytelling and the use of narrative add a "different dimension" to investigating power dynamics, as these narratives may be the only space through which the truths and experiences of a marginalized population will be revealed to the dominant institution (Parker & Lynn, 2002). "Critical Race Theorists give voice to the experience and truths of those without power while simultaneously asking citizens to question the master narratives we have come to believe. Schools represent one of the major modes for disseminating the truths or master narratives of the dominant group and in doing so often silence alternative truths or narratives" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p. 5). Given this, Ladson-Billings and Tate argue that a thorough examination of the educational system must include the counter-story of minority students (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

Whiteness as Property

The United States' history is full of struggles over property rights; making the protection of property rights an ongoing priority for our government (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). "From the removal of Indians (and later Japanese Americans) from the land, to military conquest of the Mexicans, to the construction of Africans as property, the ability to define, possess, and own property has been a central feature of power in America" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 54). Critical Race Theorists argue that whiteness has come to be held in the same fashion, which is as a property. Almost discussing whiteness as a commodity, this tenet puts forth the notion that whiteness has a value for those who possess it; alongside this right is "the right of possession, the right to use, and the right to disposition" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28). The right to possession speaks to the specific privileges that come with being white. Since there is a value to being white, the right to disposition allows whites to value behaviors and ways of being that buttress notions of whiteness. For example, "when students are rewarded only for conforming to perceived 'white norms' or sanctioned for cultural practices (e.g. dress, speech patterns, unauthorized conceptions of knowledge), white property is being rendered alienable" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 59). Finally, whiteness as property permits those in possession to utilize their whiteness when convenient, for example when moving to gated communities, or through police traffic checks. In addition to the privilege of utilizing whiteness is the ability (or right) to exclude those *not* possessing this right (Dixson A. D., 2008). The resegregation of schools—through tracking, magnet programs, and the like—clearly demonstrates that "through the myriad policies and practices that restrict the access of students of color to high-quality curricula,

and to safe and well-equipped schools, school districts have served to reify this notion of whiteness as property whereby the rights to possession, use and enjoyment, and disposition, have been enjoyed almost exclusively by whites" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28).

Critique of Liberalism

Three liberal notions are at the center of the CRT critique of liberalism: colorblindness, the neutrality of the law and incremental change (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). While on an absolute scale, free of context, these notions are admirable, Critical Race Theorists argue that the racist history of the United States makes these ideas "insufficient (and many would argue disingenuous) to redress its deleterious effects" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). CRT scholars stipulate that purported colorblind ideology serves as a rationalization for the elimination of race-based policies (Gotanda, 1991); "arguing that society should be colorblind ignores the fact that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in the contemporary society" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). A colorblind ideology, even if truly achieved, also does not eliminate all racial acts.

The principal of incremental change is criticized by CRT scholars for prioritizing a change rate that is comfortable for whites over gains for marginalized groups. Incremental change focuses on equality versus equity, a futile effort since we know that individuals start from different points and have different experiences. As such, "processes, structures and ideologies that justify inequality are not addressed and dismantled" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). Unlike the notion of equity, which acknowledges an uneven playing field; equality does little to deal with the unfair experiences and outcomes each individual brings with them. "Hence, incremental change

appears to benefit those who are not directly adversely affected by social, economic, and educational inequity that come as a result of racism and racist practices" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). The overreliance on incremental change is an unshakable drawback of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Restrictive vs. Expansive View of Equality

This tenet calls attention to process versus outcomes when analyzing the impact of race-based policies. The expansive view of equality calls one to examine the result of a policy, its ability to truly rectify the impact of racial oppression. The restrictive view uses the current moment as a starting point, more concerned with preventing racial oppression from happening in the future; with little regard for the impact of past transgressions, the restrictive view sees racial equality as a process that may not necessarily need to have successful outcomes to be rendered successful.

Critical Race Theory offers great promise for analyzing racial subtleties that play out in schools. To date, most educational researchers utilizing CRT have focused on only two of the six tenets: counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism; some CRT scholars argue that CRT has yet to reach its full potential for educational research, practice and policies, explaining that a more robust framework ought to be established (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

> In this particular historical moment when attacks on remedies for educational inequity, such as affirmative action, are on the rise, it is essential that we utilize the full power of CRT, including whiteness as property, interest conversion and the critique of liberalism. These particular aspects of CRT are especially powerful because through them, researchers are able to uncover and unmask the persistent and oppressive nature of the normativity of whiteness, the co-option and distortion of oppositional discourses, and the ways in which policies that are offered as remedies to underachievement and educational disparity may not be in

the best interest of marginalized groups, but rather serve the elite. (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 30)

CRT in Education

In 1995 at the annual American Education Research Association conference, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate implored educators to begin to utilize CRT as a theoretical framework for educational research, practice and policies. In this session, they expressed their discontent with the current educational scholarship which overwhelmingly ignored race altogether or presented race as either an ideological construct (ascribing a set of beliefs to a group based on race, i.e. blacks don't value hard work) or an objective condition (fabricated notions which point to biological makers to illuminate distinctions between races) (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). They pushed for researchers to look more closely at "race and the racialization process as a basis for educational inequality" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p. 8). Given the racial history of this country, schooling for black students attending majority white schools is particularly challenging because of the covert ways racism manifests (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Therefore it is imperative that CRT be used to examine the academic achievement gap between black and white students, especially in mixed, suburban communities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

Schools continue to be yet another structure where the dominant culture can create structures to maintain power. This is not to say that there is malicious intent, however a pernicious intent is not a necessary condition for deleterious effects of racialized behavior (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011; Brooks, 2009). What

this understanding does dictate is that discussions of schools and educational outcomes must address this "unflinching insistence on white hegemony" (Brooks, 2009, p. 90) which pervades institutions and ideologies alike. Thus, Ladson-Billings and Tate offer three themes to discuss "social inequity in general, and school inequity in particular… (1) race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States; (2) U.S. society is based on property rights; and (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 48).

It should be made clear that Ladson-Billings and Tate are not accusing others of ignoring the impact of race, but rather are expressing their belief in a framework such as CRT which requires that the "intellectual salience [of theories about racism] be systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequality" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 50). For educational policy-makers, CRT would require a more expansive view to critically examine whether equity-seeking policies are designed to simply address versus eliminate educational inequality (Dixson A. , 2011).   Very specifically, in instances like Martinsville, this means being brutally honest about efforts purposed at eliminating racial inequity which ultimately do little to undo the status quo. For example, citing a desegregation plan in Buffalo which didn't particularly serve the black and Hispanic students but was still pointed to as a model school desegregation program: "Thus, a model desegregation program becomes defined as one that ensures that whites are happy (and do not leave the system altogether) regardless of whether African-American and other students of color achieve or remain" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 56). In Martinsville, the superintendent and his cabinet continue to

point to the success of Martinsville's minority student achievement programs though a marked gap still exists in black and white academic achievement and engagement.

Critical Race Theorists point to the Brown decision as a missed opportunity for more equitable education for African-American children (Dixson A. , 2011). By focusing on more equitable access to adequately resourced schools, attention was directed toward addressing "racial segregation, but not the substantive material inequity that resulted from racial segregation" (Dixson A. , 2011, p. 818). Many African-Americans parents were less concerned with the racial composition than with the unequal resources; their support of integration was about granting their students access to more well-resourced schools. Critical Race Theorist Derrick Bell has argued that rather than push integration, civil rights lawyers should have fought for the Plessy decision to be fully and adequately funded. "Similarly, Ladson-Billings posed the question, 'Can we at least get *Plessy?'* in the face of inequitable public schooling for black and Brown children in the United States today. Both of these ideas highlight the shortcomings of agitating only for access rather than equitable funding of schools, which was and is a concern relative to *Brown*" (Dixson A. , 2011, p. 819). Arguably this same scene is playing out in Martinsville, with parents committed and attempting to provide their children with an integrated, well-resourced education; and a district that is focused on a restrictive view of equality rather than an expansive one. Indeed, CRT will provide a thorough, critical framework through which to conduct research (and examination of past and current policies and practices) about the effectiveness of Martinsville's programmatic approach to closing the academic achievement gap.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The relevant literature comprises four themes: the academic achievement gap, academic identity, the black middle-class and supplemental education programs. Each of these areas is addressed below. The academic achievement gap is highly influenced by and connected to students' self-image and the creation of their academic identity. Until recently, the majority of the research done on the black-white achievement gap has omitted specific characteristics of the black middle class. However given the unique location of the black middle class in this country this research will explore specifically the black middle class. Finally, Martinsville's programmatic approach to the achievement gap—inspired by Dr. Edmund Gordon, requires a thorough examination of Gordon's supplemental education program research.

Academic Achievement Gap

In the United States, there is a gap between the academic outcomes of Asian and white students and black and Hispanic students. This gap can be seen across gender, class, location, parental education, and socioeconomic status. As a general rule, black and Hispanic students are under-represented in every positive academic measure (high honors/AP course placement, grade point average, SAT scores) and over-represented in every negative academic measure (remedial course placement, suspension, special education referral, graduation rates). "This gap appears before children enter kindergarten and it persists into adulthood" (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has shown a consistent gap between reading and math test scores of 17 year-old black and white students since 1970 (Jencks & Phillips, The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction, 1998).

Test Score Gap

Discussions of the achievement gap originally began when researchers identified pay differences between black and white males in their thirties who had taken the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). This led to discussions which questioned the ability of closing the test gap to close the earning gap between black and white men. This also led researchers to believe that test scores were simply proxies for family background. "In the 1960s, racial egalitarians routinely blamed the test score gap on the combined effects of black poverty, racial segregation, and inadequate funding for black schools. That analysis implied obvious solutions: raise black children's family income, desegregate their schools, and equalize spending on schools that remain racially segregated" (Jencks & Phillips, The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction, 1998).

Hedges and Nowell used test score data from a number of national surveys which span almost 30 years to see how the gap between black and white students has changed over time. Using the Equality of Educational Opportunity, 1965; National Longitudinal Study of High School Class of 1972; High School and Beyond, 1980 and 1982; National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth, 1980; and National Longitudinal Study, 1992, Hedges and Nowell measured the ratio of the proportion of blacks scoring above or below a given percentile to the corresponding proportion of whites (blacks are overrepresented when the ratio is larger than 1, and underrepresented if the ratio is smaller than 1) and found that while there had been a reduction in the ratio at every percentile, over time there had been little change in the ratio for the top 10% (Hedges & Nowell, 1998). This study revealed that from 1965 to 1992, blacks are over-represented below the 50th, 25th, 10th and 5th percentiles and grossly underrepresented at the 50th, 75th, 90th and 95th percentiles.

According to the NAEP test results, the testing gap between black and white students narrowed during the 1970's and 1980's. Extensive research has been conducted to identify what accounts for growth or narrowing of the achievement gap at different points in time.

> Reading and math scores rose for black and white students at all ages between 1971 and 1996. But blacks gained much more than whites, narrowing the black-white test score gap by 0.2 to 0.6 standard deviations…blacks who entered school in 1968 did little better than those who entered in 1960. Cohorts of blacks entering between 1968 and 1980 made large gains. Among blacks entering after 1980, math scores were stable or increased slightly, while reading scores declined (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998, p. 221).

Some believe that national initiatives such as "federally funded preschools, compensatory funding of elementary schools with large numbers of poor students, desegregation of many schools, affirmative action in college and professional school admissions, and

expanded social welfare programs for poor families (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998, p. 183)" contributed to the growth in minority student achievement. The impact of these programs, many of which began in the mid-60s would have changed the home environments for students in the 70s and 80s, possibly explaining the narrowing of the gap. These two decades also saw more attention to education for all children, with "increased early schooling for non-poor children, greater per pupil expenditures, smaller classes, increases in the proportion of teachers with master's degrees, and increases in teachers' experience (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998, p. 183)" likely contributing to all students, blacks including, receiving a better education. Finally, changes in the family structure may also add to the explanation for the narrowing of the gap in the 70s and 80s. This time saw changes for middle class and poor blacks. Many blacks were better educated, had smaller families and moved to more affluent suburban communities. Poor blacks saw an increase in the number of single-parent homes; many were living in inner-city areas with other poor blacks, with a growing percentage of black children who were in poverty (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson, 1998).

Academic Achievement Gap: Theories and Explanations

One of the fundamental challenges in this conversation is to identify the causes of the achievement gap. As any well-defined solution begins with a well-defined problem, it is likely that one of our greatest quarrels will be on building consensus on the causes of the gap. Topping the list of possible causes is: a culture of poverty, schooling and its structures, culture, genetics, health issues linked to poverty, and a scarcity of two-parent black homes. There are also a number of theories, including oppositional culture and stereotype threat.

Jencks and Phillips argue that the achievement gap in schools is closely connected to the racial wage gap in society, via the black-white test score gap. They point to how tests are used to grant or deny access to selective colleges and university, and suggest that decreasing the test score gap would open pathways once denied. Perhaps optimistically, Jencks and Phillips believe that by closing the test score gap, the playing field is level. "Eliminating racial differences in test performance would also allow colleges, professional schools and employers to phase out the racial preferences that have caused so much political trouble over the past generation" (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). What is interesting is that these authors seem to believe that eliminating racial disparities in schools should, and could, precede eliminating racial disparities in society, and that "changes in education and earnings would in turn help reduce racial differences in crime, health, and family structure" (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Arguably, racial inequality in school is a *reflection of* racial inequality in society; therefore it doesn't make sense that schools would be able to undo these inequalities first, particularly if schools (and those in control in schools) have not yet dealt with the ways that schools *reproduce* the inequalities present in society.

Mindy Kornhaber points to the misuse of testing data to argue that Jencks and Phillips are contributing to the "overvalued and thus misused (Prospect, 1998)" application of standardized test scores. Furthermore they argue that by focusing on test scores, you risk ignoring cognitive and intellectual development. "Because test scores are only an indirect and partial proxy for true mental muscle, policies aimed at boosting scores do not always overlap with policies for building minds" (Prospect, 1998). Instead, Kornhaber suggests that schools work on their ability to engage students over long

periods of time, through quality teachers, effective techniques and structures. She further argues that schools must operate in ways that lessen the "psychological and social costs" (Prospect, 1998) of achievement for African-American students.

Claude Steele takes on this very notion in a response to Jencks and Phillips. "I worry that there isn't much of a relationship, and that the real causes of the earnings gap are other problems for which both low test scores and low earnings are symptomatic" (Prospect, 1998). Steele's studies point to another problem, namely the stereotypes circulating in society regarding the ability of blacks and the impact of these stereotypes. Steele studied students' performance on tasks and found that "when students are placed in a situation in which a poor performance on a standardized test would support a stereotype of inferior abilities because of the students' ethnicity or gender, then the student's performance suffers" (Singham, 1998). The reason being, students are more likely to discount the evaluations, since they do not believe they adequately measure their ability. This distance between one's self-esteem and his academic performance, Steele argues, causes him to "disidentify" with certain measures of academic performance, i.e. standardized tests. Steele argues that the pervasiveness of the stereotypes about blacks in our society dictates that we address this issue prior to policies aimed specifically at closing the achievement gap. He conjectures that with the former, the latter will be ineffective and possible "perpetuate a victim-blaming framework for thinking about racial inequality" (Prospect, 1998).

Steele's theory has been widely debated and discussed. In particular, Stephen Morgan and Jal Mehta's study raised the question, "Why might black students discount performance evaluations but remain identified with achievement in school" (Morgan &

Mehta, 2004)? Morgan and Mehta point to the different reactions students have once exposed to stereotype threat; some work even harder, some do not. Their argument is that the reaction is far too complicated and unknown to make such a strong connection between stereotype threat and disassociation, "our evidence suggest that, at least for black students in the academic domain, disidentification is not the likely outcome" (Morgan & Mehta, 2004).

Larry Hedges and Amy Nowell spent time looking at the changes in the black-white test gap over time, and frame their findings by making the point that test scores indicate different outcomes depending on the model being used. They suggest that standardized tests actually measure the amount of formal instruction one has successfully received, in this way "test score[s] reflect the joint consequences of social conditions, schooling, and perhaps innate ability that facilitates the use of both" (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). Hedges and Nowell identify three theories which often dominant the list of achievement gap causes: differences in social class, differences in family structure and functioning, and discrimination against blacks as a stigmatized group (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). Furthermore, what Hedges and Nowell found in their research is that as the socioeconomic status of blacks increases, so does the academic performance of their children. They pointedly credit increased socioeconomic status among blacks as solely responsible for the narrowing of the achievement gap, versus any other social programs (i.e. head start, smaller classes, etc.).

Amy Orr builds on this point as she looks into the impact of wealth on the achievement gap. Orr spends a great deal of time distinguishing between socioeconomic status, income and wealth. Her argument is that researchers often bucket wealth, income

and socioeconomic status; which in her opinion is over simplistic and misses the chance to truly understand how wealth impacts socioeconomic status. She defines wealth as the monetary value of all assets, minus debts, and found that barring all factors, whites have more wealth than blacks (Orr, 2003). Orr points to the social, cultural and human capital accessible to those with high levels of wealth; tutors, museum trips, college tuition, home libraries and less time at work are all attainable for those with wealth. Conversely, these may not be accessible to those without wealth. Orr argues that this is important for two reasons: "the effect of wealth on achievement is explained mainly by the effect of wealth on the amount of cultural capital to which a child is exposed" (Orr, 2003), and black students' knowledge of their parent's inability to pay for college may cause the student to lower his/her expectations and motivation.   In addition to this finding, Orr complicates the connection between test scores achievement and wealth by explaining that "after class factors are controlled, race has a significant effect on achievement. Black children tend to score lower on standardized achievement tests than do white children, even after parental income, education, occupation, and wealth are taken into account" (Orr, 2003).

Pedro Noguera and his team found similar outcomes in looking at students at Berkeley High School, however they found that it is not just the socioeconomic status of the student, but the way "student resources—economic, social, and cultural capital—interact with the structure of the school to perpetuate disparities in student outcomes and experiences" (Rubin, et al., 2006). Noguera et al take on school structures and demonstrate how the very structures intended to assist students were really very oppressive, in extremely subtle ways, and an integral part of reproducing racial and class inequalities.

These findings beg the question, what is causing this gap in achievement? If parental income, education, occupation and wealth do not account for the differences, what does? John Ogbu argues that "the performance of any given minority depends on a complex interplay of factors, such as whether the minority is a voluntary one…or an involuntary one…and the perceptions of the community toward that minority" (Singham, 1998). As such, individuals of the minority group may adopt an oppositional culture as a way of dealing with the oppression from the dominant group. Blacks "respond [to the dominant group's oppression] in ways that reinforce their separate existence and collective identity, usually made based on their perceptions of the dominant groups' collective identity" (Ogbu, 2007). In schools, the result of this oppositional culture, Ogbu argues, is that black students are less likely to adopt those practices which lead to academic success for fear of being labeled "acting white." Ogbu is not overly deterministic, and explains that not all blacks respond in opposition to the dominant culture, and that some blacks have developed strategies to cope with their perceived need to "act white." This attempt to deal with the demands to behave and talk like the dominant group is what Ogbu coined, "the burden of acting white."

Ogbu expanded this theory while studying black academic achievement in Shaker Heights, Ohio. What he found is that the black students in this affluent suburb were academically disengaged, despite understanding the importance of hard work. "Black students recognized the importance of working hard to make good grades, but they had not developed the habit of working hard to make good grades or making it a priority" (Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu spends the majority of the study identifying the reasons why students are disengaged and trying to understand the gap between the students'

aspirations and their educational outcomes. What Ogbu ultimately finds is that black students, for a variety of reasons, do not always link this country's opportunity structure to education. Referencing the experience of blacks in America prior to the civil rights movement when blacks were openly discriminated against, and did not receive "equal benefits of school credentials…for black Americans the link between school credentials, on the one hand, and upward social mobility, on the other hand, remained relatively weak" (Ogbu, 2003). However, Ogbu points to variation among students' perceptions of an unequal opportunity structure; for some it was a motivating factor, for others it heightened their level of skepticism as to the real value of academic credentials.

The Will to Change

Some researchers also point to ways that blacks can impact the achievement gap, sometimes in combination with changes the school is making; sometimes despite what the schools are doing. Hedges and Nowell attribute the narrowing gap to an increase in the socioeconomic status of blacks. "The finding that social-class variables appear to have played a role in the reductions of group differences over time suggests that a policy of reducing social-class differences may be needed to reduce group differences in test scores" (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). However, that alone is not enough, for Hedges and Nowell's research found that even after holding socioeconomic status constant, an achievement gap still remains. To explain this, they return to the value we place on test scores and the impact of such a practice. "If test scores affect outcomes via the intervening variable of opportunities (for example, opportunities for entry into relatively closed professions), then interventions that are intended to create opportunities for entry may be more direct" (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). Essentially, it is not about the scores on the exams, it is what the scores indicate. In other words, the issue is the type of access

the scores provide and the predictive value we give them. Hedges and Nowell suggest that to attain a more equitable society, we need not focus specifically on closing the achievement gap so much as we should look at ways to open up more opportunities to more people.

Discussions of opening up more opportunities most certainly lead to conversations of affirmative action and affirmative action-type policies, a divisive subject in this country. There are many potential solutions, however many of them elide a crucial element to this conversation--present in at least half of the readings on the achievement gap. This missing element speaks directly to our will to change. What is almost uncontested is the way that the current opportunity structure *inside and outside of schools* impacts the achievement levels of African-American students. Noguera makes this point explicitly, "there is considerable evidence that we can make it possible for any child to learn…however, for too long we have lacked the will to insure that the circumstances and ingredients that we know are essential…are created for all children" (Noguera, 2004). Much of the literature points to white privilege and the false notion of a meritocracy as undergirding our unwillingness to change. White privilege "refers to the advantages that white people receive simply by virtue of their appearance" (Singleton & Linton, 2006). White privilege is what allows measurements of white behavior to be seen as the "natural state of society" while measurements for blacks are seen as the problem (Singham, 1998). If society is viewed through a lens where whiteness is the norm, than when problems with the norm arise, blacks need to adjust and—arguably—act white. The problem with the "act white" solution is that "black people are not as impressed with the virtues of whites…Given the behavior of whites during the time of slavery, to ask

blacks to regard whites as role models for virtuousness seems presumptuous, to put it mildly" (Singham, 1998).

How does this notion of white privilege connect to school achievement? Amy Orr found in her study that even after all class factors are controlled (income, education, occupation and wealth); black children are still performing below white students. And while it is tempting to point to cultural differences as preventing blacks from pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, research findings demonstrate that another force is at play. Namely, that the notion of a meritocracy is likely a fallacy:

> A common belief held by many Americans is that if you want to be successful, all you have to do is try. Success, according to many, can be attained by any who want it badly enough…The findings of this study, in addition to several previous studies that have shown a significant relationship between family background and achievement, contradict the notion that opportunities to achieve are equally open to all individuals…Despite the emergence of egalitarian ideologies, individuals in American society do not have equal opportunities. While the American stratification system is characterized as being open—allowing individuals to escape the levels at which they were born—there are limits to mobility, some of which are not based on personal strengths or deficiencies. (Orr, 2003)

For whites, this is extremely troublesome because of their value and belief in their having "earned" everything they have received. (Singleton & Linton, 2006) If you adopt this perspective and look honestly at the lack of meritocracy, the lack of opportunity, and the lack of awareness of white privilege among those who possess it, you will inherently propose a different set of solutions. As opposed to looking at ways to close the

achievement gap, the essential question becomes "To what degree do you and your system have the will, skill, knowledge and capacity to understand and address issues of race as they relate to existing racial achievement disparities" (Singleton & Linton, 2006)? This is certainly a rephrasing of the question and one that demands that white people understand and acknowledge their role in the lack of academic achievement taking place with black students. Arguably, this avoidance has contributed to our overall lack of progress toward closing the gap.

Academic Identity

Another prevalent topic in the literature is the academic identity of African-Americans, or the way African-American children see themselves as students. A student's academic identity will guide the choices he makes, how he responds to adversity, the goals he sets and where he believes school fits into the pursuit of his goals. To understand the academic identity of black students requires knowledge of how families, schools and communities operate; for the blurred boundaries between each means that what happens in one sphere impacts what happens in another. Policy decisions in schools are a key part of this interplay, this back and forth between how black students see themselves and how schools see them. Any attempt to understand a district's plan to close the academic achievement gap must start with an understanding of the union and intersection of how schools see African-American children, how African-American children see school, and how African-American children see themselves (Perry, 2003). "By focusing also on academic identity, the point should be made that African-American students' identity is not formed in response to the existence of the achievement gap. Rather, the achievement gap is the result of the warping of African-American academic identity and the ways African-American students are able or unable,

willing or unwilling to respond" (Perry, 2003). Thus, this literature will focus on academic identity formation, particularly as it plays out in schools.

The academic identity of African-Americans is influenced by three factors: their blackness, institutional responses to their blackness (namely teacher expectations) and their individual response to institutions (or their perceived legitimacy of "the meritocracy"). Lori Latrice Martin, quotes Wright as saying, "blackness is in many ways the product of contradictions, which involves treating the collectivity of individuals who identify themselves as black as a generic group despite their social, economic, political, and cultural differences" (Martin, 2010). For many African-Americans, this forced homogeneity automatically requires a trade-off when making decisions about how to operate in the world. "Will I align myself with my race though there are aspects of my home group with which I disagree?" Because of the history of blackness in this country and the way blackness is defined and received in schools, for many black students, academic achievement quickly becomes about making a difficult choice, which on its face appears to be a choice between isolation (the academic road given the few numbers of black students) or mediocrity (given the experience and outcomes for students who too tightly…and maybe too openly…"cling" to their blackness). Ron Ferguson uses a compelling metaphor to discuss achievement between black and white students, comparing them to tribes of runners, Ferguson discusses the isolation black students may feel in honors and AP classes.

> Talented runners in the black tribe might find it easier and socially more
> satisfying simply to accommodate the slower pace of their friends, instead of
> breaking away. Breaking away academically while remaining connected socially

may require code switching and navigating back and forth between black and white social groups. Inability or unwillingness to do these things to signal his or her identification with other black students may be the main reason for the occasions when black high achievers get accused of acting white (Ferguson, 2007).

Black students have multiple factors to consider in negotiating their academic identity: their beliefs based on their upbringing; how their peers will respond; potential isolation by other blacks; potential rejection by whites; and negotiating the academic risk of embracing "blackness" or popular culture and the payoff of abandoning or compromising one's "blackness" (Carter, 2005). Prudence Carter found a group of students in her research who were aware of the trade-offs here and opted to make those tradeoffs in order to attain dominant cultural capital, "Bettina believed that the benefits of dominant cultural capital outweighed the rewards of her peers' full acceptance of her as an authentic black person" (Carter, 2005, p. 62). This is not a judgment of blacks who do or do not disregard the acceptance of their peer group, however, this is to point out the negotiation African-American students must make in discovering their academic identity. Understanding this deserves the full attention of researchers and policymakers as, "the role of race, class, and culture on student achievement among minority students may be more nuanced and multidimensional than what has been previously argued" (Lew, 2007, p. 376).

"Students derive their aspirations and standards for academic performance from parents, teachers, peers, carriers of popular culture, and their own sense of what is achievable and appropriate" (Ferguson, 2007). African-American students must read all

of these groups and somehow piece together an identity they believe in. The literature

will show that this process is far from seamless, and that there are often huge gaps

between some of these pieces; particularly for African-American students. Mary Pattillo-

McCoy's look into the experience of middle-class, suburban blacks found that African-

American teens were not atypical in coming to terms with their identity, however the

difference lay in the societal response to some behaviors, "Adolescence is color-blind in

its demands for excitement and its propensity to test the boundaries…But the stakes are

higher for Groveland youth…Even the youth who do not officially join a gang, and never

commit a delinquent act, but who mimic media gangtas in their fashions, language, walk

and general disposition, are at risk of being misread by the more devoted bad men, or by

the official agents of social control, like the police" (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). This quickly

called into question the double-standard here, for white children spend enormous

amounts of money at stores such as Urban Outfitters, attempting to capture a more

authentic, urban look in the suburbs and face little recourse from such representation.

African-American youth are not afforded the same privilege. A research participant

detailed in Prudence Carter's work in Yonkers questions this,

> Like, in school, a lot of black people wear their hoods on their head. Then they
>
> think we down with a gang or something. It's not really like they a part of a gang
>
> or something. People do that because they want to do it. Anybody could put they
>
> hood on they head," he said. "I understand why you can't wear a hood in a
>
> building or something, but if a sweatshirt came with a hood, why you can't wear
>
> it? Why you got to be a part of a gang or something?" Why, he wondered, were
>
> he and his black peers marked as gangsters because they fashioned themselves

after the "thuggish" appearance of favored rappers in the hip hop world? (Carter, 2005)

This example highlights the disconnect between how a student intends to portray himself and how he is received. The literature shows two disconnects. African-American students either fail to understand why they are being incorrectly labeled based on their appearance and demeanor (Carter, 2005) or they understand that they are being incorrectly labeled but either underestimate or disregard the consequences of such a label. "But young [suburban black students] must be more vigilant in separating style from behavior, and particularly aware of who is reading their styles, and how those styles might be interpreted" (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Black students, middle-class black students in particular, need to understand the impact of their decisions to "play a role" depending on who is around and what the objective is; this seems like a higher level of code-switching; though the literature shows that black students' willingness to role play is often connected to their belief in fairness in society. Thus, the likelihood that a student chooses to abandon culture, pop culture, style, etc. to not risk being incorrectly labeled, often depends on the student's belief in a fair outcome. If a student believes that he will get in trouble, harassed by the police, rejected from a college, denied a job, etc. regardless of his behavior, then why bother conforming? Furthermore, if a student believes that academic engagement and/or high academic achievement requires conforming and believes that such achievement will not be rewarded, then a student's academic identity becomes tied to the perceived legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of the meritocracy supposedly embedded in schools and society.

This process differs for blacks versus whites and may contribute to the achievement gap. White students can form their personal identity in step with their academic identity because (1) schools affirm their personal identity and (2) academic identity does not come at the expense of a personal identity. In this way, schools create and reinforce helpful identities for white students and potentially harmful identities for black students.

> …some research indicates that members of subordinate groups (e.g. blacks) rely more on self-affirming family and friends in forming an academic identity, while dominants (e.g. whites) more often take their cues from school personnel and the performance feedback conveyed by grades and achievement test scores. Whatever the reason—be it the perception of glass ceilings and blocked opportunities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1985), an inability to bond with teachers (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), or avoidance of discomfort when performance disappoints (Crocker & Major, 1989)—such a turning away from school is likely to prove costly in the long run…finding [the school] avenue for building social capital cut off, they [African-American and Latino students] turn to others, but [the others] are ones that frighten school personnel and do not encourage school commitment (Gosa & Alexander, 2007).

There is undeniably a shared responsibility here for while black parents may pass on a different type of capital to their children (though many pass on dominant, middle-class capital), if schools are unable or unwilling to value the capital that black children bring, black students will continue to amass the type of capital required for trading in their "world." Then the problem becomes that the capital they amass is off-putting to the

dominant culture, further alienating minority students from the very power structure designed to offer access to capital (and therefore institutional change). There are at least four layers here: capital given at home, capital devalued in school, non-dominant capital amassed, and schools/society response in fear or disapproval. Most fascinating is that within this process, African-American students and African-American capital appear to be the cause of the problem. "The spiral of contextual constraints is unforgiving: it is the harsh reality of racial stratification that can cause black children, even in families of high economic standing and abundant home resources, to fall short of their educational potential" (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). However, this is not because the black students did not *value* the dominant capital, but because of the institutional response. If the achievement gap has grown out of academic disengagement, and academic disengagement has grown as a part of a students' identity, which is directly connected to their schooling experience, than (1) the academic achievement gap is not reflective of a cultural deficiency and (2) any solution to the academic achievement gap must address the way schools value the capital and identity of black students.

Teacher Beliefs, Expectations and Perceptions

Effects on Identity Formation

The literature is very clear on how central teacher expectations are to African-Americans academic identity formation.

As students and teacher immerse themselves in the routines of schooling, both perceptions and expectations reflect and determine the goals that both students and teachers set for achievement, the strategies they use to pursue the goals, the skills, energy, and other resources they use to implement strategies, and the rewards they expect from making the effort (Ferguson, 2003).

This is an important piece of the negotiation black students go through when identifying their academic identity and the literature shows this process is extremely racialized (Carter, 2005; Perry, 2003; Lewis, 2007; Rubie-Davies, 2010).

Ron Ferguson (Ferguson, 2002) conducted a study where he asked students, "When you work really hard in school, which of the following reasons are most important for you?" Black students responded that teacher encouragement inspired them to work hard in school, more than for white students and also more than teacher demands. The opposite was true for white students, for whom teacher demands were a more common response. "These racial and ethnic differences are not explained by measures of socioeconomic status. The emphasis among nonwhites on teacher encouragement, as distinct from teacher demands, suggests the special importance of teacher-student relationships as a source of achievement motivation for blacks and Hispanics, in particular" (Ferguson, 2002). The impact of teacher expectations is even greater when the teacher's belief in his/her students is class-wide, rather than individual (Rubie-Davies, 2010).

Numerous studies (Jussim & Kolb, 1994; Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984; Ferguson, 2003) show that teacher perceptions of students' ability impacts the way teachers interact with the students, that these interactions matter for African-American students in a very real way, particularly when compared to the impact of these perceptions on white students, and that teacher perceptions and actions can alter the achievement trajectory for a previously successful student. This contributes to the discussion in a more nuanced way, by showing the weight students give to their teachers' expectations of their performance (and not the demands). Ronald Ferguson points to this

type of bias as "sustaining" rather than "self-fulfilling" explaining that this behavior is not based on the current student, rather it "produces expectations that are 'sustaining' of past trends…[and is] likely to block the absorption of new information into a decision process and thereby to sustain the trend the existed before the new information arrived" (Ferguson, 2003). Ferguson is arguing, as others have, that teachers' overreliance on their perceptions of African-American students may blind them to new information which challenges their bias. In the best case, this leads to a battle, where a self-assured student perceives his teachers' bias against or lack of belief in his abilities, yet is committed to challenging this very notion. This interaction has far-reaching implications for the student and ultimately depends on the teacher's willingness or ability to challenge his own bias (Jussim & Kolb, 1994).

> How children react when teachers treat them as low achievers depends on the beliefs these children hold about themselves and on the rigidity of their teachers' negative expectations. Children who believe they are intelligent and competent may attempt to change their teachers' erroneous beliefs by working harder and behaving better. In most cases, these efforts will be successful and teaches will revise their expectations upward. In some cases, however, children may find that it is impossible to change their teachers' negative beliefs. Teachers may rigidly resist modifying their expectations about a student when they are highly confident that their beliefs are valid or when they believe that the basis for their expectations is some stable factor…when children's efforts to change their teachers' erroneous beliefs fail, they may give up trying to change those beliefs, rebel or withdraw from classroom activities, and work even less hard at school.

Ultimately, they may come to objectively confirm their teachers' negative expectations. Thus, a self-fulfilling prophecy may occur, because the teacher's low expectations created an environment that led the student to confirm these originally false beliefs (Jussim & Kolb, 1994).

A similar risk is present even for teachers who appear to be neutral or indifferent regarding the achievement potential of African-American students, for those teachers are not likely to be proactive in revealing the potential of black students (Ferguson, 2007). This seems incredibly important for two reasons: (1) we know that African-American students more highly value and respond to their teachers' encouragement and (2) for African-American students who are struggling with realizing their academic potential or identity, either because they are going against their peers or because they simply haven't seen consistent academic success before, this is damaging, for in the absence of a positive academic identity, perhaps there is a greater inclination to form a negative one. "These finding also strongly indicate that teacher expectations do not merely sustain pre-existing differences in student achievement but can also increase these differences" (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984).

Ronald Ferguson speculates that teacher expectations for black students may be more unyielding than for white students and that the impact may collect from one year to the next (Ferguson, 2003); this type of academic "weathering[3] (Geronimus, Hicken, & Bound, 2006)" is certain to have an impact on the academic identity of black students and the way they approach and engage in school. It is worth noting that the effect of such a

---

[3] Weathering is a hypothesis by Arline Geronimus which "posits that blacks experience early health deterioration as a consequence of the cumulative impact of repeated experience with social or economic adversity and political marginalization" (Geronimus, Hicken, & Bound, 2006, p. 826).

pervasive sentiment regarding the potential of an individual or group of students may have the power to undo the individual agency of a student; "teachers can behave in ways that communicate their achievement expectations to their students (expectations that may *deviate* from a student's prior achievement)…such treatment may also indirectly inform students about expected behavior and thereby affect student self-image" (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984).

These points are extremely important as they demonstrate how individual sentiments essentially become institutional barriers. The energy and commitment required for a student to overcome this perspective can be daunting, for he is unable to begin each year with a fresh opportunity to demonstrate his commitment and ability. Instead, he is starting at a deficit, forced to overcompensate for the biased, potentially racialized, and unchecked anecdotal experience of last year's teacher. Once with his new teacher, if the student misbehaves he runs the risk of the new teacher forming a disparaging image of the student and treating the student "as [a] low achiever by providing [him] with a less emotionally supportive environment, less clear and positive feedback, fewer challenging and difficult assignments, and fewer opportunities to demonstrate their competences" (Jussim & Kolb, 1994). This type of treatment not only lowers the engagement among these students, but can actually evoke from the student behaviors which may confirm the teachers' previously and loosely-based disparaging view of the student (Jussim & Kolb, 1994).

Jerome Brophy is skeptical about the impact of a teacher's erroneous expectations, arguing "few teachers can sustain grossly inaccurate expectations for many of their students in the face of daily feedback that contradicts those expectations"

(Ferguson, 2007). But this does not acknowledge the rigid images with which black students must contend from some teachers, and it also does not acknowledge that many students are not given the chance to offer a counter-narrative. Consider the black girl who is never called on; is she to shout her answer out without being acknowledged first? Certainly this will carry disciplinary consequences which will do little to contradict those expectations.   There is also a racialized notion here, even in terms of how teachers perceive certain behaviors. Consider the play of little boys, when seen among white males it is dismissed as "boys being boys," yet seen among black males is "hyperactivity and aggression."   Consider the little boy who has to go to the bathroom and is told to wait, while his white counterpart is allowed to go (Lewis, 2007). When he [rightfully] objects, is he confirming or contradicting his teacher's lowered expectations of him? There are ways for schools to devalue the culture African-Americans bring, yet these are the spaces where African-American children must operate in if they are to contradict the expectations of their teachers.

How Teacher Perceptions are Formed

Teacher's own social origins exercise a strong influence on how they respond to students. And their class position might matter, in addition to their professional competence…[researchers] found that both black and white teachers from high socioeconomic classes or advantaged social origins evaluated black students significantly more negatively than white students on both non-cognitive and cognitive factors. Among teachers from low socioeconomic origins, race did not matter in their evaluations. In other words, class, though inextricably linked to race, also matters in spaces of instruction (Carter, 2005, p. 70).

Teachers, like other people, form perceptions about the students with whom they come into contact. Teachers are not being asked to suspend judgment of their students. The best teachers do just the opposite, using extraordinary interpersonal skills to identity and interpret student needs; even if the student is unable to articulate them. In this instance, a teacher is determining the best way to support a particular student to ensure that he/she reaches their full potential. This is an asset among great teachers and something to be lauded. However, there are also examples of teachers forming perceptions of students which essentially excuse the teacher for maintaining a bias about that student. This is particularly harmful when the bias causes the teacher to question the potential of a student; when the perceptions are not about what a student needs, but rather about the ways in which the student is deficient. The literature is clear on the impact of teacher perceptions. The other side of this phenomenon is how teacher perceptions are formed.

The majority of the literature suggests that teacher perceptions of student ability are formed based on the student's past performance, and this is often seen as racial neutral. However given the racialized ways schools operate, this may not always be the case; particularly in instances where previous academic outcomes were connected with race (Ferguson, 2003). Teachers form perceptions of their students outside of, or in accord with, past performance. Ronald Ferguson, quoting Sara Lawrence Lightfoot acknowledges that over time teachers racialized ideas about students become "increasingly stereotyped and children become hardened caricatures of an initially discriminatory vision" (Ferguson, 2007). This is not a judgment against teachers; however what this does is contextualize the lens through which teachers see past

performance, student behavior *and therefore* student potential. According to Baron, Tom and Cooper, "the race or class of a particular student may cue the teacher to apply the generalized expectations…in this manner, the race or class distinction among students in perpetuated…it becomes difficult for minority or disadvantaged students to distinguish themselves from the generalized expectation" (Ferguson, 2007).

Teachers come to school with a notion of how children are to behave and are likely to make assumptions based on a number of factors about their students, their students' behavior, capability, and potential (Jussim & Kolb, 1994).   By understanding fully the impact of teacher expectations on student learning, it is clear how teacher expectations and perceptions of students play a role in the achievement gap. The literature shows that teachers see students in very racialized ways and when left unchecked, this has grave repercussions for student learning, achievement and indeed their academic identity (Lewis, 2007; Perry, 2003). "A further implication of teacher's expectations is that when teachers have high expectations for some students and low for others this may lead to a halo effect in which teachers also perceive there to be differences in student characteristics" (Rubie-Davies, 2010). This contributes to the caricature of black students in a teacher's mind, and is actually more dangerous because the teacher believes this image is more authentic as it is based on *her own experience*. This again contributes to the bridge which quickly promotes personal bias and perceptions into institutional barriers. Furthermore, this requires a level of agency— again—of black children that is (1) unlike that which is required of white children and (2) underestimated—and sometimes completely off the radar screen—by their parents.

Ron Ferguson explores the impact of teacher perceptions and found two pertinent points. First, teachers "are less flexible in their expectations for blacks, females and students from low-income households," making it difficult for children to overcome the low expectations of them held by their teachers (Ferguson, 2003). Second, some children, by nature of their cultural values, are more or less likely to be impacted by their teachers' expectations of them. For those students who depend heavily on their teachers' perception of their ability, rigid, perpetual low expectations pose a death trap to their academic achievement (Ferguson, 2003; Weinstein, 1985). Further research is required "concerning the individual differences among students that might moderate teacher-student influence…As well, under what conditions do perceptions of differential teacher treatment become reflected in students' own expectations for their performance" (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984)? The answer to these questions may help develop strategies students can employ so that they are less likely to base their own expectations on their teacher's expectations of them. However this does not disconnect teacher expectations from the current academic achievement gap between black and white students.

African-American Skepticism of Meritocracy

The literature suggests that African-American's skepticism toward the "American" notion of a meritocracy is important to understanding the identity of the African-American student. This is not to suggest that African-Americans hold a homogeneous view of meritocratic schooling environments, or similarly a homogeneous response to the meritocracy supposedly underlying American schools. This is to say that African-American student's individual understanding and opinion of the legitimacy of schools as meritocratic places provides insight into that same student's academic identity

and therefore, perhaps, his/her academic outcomes. The literature is also clear to locate the source of this skepticism and it is not in opposition to dominant cultural norms and values, as Ogbu and others have suggested. Rather, the literature shows that African-Americans have good reason to question the espoused American virtue that schools are meritocratic places, and the misgivings they feel towards school is both well-founded and imperative to understanding how these students understand schools as a pathway to success and therefore how African-American students negotiate their academic identity within schools. "As both a sign of the times and a legacy of the past, African-American and Latino youths grapple with issues of race, ethnicity, age, class, gender, sexuality, and culture. Many develop ways to make sense out of an inequitable world. Every day they struggle to balance the principles and practices that schools espouse and the difficult realities they face" (Carter, 2005, p. 43).

Prudence Carter's research amplifies the point that African-American students believe in the power of academic achievement, adding to the body of research which shows that blacks are not rejecting the merits of scholastic pursuit (Ferguson, 2007; Perry, 2003; Carter, 2005). Rather, black students are looking to confirm that schools, are in fact, true meritocracies; they are "looking to the gatekeepers of public education for signs that the boundaries of the culture of mobility are not as thick and rigid as they appear" (Carter, 2005, p. 157). Those unwilling to conform bring to light contentious social problems, essentially asking, "Why can't success be multicultural?" and "Why are schools inscribed with the select cultural practices of elite groups, which in itself automatically renders others as deviant if they do not conform" (Carter, 2005)?

Carter quotes John Ogbu's work in Shaker Heights, Ohio where he found, "…minority youths reject the belief that education leads to success because they fail to observe the link between academic achievement and access to jobs" (Carter, 2005, p. 29). Is this accurate? Do students reject the belief that education leads to success or are they lacking the tools to manifest this belief? The literature shows that the gap in academic achievement between black and white students can be more strongly traced to a lack of skill versus a lack of effort (Ferguson, 2007).

Carter also challenges this notion in her work, finding, "noncompliant believers often subscribe to the functional aspects of a good education, but they slip through the cracks because they comport themselves differently and do not view cultural assimilation as a prerequisite for achievement" (Carter, 2005, p. 30). John Ogbu oversimplifies the creation and impact of the belief minority students have in the promise of education.

> Measurable racial disparities in skill and commitment to work are complex manifestations of deep-rooted, historical and contemporary social forces that produce self-fulfilling prophesies of poor performance for many African American youths and adults alike…Discouraging messages that communicate low expectations to black male youths…that the economic game is 'rigged,' foster skeptical and often half-hearted engagement by many black youths, and some adults as well, in 'mainstream' activities that purport to prepare them for expanded opportunity (Ferguson, 2007, p. 11).

Students who refuse to conform to dominant cultural practices illuminate a social problem. This problem both undermines the very "American" notion of merit by racializing academic success and at the same time complicates the problem it creates

because it is only a problem for African-American and Hispanic students. When African-American students do not conform to what the dominant society values in a student (said differently, if they do not look and act the part) they are automatically seen as rejecting academic success; despite and sometimes *in spite of* the success they have demonstrated in the past. If the image of student is racialized in such a way that requires a member of the minority group to give up valuable parts of himself, there is little room for wide-scale success for members of the minority group. Furthermore, there is little room for the failure of members of the majority group.

What are the cultural practices being discussed here: the use of Standard English; appropriate dress and or hair? Is it plausible that this is simply about race? The suggestion that black middle-class children (on a whole) have drastically different cultural practices of affluent and middle-class whites seems unlikely. Furthermore, with the growth of such stores as Urban Outfitters, there is a more universal look among all young people (black and white); if anything there has been a shift to older black urban males calling the way younger black students dress as "white." The examination of the academic gap between black and white students in affluent suburbs calls into question the extent to which schools value the cultural practices of whites, versus schools categorically valuing whites.

How does this actually play out in schools? Students who refuse to conform are at jeopardy to receive negative evaluations and may become less engaged in school. Thus, for these students, schools play a perfunctory role, sorting those students who do not embody the dominant culture; who are in the wrong ways different (Carter, 2005). This process contradicts the notion of schools as meritocracies, for students who

understand this have a diminished sense of agency (relating to schools) as they believe that their effort will unlikely overcome this rigid social construct, even if they are able to convince their teachers otherwise. Out of this is born the need for black students (in particular) to find another identity. The ability to ascertain this should not be seen as oppositional, but rather is actually quite sophisticated.

Oppositional Culture/Anti-School Sentiment

Black students experience with rigid, unyielding low expectations from teachers and their own skepticism of schools as meritocratic places leaves groups of black students searching for an academic identity; not out of rebellion or rejection, but rather out of alienation and ostracism. Oppositional culture was originally offered as an explanation for the lack of engagement seen among black students in a blaming fashion, suggesting that black students were choosing a culture in opposition to the dominant culture because they did not value education or dominant cultural capital and codes (Ogbu, 2003). This argument plays out in the literature, with some researchers explaining that black students have not created an identity in opposition to the dominant achievement ideology, but rather are attempting to find a niche that values their aspirations and their culture; particularly given both the overt and subtle ways the dominant culture renders them inferior.

Ronald Ferguson examined this anti-school sentiment among black low-achieving students—identified as those who predicted their grade point average to be below a 2.0— and found their mean value to the statement "[my] friends think academic zeal isn't cool" was similar to the mean for all students in the affluent, suburban district where he conducted his research (Ferguson, 2007). That is to say that their below average academic performance does not represent a devaluing of or disbelief in academic

achievement. There is no substantial quantitative data that shows the African-American students fear ostracism from their peers due to academic achievement more than white students (Ferguson, 2007). This calls into question the findings of John Ogbu (2003) who attributed much of the achievement gap to the lack of academic engagement among African-Americans in Shaker Heights as compared to the white students (Gosa & Alexander, 2007).

Within the Ogbu theory of academic disengagement, there exists the theory that low academic achievement among African-American students stems from their fear of "acting white." Embedded in this theory is the notion that African-Americans identify academic achievement or certain behaviors underlying academic achievement as white. This means that an African-American student would opt out of doing homework, asking for help, or taking advanced level courses for fear of being labeled as some sort of race detractor by their peer group. Prudence Carter's work calls this theory into question, finding "…resistance to 'acting white' for many African-American students is about maintaining cultural identity, not about embracing or rejecting the dominant standards of achievement" (Carter, 2005, p. 53).

Black students may be unaware that their "cultural behavior" will be tied to academic indifference, not because of the behavior but because of the person doing it. Consider the hooded sweatshirt as a metaphor for this complexity. White and Asian students also wear hooded sweatshirts and baseball caps. However, because of the racialized ways schools operate, their intelligence or engagement is not called into question because of this stylistic option. Their clothes are not seen as political symbols. Their teachers continue to respond to the person, despite the clothes. An African-

American in the same hooded sweatshirt and baseball cap is seen as representing urban culture because of this garb, and possibly even seen as being defiant—for wearing a hat indoors. In this instance, the teacher responds to the clothes and the child and does not engage this student as much, or perhaps is overly aggressive with disciplinary action. I am not convinced that African-American children, particularly those in affluent suburbs whose behaviors mirror that of their white and Asian counterparts, understand the message ascribed to their demeanor, actions and attire.

"Notwithstanding the significance of Ogbu's theory [of oppositional culture]… Other emerging studies also show that minority students may be adopting and negotiating a set of different cultural repertoires depending on the given social, economic, and school context" (Lew, 2006, p. 376). Lew's research demonstrates that the African-American students in these affluent suburban schools may be forming their identity in response to the context in which they are operating, rather than the suggestion that they are coming to school with a cultural agenda. I think this has great implications for the discussion of identity formation, and what it means for African-American students to have to negotiate their identity in such a racially sophisticated space, a negotiation which may be foreign or understated to their parents.

Black Middle-Class

Increased discussions of the academic achievement gap between black and white students has drawn many researchers to examine the experience of black children, usually those attending schools in predominantly black areas and usually students of poor or working class parents. This practice greatly ignores the experience of middle class African-Americans and has left a void in our collective understanding of middle class African-American students; a group deserving attention given the persistent gap between

black and white students *despite* socioeconomic status. Middle class African-Americans often undermine the many theories and explanations for the academic achievement gap which circle or stem from culture of poverty or cultural deficit theories; for this group of students is food and housing secure, growing up in two parent homes with at least one college educated parent, knows the value of education, has access to social, cultural, political and economic capital, and often attends above average, if not high performing, schools. This hole in the research has caused many authors to define specifically who compromise the black middle class, their path to middle-class, and where they reside (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999).

Who is the Black Middle Class

The literature tends to describe the middle-class black community in terms of experiences and there are a number of experiences unique to this group of African-Americans. The first is purely economic; how many blacks are actually middle-class? Second, how long have blacks been middle class, and therefore how long have blacks had and operated with middle-class cultural capital and norms? Third, what is the connection of middle-class blacks to poor blacks, if so how is this connection maintained and what are the implications of it? Fourth, how does society respond to the black middle class? Fifth, how certain is the class transfer from parent to child, that is how consistently can middle-class black children inherit their parents' middle-class status (such that they do not need to work their way up to middle-class as their parents did). Mary Pattillo-McCoy locates the black middle class between middle-class white America and poor blacks and Latinos.

> For many middle-class white Americans, the incidents they hear about in distant
> and troubled inner cities provide a constant symbolic threat, but an infrequent

reality. For the families who live on the corner of the crime scene—overwhelmingly black or Latino, and poor—daily life is organized to avoid victimization. In the middle of these two geographically and socially distant groups lives the black middle class (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999, p. 6).

This contributes to the unique way middle-class blacks exist in America; they remain connected to and (often) understand the plight of poor blacks, while at the same time working and living near, if not among, middle class whites. While this class ascension offers many benefits to middle-class blacks and their children, middle-class status does not insulate middle-class blacks in the same way that it does middle-class whites (Gosa & Alexander, 2007).

The pursuit of middle-class status and all the benefits therein, is arguably the uniting characteristic of the black middle class. Wilson points to the growth of the black middle class as proof that blacks were experiencing in life in vastly different ways, often driven by their class. This, he argues, was a change from when blacks were united by their experiences of being oppressed as a racial group. The result of this shift, Wilson argues is that "class, not race, would take the helm in the post-Civil Rights Era, as the factor that would determine the life chances and opportunities" (Martin, 2010, p. 235). However for members of the black middle-class living, working and going to school among middle-class and affluent whites, race *does* return as a factor, as middle-class blacks are unable (as a group) to consistently capitalize on the benefits of being middle-class (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). The outcome of this is twofold: first, a frustration or confusion among middle-class blacks about why they are unable to capitalize on this American dream in the same way as white families (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999); second, a

focus on individual-level solutions diverts attention away from the structural barriers present for many blacks (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999); third, it contributes to the belief the middle-class and black are mutually exclusive, making it "difficult for blacks in the middle class to construct identities that are both authentically black and traditionally middle class" (Martin, 2010, p. 236).

Arguably the easiest way to examine the black middle-class is through pure economics. "High end" socioeconomic indicators are: (1) gross income of over $100,000[4]; (2) wealth above one year of income; (3) two-parent household income; (4) at least one grandparent with college experience, and (5) computer access in the home (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). Yet, for the "simplest" measure, already the outlook is not promising. Most African-Americans who identify as middle-class are more accurately lower-middle class (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Additionally, over 80% of the black middle-class is first-generation (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). Given the amount of time it takes to acquire and benefit from the full "cultural content of class—for example, the values, attitude, and habits used by parents of successful children to reinforce the school's agenda at home" (Gosa & Alexander, 2007, p. 290), those children whose parents are second or third generation middle-class may have a "more authentic, deeper kind of class background" (Gosa & Alexander, 2007, p. 290). Additionally, middle class black families, even those struggling financially, operate within social circles which expose their children to middle-class and dominant cultural capital, thereby offering intangible benefits to their children and their families in priceless ways incapable of being defined by traditional socioeconomic measures.

---

[4] http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2012/09/13/where-do-you-fall-in-the-american-economic-class-system

Through a set of shared experiences, we can identify the black middle-class. Research shows that the black middle-class is usually still connected to the greater black community. "These middle class, strategic assimilators, gain access to predominately white schools, occupations, and neighborhoods while simultaneously retaining ties in the black world. They work in professional occupations with largely white coworkers; yet, maintain membership in historically black churches and historically black civic and voluntary associations" (Martin, 2010, p. 238). This is promising, as research with other ethnicities has demonstrated the positive impact ethnic ties have on the children of immigrants; and while African-Americans are not immigrants per se, in many ways their assimilation paths mirror that of immigrants. Jamie Lew's study of Korean American high school students found, "different strategies are integrally based on the parent's socioeconomic backgrounds and on whether the students have strong ties to parental co-ethnic networks that can provide important information about schooling" (Lew, 2006, p. 386). The questions become, is the connection between middle-class blacks and the greater black community a part of a parenting strategy? What is the payoff? In what ways do middle-class and affluent black parents use their "social capital and economic resources…to translate educational values and aspirations into academic achievement for their children" (Lew, 2006)? Because little research has been done on the new black middle class, there is great opportunity to enhance the knowledge regarding middle-class and affluent black and white families (versus comparisons of middle-class blacks and poor blacks; or poor blacks and middle-class whites) (Gosa & Alexander, 2007). Are the parenting strategies more similar to poor and working class blacks or middle-class and

affluent whites? For instances where there are similar parenting strategies, do black and white children profit the same and what accounts for any differences?

The literature shows that for middle-class blacks the relationship may not be so pragmatic. Class ascension for blacks has often caused a dilemma; do they more greatly identify and show allegiance to their race or their socioeconomic class status (Martin, 2010)? Embedded in this dilemma is the notion that black culture and middle-class cultural capital are contradictory. Scholars have attempted to shift the discourse by pointing out that "some dominant capital originated in black cultures" (Carter, 2005, p. 66), or by challenging the equations that black equals poor while middle-class equals white (Martin, 2010).

Supplemental Educational Programs

Edmund Gordon is well versed in the interactions which take place in schools, as well as in the power of schools to deliver outstanding, high quality educational experiences to all children. However, Dr. Gordon shows no naiveté about the inferior academic outcomes for African American, Hispanic American and Native American children due to the current structure and operation of schools. Therefore, his approach to improving minority student achievement does not rest on changing the U.S. educational institution as it currently exists. Rather, Dr. Gordon seems to understand fully what

U.S. schools are currently doing, not what they are capable of doing, but how they currently exist and operate today. With this shift in focus, Dr. Gordon spends a great deal of time researching ways to utilize supplementary and out-of-school learning to buttress academic learning that takes place in schools (which Dr. Gordon has called a necessary but not sufficient component of high academic achievement),

but we are pessimistic with respect to the possibility that schooling alone will solve the problem [of the academic achievement gap]. We therefore propose concentrated efforts at introducing a wide variety of supplementary education opportunities for low-income families and communities of color…After-school programs are among the most widespread forms of supplementary education, and are being re-conceptualized as opportunities to influence the narrowing of this pervasive academic achievement gap between majority and some ethnic minority student groups (Bridglall B. , 2005, p. 59).

Gordon argues that school reforms aimed at improving minority student achievement have been ineffective for one of a few reasons. Either the reforms are focused on raising the bottom rungs of achievement, versus focusing on moving high performing students higher, or the reforms have focused on across the board achievement, which may improve minority student achievement but do little to close the academic achievement gap (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005). Gordon believes that improving academic achievement by itself will not close the gap for minority students, instead arguing that that "without the capital to invest in human resource development, it is impossible to achieve meaningful participation in an advanced technological society" (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005, p. 17). Thus, Gordon believes that in addition to adequately investing other resources, those interested in closing the achievement gap must direct their attention to multiple forms of capital: cultural, financial, health, human, personal, policy, and social (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005).

The over-identification of education with schooling is perhaps a function of our cultural history in which school has played the central role educationally for most

members of the society. As both the common socializing and nation-building influence and the primary source of exposure to formal didactic experience with the disciplines, most of us perhaps think first of school when we think of academic learning. Despite this colloquially accepted notion, increasingly we are convinced that universal academic development and high achievement require more than schools can deliver (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005, p. 19).

Overall, Gordon identifies that schools, like society, are places that operate with and value certain types of dominant capital; capital which is not evenly distributed among all groups. In the instances where well-funded, effective schools serve students with dominant capital, both the necessary and sufficient components of a high quality education are present. However, the opposite is also true. In instances where either well-funded, effective schools are not present or students do not possess dominant capital, the conditions for a high quality education have not been met and the outcomes will represent this lack. Gordon is not pushing for societal changes in the same way that Jean Anyon and others are, instead he acknowledges that workable alternatives are available to provide students access to the benefits of possessing dominant capital (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005).

Gordon underscores the importance of capital by pointing to the dearth of African-American middle class students among the highest achieving students in our country. Arguing that blacks are simply not benefiting from middle-class status in the ways that ought to (as predicted by the way white Americans obtain upward mobility along with attain middle-class status) (Bowen & Bok, 2000). The data continue to show

that the black children of college graduated parents achieve at levels more comparable with the white students of high school graduates versus the white students of college graduates. "So that meant that even though we were getting more black people into the middle class, black middle-class students were not achieving at a level that would be predicted by that class….What is it we have to do for and with our kids, in the schools that they go to and the homes that they live in, that's going to greatly increase our contributions to the higher-achieving group" (Gordon, 2007, p. 7)?

In understanding the achievement gap, Gordon looks at the low performance levels of both the school, as it relates to subpopulations, as well as the low performance of the actual subpopulation. Specifically, Gordon wants to look at the personal and academic development of poor and minority students, contending that privileged students, or the students of sophisticated parents, participate in an array of enriching experiences which contribute to their personal and academic development. At the heart of Gordon's theory of change exists the need for a systematic way to expose all students to the type of enriching experiences which produce the required dominant capital to make schools work well (Gordon, 2007; Gordon, Bridglall, & Saa Meroe, Preface, 2005). For Gordon, supplementary educational programs achieve this goal.

Supplementary educational programs refer to the "activities, services, and practices as supplemental to schooling…the formal and informal learning and developmental enrichment opportunities that are provided for students outside of school and beyond the regular school day" (Bridglall B. , 2005, pp. 35, 41). It is no secret that most academically successful students spend a good portion of their out-of-school time participating in activities which enhance and engage their individual learning. It is also

clear that parents are imperative to facilitating and orienting the student towards these activities in order to maximize the impact of participation. Sophisticated parents understand that these activities are required to "enable schooling to work…It is the inferred association between access to human development capital and supplementary education, and between supplementary education and the effectiveness of education, that lead to the inclusion of supplementary education as a component of Gordon's advocacy for the affirmative development of academic ability" (Bridglall B. , 2005, p. 40).

In addition to formal supplementary learning, there are a number of informal, seemingly pedestrian routines in which parents engage to support the intellectual, social, academic and personal development of their children. Sophisticated parents employ ordinary tactics which could be seen simply as *good parenting*, but others are deliberate; both provide additional scaffolding which contributes to their children's academic success (Bridglall B. , 2005). Examples of these activities include reading aloud with children, family dinner conversations and discussions of important matters, taking children to public information sources, such as the library and museums, having books and other educational supplies in the home, moderating television time and content, and monitoring friends (Bridglall B. , 2005).

Gordon's attempt to mitigate the negative impact of schools is to better prepare students for the schools as they currently exist by exposing students to the learning which happens in the house of more sophisticated parents through the use of supplementary programs. These parents know that schools cannot address all the individual needs of all children; however less sophisticated parents may depend on schools for all aspects of their child's education (Bridglall B. , 2005). Gordon's perspective appears to both

acknowledge that blacks and poor blacks possess their own cultural capital valued within their communities, while also acknowledging that schools have not and probably will not value the culture of poor blacks and maybe not even value the culture of middle-class blacks. Said differently, while Gordon understands that it is imperative to examine the ways schools advantage and disadvantage certain children based on their home life, parent's education, physical appearance/style or attitude, all of which may indeed have some connection to the child's race and/or class; it is of equal or greater importance that these disadvantaged children have access to the dominant capital for which schools were built. "There may be limits to what we can expect to achieve for students of color through the current efforts at school reform…It may be necessary that students, families, and communities be strengthened in their capacity to extract what they need from the schools as they exist" (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005, p. 27). Therefore, as a necessary condition for academic success in U.S. schools as they currently exist and perform, blacks, in general, and specifically, poor blacks should embody dominant culture.

Decisions on where and how to utilize supplementary educational programs depends solely on how we understand and define the problem of inequitable capital distribution. Fundamentally, Gordon argues that schools themselves will not be able to close the academic achievement gap between African-American, Hispanic and Native American students and their white and Asian counterparts.   Since Gordon's notion of supplemental education is based on the benefits of dominant capital, he does not point solely to schools to fix this problem (Gordon, Bridglall, & Saa Meroe, 2005). Rather, Gordon appears to see schools as a place where this problem is seen and perpetuated, though not the cause. As such, Gordon compels schools to be more selective about the

role they opt to play in addressing the academic disparities between high and low achieving students.

> I think schools are important, but I think schools make a mistake when they let the society place on them the responsibility for the total development of kids…we school people need to get that message across just as the people in medicine and public health came to realize that unless you do something about the context in which health is to be maintained, you can't simply solve the problems of good health maintenance with first-class medicine, first-class medical treatment, which is important, but you've also go to clean up the swamps and get rid of the garbage and pipe the sewage out, et cetera. So that's about my message (Gordon, 2007, p. 9).

Successful Supplementary Programs

While there is still some debate as to the need for supplementary education, Gordon's research identified three components of successful programs: positive relationships with peers and adults, enriching experiences and activities, and a safe place (Bridglall B. , 2005). For Gordon and his research team, "supplementary education is as much about the ethos of caring and concern, and the acts of enablement, nurturance, and protection, as it is about the institutions, resources, and services" (2005, pp. 321-2). It would follow then that Gordon makes a distinction between formal and informal learning and is clear about the potential impact of each. Using an example, Gordon says that informal learning is when a parent sits down to read with their children, whereas formal learning is when the parent pays for a tutor to help the child learn to read.

Now your question is, which of these loads on to academic achievement?...I don't

think they have an answer for that question, but I would speculate that it may be

the father reading to the child. To the extent that kids grow up thinking of

themselves as learning people…who can impact if not control their own learning,

they subsequently run into some difficult spots, but most of us will find a way to

dig ourselves out of it if we had that background…If you don't have the well to

dig into, then you get into trouble. Then the tutorial experience is specific to

helping you dig yourself out of trouble….And of course this is one of the

problems with the NCLB legislation; the supplementary education they're really

talking about is some formal experiences that you combine that most certainly

help kids with specific problems, but it's not doing much for this sense of self as a

learning person who can do it and who is responsible for one's own learning—it

doesn't help that much (Gordon, 2007, p. 3).

To achieve the softer goals of supplementary education programs, those aimed at

empowering students and making them more aware of their individual agency,

supplementary programs should be developed with specific goals at each step of the K-12

schooling spectrum. Initially, programs "should be geared toward preparing students to

develop positive attitudes and long-term commitments to learning and intellectual

achievement" (Bridglall, Green, & Mejia, 2005, p. 187). Then, programs should focus

much more on advancing oral, written and quantitative skillsets. Supplementary

programs for junior high school students should focus on the impact of peer groups,

looking at their "attitudes, beliefs and behaviors" (Bridglall, Green, & Mejia, 2005, p.

187); this change acknowledges the increased importance of peer group influence over

parent influence. Finally, high school students engaged in supplementary programs should be focusing on strengthening advanced skills and gaps as this group of students prepares for college.

Supplementary Education Program Taxonomy

There are multiple ways to group supplementary education programs. They can be grouped according to the purpose of the sponsoring organization. These programs can also be grouped using a "classification system that assessed availability, capacity, and utilization rates, and another that focused on income characteristics of children served, enrollment levels, use of program space, program size, child-staff ratio, staffing, staff wages and benefits, and the role of parents" (Bridglall, Green, & Mejia, 2005, pp. 151-2). Supplementary programs can also be grouped by the focus of their content, i.e. academic, sports, honor societies, science, community development, etc. Gordon's research team created a taxonomy based on:

(1) The explicit versus implicit purposes of the services—that is, are they services deliberately intended to be supplemental to education or incidentally so

(2) The basis of program content, including academic instruction, remediation, socialization, recreational, religious instruction, and cultural enrichment;

(3) The nature of the organization that sponsors the service (national, local, independent, private religious, private secular, commercial or public agency) (Bridglall, Green, & Mejia, 2005, p. 152).

Institutionalizing Supplementary Programs

Supplemental programs can be either actual extra programs which occur outside of the normal day or as:

a way of life or a way of doing things. We are convinced that in some instances

the effectiveness of supplementary education may be more a function of the

commitment and interest of parents and other significant adults than of what

actually happens to children who participate" (Bridglall & Gordon, 2005, p. 276).

This phenomenon is important to understanding how some supplemental programs

become institutionalized. Given the widespread need for supplementary programs for

African-American, Hispanic-American and Native Americans students, Gordon suggests

that policy-makers and educators look to institutionalize quality programs by either

creating new programs, taking advantage of applicable resource in programs currently

running, or even expanding the services of some programs already in operation.

Policy Challenges

Gordon and Bridglall identify a set of challenges for policy-makers looking to

establish and enact supplemental programs for school-age children. The most central

challenge is that institutionalized supplemental programs require money, either public or

private, and therefore popular social norms will always be an integral part of which

programs and policies are endorsed and which are not. The United States' tradition of

"pluralism, democracy, age-appropriate sexual behaviors and preparation for child

rearing (Bridglall & Gordon, 2005, p. 278)" often times restrict the number of useful

programs implemented. This reality magnifies the need for a paradigm shift in our policy

making. Gordon and Bridglall's "seemingly contradictory policy dilemmas" best

demonstrate the shifts required, including:

value-laden vs. value-neutral programs; standardized programs vs. locally

constructed practices; seemingly nondiscriminatory policies vs. policies that

recognize the relevancy of ethnicity, gender, and race in developing appropriate programs; the needs of the privileged vs. the needs of the disadvantaged; professionalism vs. indigenous knowledge; accountability vs. adaptability; responses to immediate and colloquial activities vs. responses to longer-term societal demands; relaxation and recreation vs. remediation and work; and professional or bureaucratic boundaries vs. comprehensive needs (Bridglall & Gordon, 2005, p. 278).

Gordon and Bridglall also identify a number of challenging issues when it comes to the implementation of supplementary education programs, including staff to student ratios, staff education level, staff turnover and compensation levels. There is also literature on young people's motivation for participating or not participating in some supplementary programs. Low-income students tend to avoid programs "defined from the perspective of societal need for social control, and also tend to opt out of programs which "define them as deviant, 'at risk,' or are some way deficient or negative" (Bridglall & Gordon, 2005, p. 289). Instead, low-income students prefer supplementary educational programs which acknowledge, respect and uplift who they are, rather than trying to change them into, or worse programs which challenge their character, worth or identity (Bridglall & Gordon, 2005).

Chapter 3: History of Martinsville

The Growth of Martinsville's black Community

At the turn of the 20th century Martinsville, like most New Jersey towns and

cities, continued to experience a massive influx of African-Americans from the south.

New Jersey saw a 40% increase from 1940 to 1950 with blacks growing to 7% of the

entire population. By 1980, this number would grow to slightly under one million

African-Americans in New Jersey, representing 13% of the entire population with 95% of

blacks located in urban areas. It is worth noting that Newark, East Orange, Orange,

Elizabeth, Irvington and Jersey City combined (all located in North Jersey) claimed over

40% of blacks in NJ. Figure 1 shows the distribution trends across the state and how the

majority of blacks were clustered in the northeastern part of New Jersey. While a great

number of these newcomers were poor and lower- to working-class, there were also many

professionals-doctors, teachers, pharmacists, social workers, dentists and the like.

(Wright, 1998).
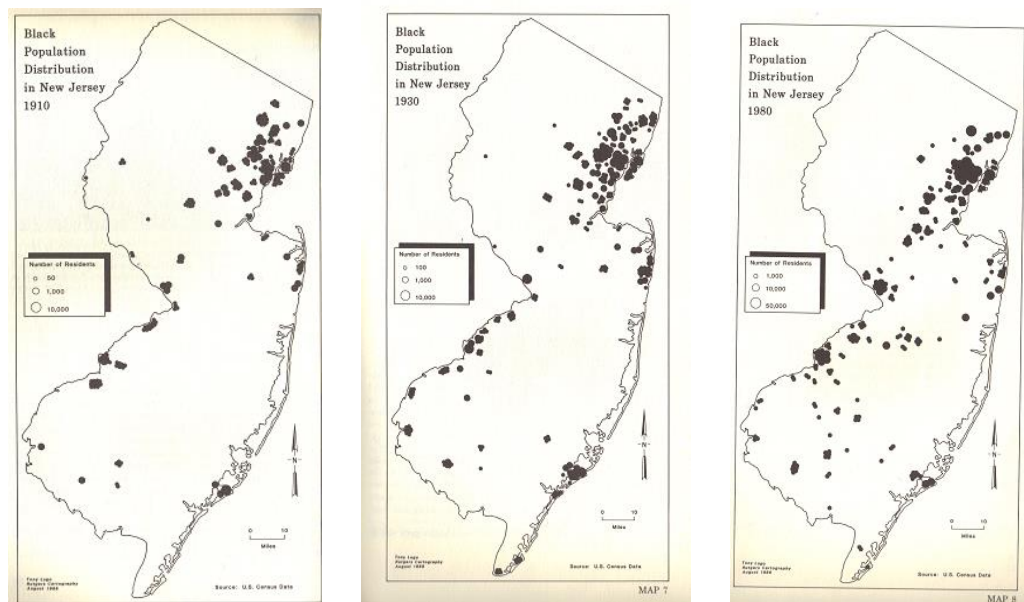
Figure 1: African American Growth Trends over the 20th Century (Wright, 1998)

The increase in population spurred the growth and necessity of social organizations which, outside of church, provided the sole opportunity for blacks to interact. Social organizations focused on civil rights issues such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League had chapters in Martinsville, as did Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association. Although these groups had differing opinions regarding integration efforts, there was enough movement in Martinsville to have chapters and members for each group. (Wright, 1998).

Setting the Stage for Openly Segregated Schools: Housing Patterns

During the 19th century, many black newcomers settled into the southwest corner of the city, in homes originally built for mill workers. As was the trend across the state, most African-Americans would experience residential segregation relegating them to one or two areas in a town or city. Those immigrating to Martinsville in the 20th century found that little had changed in terms of attitudes toward race and that the southwest corner (south of Clarkton Avenue and east of Front Street) was allocated for blacks. Figure 2 shows the current zones in Martinsville, the southwest corner is mainly the 3rd ward (note that the map is sideways).

By 1930, there were over two hundred thousand blacks in the state…of the twenty-one northern cities in 1930 that had black populations over ten thousand, four – Newark, Atlantic City, Camden and Jersey City – were in New Jersey. Only Ohio, with seven, had more…The Afro-Americans who arrived during the Great Migration laid the foundation for the state's black ghettos. Before this heavy influx, urban blacks lived mainly in scattered enclaves. But as large numbers of newcomers encountered discriminatory housing practices, a new

residential pattern emerged. Large concentrations of blacks developed in one or two sections of a city (Wright, 1998).

Real estate agents were integral in maintaining these residential patterns. Often times explicitly lying to blacks about the availability of housing outside of this area, a common practice during this period. In fact, in 1965 the Martinsville Fair Housing Committee conducted a survey to establish the degree to which racial steering was occurring in Martinsville. They contacted 22 people with homes on the market and only 4 of them said they would sell to a black family. Upon interviewing African-American buyers, the Committee found that realtors were telling blacks that available homes were not on the market. After conducting housing audits, the Committee proved that blacks were misled or lied to about homes outside of the southeastern section of Martinsville and that whites were shown these same properties immediately. "By 1968, the Fair Housing Committee revealed that little progress toward integration had been made…Realtors were doing their job in keeping the African-American community in the southeastern part of town" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).
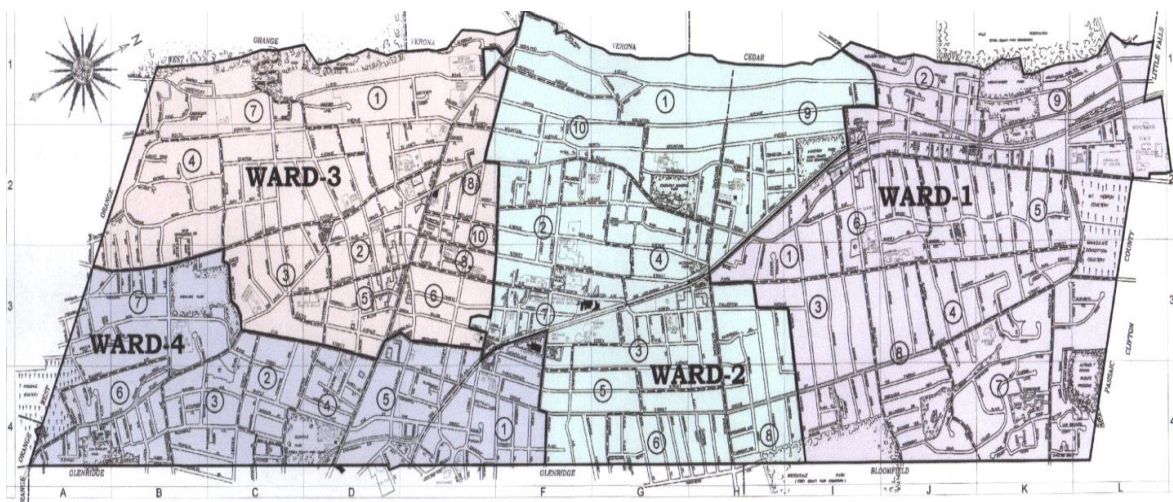
Figure 2: District Map of Martinsville (map is sideways). Note that Front Street forms the eastern border of zone 3 and Clarkton Avenue cuts through the top, showing that blacks lived south of Clarkton Ave and west of Front St. **Source: Martinsville Public Library.**

This overt housing segregation is important for a number of reasons. First, as I will demonstrate later, this will provide the rationale for community schools to be segregated and will make it challenging to desegregate the schools. During the late 1960s/early 1970s, with a higher segregation index than Newark (80.3 vs. 71.6), "the residential patterns provided the justification for a de facto segregated school system, rationalized in the language of 'neighborhood schools'" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002). Second, it is indicative of the racism, marginalization and inequality that would soon spur the riots that would rip through a number of towns. Finally, it points to a departure from the typical "immigrant" experience and shows a phenomenon experienced by African-Americans.

> Compared to the various European immigrant groups with whom they shared the cities, blacks generally experienced greater residential segregation. Not only did they tend to be more sharply segregated from other ethnic groups then those groups were from each other, but their residential isolation tended to increase over time while that of other ethnic groups lessened. Economic advancement, for example, did not free African-Americans from confinement to black residential areas; when they moved into previously all-white areas, those areas invariably turned black (Wright, 1998).

Racial Tension in the Community

During the 1960s, while mob riots were plaguing other cities around the country and the state, Martinsville was also dealing with a growing dissatisfaction among blacks. Unlike in other places, the discontent in Martinsville didn't stem from an altercation between a white police officer and a black citizen. Instead, the blacks in Martinsville had

lost patience with the clearly separate, unequal and inferior education their children were receiving. Despite the Supreme Court's Brown Decision abolishing the "separate, but equal" doctrine handed down in 1954, however nothing had been done in many parts of the state (Martinsville included) to show any semblance of movement toward integrated schools.

Citizens grew increasingly tired of the lack of progress. Throughout the 1960s, Martinsville saw a number of demonstrations, protests, and what the Martinsville Times named "disturbances." The active civil rights organizations, the NAACP, the Fair Housing Committee, the local Civil Rights Commission, and churches all acknowledged that Martinsville's institutions were unaware of the moral and structural changes that needed to occur in the town. This claim was difficult for people to understand, as many in the North thought the South had the monopoly on bigotry and racism. However, history would come to show that the road to desegregating Martinsville schools was "longer than desegregation struggles in Little Rock, Birmingham and throughout the south" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

Martinsville experienced a small, yet powerful demonstration in July, 1967 which had a "traumatic effect on both the black and white communities." Much like the wakeup call our nation's politicians received when riots began taking place in Washington, D.C., the people of Martinsville would learn that they were not immune to the racism, or the violence and disruptive response, rampant in so many U.S. cities during this time.

This near riot in Martinsville is local evidence that our town suffers from the same ills that have beset Newark, Nyack, Birmingham and Detroit…Old leaders have been rejected and new leaders have been chosen from their [young people] ranks.

Current events reflect their extreme frustration and a growing determination to

pay the ultimate price to motivate change. This was the mood as I sense it while

"holed up" with a group of angry young Negroes on that tense Sunday night, July

16 (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

Two significant events served as the wakeup call for Martinsville. The first

occurred when "a few young blacks broke windows in the southeastern business district"

(Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002), the second was a sit-in at the high school.   The

sit-in was organized by the black Student Union in reaction to Mr. Williams, a black

guidance counselor, losing his contract. As Mary Blackman, a Board of Education

employee pointed out, "[black students] were striving to get the attention of the adults.

They were striving to get the attention of the Board of Education…they were fighting for

equal education. They were protesting for equality" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey,

2002). And they were right, by now Martinsville had become a dichotomous town; as

pointed out in the 1968 Kerner Commission Report, "by the end of the 1960s

Martinsville was recognized as divided into two societies, separate and unequal." This

reality and growing tension provides the backdrop for the fight to integrate the schools"

(Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

A War at Home: Integrating Martinsville's Public Schools

It is extremely important to note that the Brown decision itself did not mark the

end of school segregation; rather it signaled the beginning of a long struggle to

achieve the elusive goal of integration. Brown could not exorcise the deep-seated

racism in American society, a tragic flaw that persists to this day. Over the

decades, racism would assume novel and less visible forms than segregated

schools. The Brown decision was thus just the beginning of a new series of struggles (Altenbaugh, 2003).

To provide the proper context for this journey, it is important to understand the history and philosophy of the Martinsville School Board throughout history. Johnson School (formerly Jones Street School) was built in 1887 to house black and Italian children in the southern end of town to "ensure that these 2 groups would not attend school with white students." Mount Hope School (formerly Second Street School) was created to continue the same purpose. In the late 1940s, the school board went so far as to convert a former mansion thus creating the Turnitt School, built to educate the children from the small, wealthy white community in the southwestern (black) end of town. The Turnitt School allowed these white children to go to school in isolation, rather than attending either one of the two schools already available in the southwestern part of town; making Turnitt 97% white and Mount Hope 97% black (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In his study of school segregation following the Brown decision, legal historian J. Harvie Wilkinson, III identified "five distinct chronological stages, which facilitate historical analysis…absolute defiance, token compliance, modest compliance, massive integration, and resegregation" (Altenbaugh, 2003).

Absolute Defiance (1961-1967)

Although the Brown decision was handed down in 1954, the actual process of integrating Martinsville's school started around 1961. Up until this point, it was no secret that Martinsville's school were segregated, "that was explicit and rationalized by neighborhood boundaries." Thus the issue was not to integrate the schools per se, so

much as to eliminate the disparity between black and white schools. As Sarah Davis, a white activist and parent, noted, "There was a group of African American parents (and supporters) in Martinsville…who [also] believed that integration was not the solution to the inequities in education. Some believed that as long as white people were in control…the expectations for their children would remain low" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In 1961, in pursuit of educational equity for their children, a group of parents, with the support of the local NAACP, challenged the Martinsville School Board and the current Superintendent. They claimed that their children were receiving "unequal and inferior educational opportunities." They demanded that the Board appoint a committee to study the elementary and middle schools in town and that the boundaries within the district be redrawn immediately.

Mount Hope's PTA president organized a Parents Emergency Committee, which in collaboration with the NAACP found

> Disparities similar to those found in "separate but equal" systems in the South. The schools in Martinsville's white neighborhoods had newer supplies, more rigorous curricula, better facilities and more experienced teachers…The predominantly white schools received new textbooks and furniture on a regular basis, while Mount Hope had to be content with hand-me-downs…white schools had new science laboratories, extensive libraries, and fully-equipped gymnasiums and cafeterias…Finally Mount Hope's teaching staff did not have the same credentials as those in other schools. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Following a brief boycott at the start of the 1961-1962 school year,
Superintendent Forbes responded with "vague promises to study the situation, as well as
half-hearted, ineffective gestures toward creating desegregation plans" (Anand, Fine,
Perkins, & Surrey, 2002). Though efforts were small, any attempt by Superintendent
Forbes to integrate was met with opposition. The Committee for Neighborhood Schools,
and other organizations like it, were formed to offer strong rationale and support for the
current neighborhood schooling structure. White parents "argued that busing would tire
their children out and thus would be educationally unfounded" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, &
Surrey, 2002). The Committee for Neighborhood Schools never addressed the fact that
only through residential segregation and gerrymandering did black and white
neighborhoods come to exist, and therefore never pushed to see the validity in plans to
integrate the schools (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In 1962, Martinsville made its first appearance in court on this issue. The
Committee for Neighborhood Schools argued that that Board of Education's plan to
"create limited integration at Newton" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002) violated
their children's Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection. In 1964, the New
Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the School Board could in fact use race to determine
school assignments without violating the white students' Fourteenth Amendment rights.
Tom Smith accepted the superintendent's position, thus replacing Forbes in 1964; and
proceeded with the "half-hearted" desegregation plans offered originally by Forbes.
These plans did not satisfy the pro-integration groups and the lack of progress frustrated
black parents (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In 1966, black parents took their issue to the New Jersey State Commissioner of Education, citing that the Martinsville Board of Education's minimal efforts to integrate the schools violated their rights to an equal education. They further requested that the Board swiftly move toward an adequate integration plan, equipped with "fair and impartial standards, to eliminate all aspects of racial segregation and discrimination under its jurisdiction" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In response to this petition, the Commissioner offered a ruling on November 8, 1967. The decision was thorough, acknowledging both the two plans the Board had in place to desegregate the schools: busing students between pairs of schools or closing two schools, as well as the fact that the Board had acknowledged the shortfall of these plans and had already rejected them. The Commissioner also rejected the black parents' claim that the Board was unaware of the effects of discrimination. A watershed moment in this journey so far came as the Commissioner ruled that the School Board must "implement a complete correction of racial imbalance in its school system" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002). Although there was no guidance as to how to achieve the goal, and widespread disagreement about the merits of the goal, the goal was now clear – Martinsville Public Schools could no longer offer excuses or rationalizations for the racial imbalance so visible in its schools (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

Token Compliance (1967-1970)

"Parallel to Brown v. Board of Education, the 1967 ruling by the Commissioner led to neither immediate nor full implementation. It certainly was a legal victory; however, it would take a long time to reach fruition" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

The School Board issued a desegregation plan entitled the *5-3-4 Plan*. This plan would propose the following:

- Move black students in grades 1-4 from Maxon school in the south to Leland and Emerson Schools in the north

- Move white students in the fifth and sixth grades from Leland and Emerson to Maxon

- Place white fifth and sixth graders from Turnitt School in programs in Johnson (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Despite this attempt, the Commissioner and the NAACP found this plan insufficient and on August 19, 1968 the official ruling was that this plan was unacceptable. Again, without an alternative or timeline requirements, the Board was sent to create a plan to desegregate the schools. As proponents of integration demanded more substantive plans, opponents continued to push for neighborhood schools. As these token plans came forth as a solution, it became clear that many people simply weren't being honest about their belief systems that fueled their resistance to integrated schools. As Sarah Davis noted,

People were not saying what they really believed. I mean, nobody said, 'We're against integration.' They said things like, 'We're against this change because children have to go further away from their homes.' Or 'This is complicated.' Or 'There are too many changes.' But people did not admit to being against integration (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

It is worth noting that although the *5-3-4 Plan* was rejected, one aspect of the plan would come to end up in the accepted plan to integrate the schools. Within this plan, the Board was going to offer "exciting educational programs" at Johnson and Maxon to convince

white parents to support the plan. This magnet school notion had great merit and would resurface when the final integration plan was put forth (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In addition to struggling to find an adequate plan, there was also growing tension in the school and the community. Across the country, in 1968 following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., there were dozens of riots. Whether fueled by the assassination of Dr. King, a growing frustration with the lack of change in the schools or a combination of the two, there was a student protest in September, 1968 at Martinsville High School. Although no one was injured, the most telling facet of this protest was the sentiment relayed in the Martinsville Times newspaper article reporting on the disturbance

> [an] intolerable situation at Martinsville High School [in which] the Black Student
> Union, some 500 strong, decided on a sit-down demonstration…The high school
> has been plagued with demonstrations, physical attacks by Negro students upon
> white students and conditions in the high school not conducive to the democratic
> process…Everyone in the community, Negroes and whites, have much at stake in
> this critical situation and already many white families, fearful of attacks upon
> their children, are considering withdrawing them from the high school and
> moving or sending them to private schools. Martinsville can ill afford such a
> movement, for it wouldn't take long for our schools to become predominantly
> Negro and the community a ghost town. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Not only does this coverage do little to represent the sentiments of anyone other than Martinsville's elite, it also puts fear in the minds of those disconnected from the

integration journey and portrays blacks as vigilantes, pursuing justice that is mindless of the needs and safety of others. It paints whites as the victim and further undermines the racist practices that so clearly brought Martinsville to this reality.

Following the protest at the school, there was a meeting called at Summit school where the town's PTAs, members of the NAACP and about 700 parents met to discuss the negative interactions between the black and white students. The meeting was an emotional one, with a lot of yelling. As captured by the Martinsville Times, James Davis bottom-lined "the real problem…as naked, unabashed white racism." Winkler ended up writing a piece about that night that publicly identified the shared responsibility for what was happening in the town

> It is high time now that someone stood up and told it as it is, characterizing the real problem by its right name—i.e. pure, simple, naked, unabashed white racism—some of it subtle, most about as subtle as the main address at a George Wallace rally…What has this town in such an uproar? Several hundred black students join together to develop an organizational forum which they apparently felt was necessary to express their particular problems and needs; special problems which result from a very special oppression—a systematic, all encompassing, humiliating oppression which all black people, and particularly black youth have been subjected to for over two hundred years. We are incensed that they no longer eagerly reach out to grab at some noble white hand, which time and time again has clenched into a steel fist—only to beat them into the ground in a thousand insidious ways….To those who suddenly lament this polarization of the black community, but who have nothing to say about the lily

white polarization that has for decades dominated every aspect of life in the town, notwithstanding its racial tokenism…I for one say thank God these kids have the courage, wisdom and guts to stand up and be counted…First rate, quality education is an indivisible as freedom itself…I have every confidence that all of our children, black and white, can resolve this question as they will resolve many of the decisive questions of our times which our own generation has bungled. It is some of the parents and certainly the bigoted troublemakers who constitute the real problem. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

By 1970, the Board had put forth a number of plans although none were accepted. A plan to make Newton and Summit integrated middle schools was rejected, as was a plan to only partially integrate 3 middle schools by bussing black kids to white schools, but not vice versa. Although community support for integration was growing, by 1971, there was still no viable option to adequately desegregate Martinsville Public Schools. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Modest Compliance (1971-1976)

There were people in Martinsville who really fought hard for what they believed was the right thing to do for kids…They believed that all kids in this town were going to get a more equal educational experience, a better social experience…a more diverse community…We realized that Martinsville was really in noncompliance with the law, that we had been given an order to desegregate our schools and we were tossing the ball all around town…We got tired of listening to all the arguments that went back and forth. We said, 'You know what? Let's make an appointment with the Commissioner of Education." (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Joanne Hillerdale, a white PTA mother and other concerned mothers went down to Trenton to speak with the Commissioner about Martinsville's languid movement toward desegregating the schools. By 1972, Martinsville had a new superintendent, James Adams, and he put forth a plan to integrate both elementary and middle schools utilizing two-way busing. This plan, referred to as *The Plan of Action*, was adopted by the School Board and would require each student to "…attend his neighborhood school for four years…for example, Johnson's second graders will be assigned to Emerson and Milton…This assignment…will bring about racial balance at that level" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In response to this, the group formerly known as the Committee for Neighborhood Schools organized to become Better Education for All Martinsville (BEAM). BEAM again raised the point that busing students was "educational unsound" and contended that it would cause a decrease in quality. However, in addition to trying to convince the school board, BEAM took advantage of the upcoming May, 1972 Town Commission election and supported anti-busing candidates. With a packed Town Commission, BEAM would facilitate change through the political process and create a system that would make it difficult to pass desegregation plans, despite the state mandate. The Commission proceeded to increase the number on the Board of Education from five to seven, as well as shorten the term from five to three years. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

In 1974, Martinsville saw another superintendent take the reigns as James Adams was replaced by Walter Boomer. Soon after Boomer came in, the Board instituted a "Freedom of Choice" plan to take the place of Adams' *Plan of Action*. Under the

Freedom of Choice plan parents were able to choose which school to send their children to as long as their choices maintained a racial balance at the school. However, reality would demonstrate that the Board did not use racial balance as a determining factor and instead allowed all requests. Frank Rennie, an educator at the time, explained that "…the policy was implemented in ways that undermined integration" (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

The State Commissioner of Education was not compelled by this desegregation plan explaining that absolute freedom, without any way to achieve and maintain equilibrium would not work toward sustained racial integration. So again, in July, 1975, the Commissioner rejected yet another plan to desegregate Martinsville's Public School. However, unlike in the past, the Commissioner gave explicit targets for the level of integration. Since the school districts' population was 60% white and 40% black, the School Board was to create an integration plan that would maintain the same ratio (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002).

With a clear, measurable directive from the Commissioner of Education, Superintendent Boomer was not in the position to play politics and appease the anti-integration Board members. Despite his personal preferences or affiliations, Superintendent Boomer had a clear responsibility to put forth a plan that would desegregate Martinsville's schools. In April, 1976 Boomer introduced 5 plans to the school board

- Blue: Called for the closing of five elementary schools and increased busing
- Red (2): Called for the cessation of all busing for integration

- Gold and Green: Mandate limited busing; however both emphasized the magnet school alternative. In theory, each school under the gold and green plans would be so attractive based on its specific theme that for most parents, that is, white parents, busing would be not only digestible but desirable. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

The School Board voted 4-3 for a modified version of the Red plan, although any level of intelligence guaranteed two reactions to this selection: first, the Commissioner of Education would not approve it and second, the black and pro-integration communities would not approve of it either. One has to wonder what the intention of such a vote was, especially considering the risk of losing state aid if the School Board opted to deliberately keep the schools segregated. As expected, the black community protested by way of a sit-in at the Board office; and in another watershed moment, Superintendent Boomer *did not* have them escorted out and conversely supported their initiative. Perhaps this, along with the potential for losing over $2,000,000 in state money, captured the attention of the School Board who transferred their support of the Red plan to the Green plan. Thus in June, 1976, with a 6-1 vote, Martinsville had established a plan to desegregate the public schools. The Green plan they adopted was slightly different from the original one, calling for "the incorporation of magnet schools… [No] mandatory busing for racial balance, however…required at least 25% 'minority students' in each of the K-9 schools." (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Massive Integration (1976-1979)

By all accounts, Superintendent Boomer's plan was revolutionary. To establish a plan that would make it easy for white parents to buy in took a lot of courage. By placing

the magnet programs in the traditionally black schools, Boomer enticed white parents to send their students there. The plan was as follows:

- Turnitt and Mount Hope elementary schools were closed, as was Summit middle school. Mount Hope and Newton became 6-8 junior high schools. All elementary schools except Johnson and Summit offered a K-5 program.

- Johnson and Summit were paired: Johnson housed Early Childhood, K, 1, and 2, and Summit housed grades 3, 4, and 5. Both schools, plus Mount Hope, became sites of a magnet school program for gifted and talented youngsters. A fundamental magnet schools program, as well as another Early Childhood component, was created at Milton.

- Elementary school attendance lines and middle school feeder patterns were redrawn. Transportation was provided for students participating in the magnet school programs and any students electing Freedom of Choice (choice of school, provided racial balance was maintained) (Martinsville's 1980 Community Audit, 1980).

It is interesting to speculate what the academic themes would have looked like if the desires of black parents were also taken into consideration. Under the plan, the themes at the predominantly black schools were commensurate with the sub-standard quality of education they were receiving at their neighborhood schools. So while gifted and talented, and arts programs were added to pull white students to schools in neighborhoods, the academic themes at the schools in white neighborhoods, to pull black students, were not particularly innovative and usually centered on "basics." Apparently, this is what the black parents were requesting at the time, so it is understandable why the

black schools didn't have more ambitious academic programs (Anand, Fine, Perkins, &

Surrey, 2002). However, given the black/white achievement gap still present in

Martinsville, one has to wonder how this contributed to the current-day achievement gap

present in Martinsville. The history and culture of sustained low expectations in

Martinsville is a topic worthy of research.

There was somewhat of a public relations campaign to ensure that the community

understood that plan and to build momentum for it. Boomer took the 1976-77 school

year to do such, and to integrate the elementary schools; and the following school year he

fully implemented the green plan—extending the plan to the middle schools as well.

Thus, by the start of the 1979 school year, Martinsville had emerged as the model magnet

school system as it is currently known. As Clifton Braxton pointed out,

> We have a lot of artists in [town], and we have a lot of well-educated people,
>
> black and white. We have people in the media, in the arts, actors, writers. So
>
> they decided to make Summit School an attraction by putting an arts magnet
>
> there…They wanted to attract white parents badly. And white parents were
>
> attracted to something like that. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

	1947	1964	1980
Elementary Schools			
Milton	100	100	52.4
Emerson	100	95	58.2
George Washington	58.4	Closed	Closed
Mount Hope	14.6	10	Closed
Summit	88.7	70	44.1
Newton	100	100	Closed
Johnson	48.8	10	52.8
Cliffside	100	100	67
Maxon	33.6	15	Closed
Turnitt	-	100	Closed
Leland	98.3	70	Closed

Junior High Schools			
West Elm	80.8	70	Closed
Mount Hope	35	Closed	52.6
Summit	64.9	35	Closed
Newton	100	90	53.6
Senior High School			
Martinsville High School	77	75	53.4

The impact of the magnet program was seen relatively quickly. During the first year 2,500 students opted to be bused, the lowest percentage of blacks at a school was 28%, and the greatest hovering at 54%. The outcome of this massive integration is phenomenal, as is demonstrated in figure 3; Martinsville truly did attain an integrated school district.

The desegregation efforts extended beyond the number of students in each school. Although this was an important measure, there was much about the culture of the schools that would need to change given the diversity each school now experienced. The School Board and community organizations continue to look at the number of minority faculty and administrators to ensure that there is adequate representation. They also have professional development opportunities to help teachers better discuss instructional strategies for multicultural learners.

Figure 3: % Non-Minority Students in Martinsville from 1947-1980. (Martinsville's 1980 Community Audit, 1980)

(Martinsville's 1980 Community Audit, 1980).

Resegregation

Despite the success of the movement to integrate Martinsville's schools, there are significant indicators that the community is still segregated and one could argue that the current trend, left to its own momentum, will eventually lead to back to segregated

schools. Returning to Wilkinson's findings, after the Brown decision and the subsequent

integration efforts, there still remains a large number of children in segregated schools.

Citing research from Gary Orfield, "both African-American and Latino

students…continue to face the most intense segregation in the Cliffside." Martinsville

has two indicators worthy of attention: declining percentage of white students in high

school and lack of integration outside of school.

"If we don't act now then the town will slowly disintegrate, until we have nothing

left and all the effort people put in—and died for—will go to waste." A Martinsville

middle school researcher (working with Bernadette Anand et al on an oral history of

Martinsville) speaks about his assessment of where Martinsville could be heading.

Figure 4 shows the enrollment numbers for the 2000-2001 school year.

	White		Black		Hispanic		Amer. Indian		Asian/Pacific Is.		Total
Elementary Schools	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
	197	54.4%	142	39.2%	14	3.9%		0.0%	9	2.5%	362
	158	51.8%	101	33.1%	16	5.2%		0.0%	30	9.8%	305
	267	41.1%	346	53.2%	19	2.9%	4	0.6%	14	2.2%	650
	294	47.0%	302	48.3%	20	3.2%		0.0%	9	1.4%	625
	145	40.6%	158	44.3%	37	10.4%		0.0%	17	4.8%	357
	16	50.0%	14	43.8%	0	0.0%		0.0%	2	6.3%	32
	196	54.0%	130	35.8%	24	6.6%	3	0.8%	10	2.8%	363
	244	55.3%	151	34.2%	21	4.8%	2	0.5%	23	5.2%	441
	1,517	48.4%	1,344	42.9%	151	4.8%	9	0.3%	114	3.6%	3,135
	347	49.3%	313	44.5%	22	3.1%	3	0.4%	19	2.7%	704
	191	38.2%	238	47.6%	45	9.0%		0.0%	26	5.2%	500
	114	50.7%	91	40.4%	10	4.4%		0.0%	10	4.4%	225
	652	45.6%	642	44.9%	77	5.4%	3	0.2%	55	3.8%	1,429
High School	627	40.5%	783	50.6%	70	4.5%		0.0%	67	4.3%	1,547
Grand Total	2,796	45.8%	2,769	45.3%	298	4.9%	12	0.2%	236	3.9%	6,111

Figure 4: Race Distribution for the 2000-01 School Year (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)

Close examination shows that from elementary school to high school the number

of black students increases by about 8%, while the number of white students decreases by

about 8%. (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, 2002)   Further investigation is necessary to

know where and why these students are leaving, however a safe assumption is that white

parents are either moving or sending their high school age students to private schools.

History demonstrates that this trend, left unchallenged, will eventually lead to a tipping

point due to the "fears of white flight emerge when some white parents transfer their

children from public to private schools, claiming they are not sufficiently challenged in

racially mixed classrooms." (Gale, 2006)

  "Now we need to integrate our town and our neighborhoods." Sentiments offered

by another middle school researcher. Even with integrated classrooms, one glance at the

lunchroom shows that "lunchtime co-mingling is uncommon at school and children tend

to sit with others of their own race" (Gale, 2006). Beyond the school, housing patterns

and church membership logs still point to a highly segregated town.

Chapter 4: Martinsville Public Schools

Magnet Program

Martinsville has been the recipient of a number of awards due to their integrated schools. Most notably, Martinsville's magnet system received the Governor's Award for Performance Excellence and the U.S. Department of Education used Martinsville's model in a report "Innovations in Education: Creating Successful Magnet School Programs," noting Martinsville as one of six best districts in the country (Martinsville Public Schools, 2013).

Following a town wide desegregation battle, Martinsville implemented a choice model to entice parents in segregated neighborhoods to voluntarily send their children to schools on the "other side of town." The model designed by Superintendent Boomer, voted on by the school board and approved by the NJ Commissioner of Education started Martinsville's integration efforts by opening Mount Hope Middle School in 1977. Mount Hope's gifted and talented curriculum was enough to convince white parents to *voluntarily* put their children on a bus to attend school in Martinsville's 4th ward, the predominantly black neighborhood in the southern tip. At the same time, Newton Middle School opened in Upper Martinsville as a magnet focused on fundamentals, with a "back to basics" curriculum to sway black parents to *voluntarily* put their children on buses to go to school in Martinsville's predominantly white, Cliffside corner. School by school this process continued until the entire district consisted only of magnet schools. This remains in existence today. Martinsville children are not required to attend their neighborhood schools, instead each family is able to decide which school they feel will best educate their child—so long as that selection does not offset the school's racial

balance.[5] Table 1 below shows the theme of each magnet school. Despite the gaps in achievement between black and white students, the magnet schools have successfully integrated all of Martinsville's schools. As Table 2 demonstrates, the demographics of Martinsville's schools do not mirror the demographics of the neighborhoods in which they are located. While this calls into question the school-based systems required to manifest the promise of integrated schools, the ability of Martinsville to maintain such a system over a number of decades demonstrates some level of commitment to and belief in the power of integration.

Martinsville Public Schools 2008-09

School	Grade	Demographic	Theme
Johnson	K – 2	AA 41.6% W 40.6%	Gifted and Talented
Summit	3 – 5	AA 37.1% W 51.6 %	Gifted and Talented
Cliffside	K – 5	AA 28.2% W 53.1%	Global Studies
Westwood	K – 5	AA 40.6% W 46.7%	Environmental Science
Milton	K – 5	AA 38.2% W 57.8%	The University Magnet
Leland	K – 5	AA 20.5% W 63%	Science and Technology
Emerson	K – 5	AA 36.2% W 43.3%	Montessori
Newton	6 – 8	AA 47.7% W 39.2%	Science and Technology
Honeywell	6 – 8	AA 25.5% W 60.3%	Historic Rebirth of Arts and Sciences (smaller)
Mt. Hope	6 – 8	AA 33% W 56%	Visual and Performing Arts
Martinsville High School	9 – 12	AA 41.8% W 47.9%	Series of SLCs

National Center for Education Statistics (2008-2009) www.nces.ed.gov/globallocator AND NJDOE Data page

Table 2. Martinsville's Magnets Neighborhood vs. School Demographics. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2008-2009) www.nces.ed.gov/globallocator and NJDOE Data page

---

[5] In 2009, the district converted to a zone model which uses census data on median household income and free/reduced price lunch following the PICS vs. Seattle. Now school enrollment must maintain a zone balance; which mirrors racial balance given the way Martinsville neighborhoods are organized.

Martinsville High School

Though there are no "neighborhood schools" in Martinsville, there is still a feeder pattern at work in the district. This is not written in stone and students have the option to transfer from one school to another, and the pattern ends with all students at Martinsville High School.

Martinsville produced an "Inside Martinsville High" promotional video to showcase what life is like inside the walls of Martinsville High School (MHS). The footage is phenomenal; showing all the reasons Martinsville is a wonderful place to attend public schools. The video details teachers and their teaching methods, the plethora of clubs available to students, and the small learning communities available to students. The students spoke of the great opportunity for them to grow into their own person at Martinsville High School, to not have to fit into a model of a high school but rather being able to fit their own niche and flourish within this mammoth place. Finally, the students lauded the school for being such a great representation of the very diverse town of Martinsville. Recent graduates were quoted, offering anecdotes of fellow college students who had difficulty befriending people who were different from themselves, versus the Martinsville graduates who felt very comfortable in a diverse setting. They attribute this ability to their experience at Martinsville High School.

Martinsville High School is the pride of many Martinsville residents and has been over a number of decades. The high school is the only public high school in Martinsville, bringing together students from all neighborhoods on a daily basis. With a District Factor Group (DFG) ranking of I (top ranking for richest districts is J); Martinsville is one of New Jersey's wealthiest school districts.

The MHS Campus consists of two buildings across the street from one another. All freshmen begin Martinsville High School in the 9th Grade Academy located in the Annex, which was once operated as West Elm Middle School. Sophomore year, these students join the juniors and seniors in the main school building. The school campus is beautiful, complete with a brook and stone overpass, and an amphitheater. During the day, students can be seen littered across the campus or patronizing the many food trucks or local eateries as the school also maintains an open campus.

The open campus is one of many features which make Martinsville High School special. Martinsville has dozens of extracurricular activities, a full range of varsity sports, and even an international sister school.   In this way, MHS students have a variety of options at their disposal and are able to create a unique high school experience.

Martinsville High School competes with some of New Jersey's most elite private schools in the town, including The Martinsville Academy, Lakewood Prep Academy, and St. Mary's High School. However, compete Martinsville does, as the academic offerings at the high school rival those of any private school, Martinsville graduates nearly 90% of its students, and in 2010, 10% of MHS students went on to Ivy League Schools. (http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/Article.aspx?Id=588)

Course Offerings

Martinsville's course offerings contribute greatly to the school's success. Martinsville High School has a number of academic departments, adding the Arts Program, to the list of typical academic departments found in a high school. Through departments such as The Arts Program, Martinsville offers students options to pursue nearly any academic interest they may have.

Most courses in a department are assigned an achievement level: college prep, honors, high honors, or Advanced Placement. According to the MHS Program Planning Guide (Martinsville High School, 2012), students should work with their teacher and guidance counselor to identify the appropriate course level for the student. Students are advised that they may change a course mid-semester if the class is too easy or difficult, so long as they follow the outlined procedure. The procedure includes parental permission, input from the teacher and approval from the guidance counselor and administration.

The Guide offers some guidance for establishing the proper level for a student. Table 4 below details each achievement group.

College Prep (CP)	These classes are for students with achievement test scores generally between the 30th and 70th percentile. Classroom work depends upon outside preparation each day with class reinforcement. These classes will afford students a solid foundation to build upon as they move through their high school experience.
Honors (H)	These classes are for students of high academic achievement. Students recommended to these classes typically have high grades and high scores on standardized assessments usually above the 70th percentile. Class instruction assumes that all students have the skills and motivation enabling them to do special reports and projects, etc., in addition to mastering the regular basic test and materials
Advanced (AP) Placement and High Honors (HH)	Students recommended to these classes typically have high grades and very high test scores—usually above 95th percentile on appropriate standardized achievement tests. These students have also demonstrated a great interest in the subject with skills commensurate with enthusiastic independent work and exploration.

Table 4. MHS Achievement Groups (Martinsville High School, 2012)

This is level of specificity regarding courses is important because MHS, as a school policy, has adopted a choice policy. This means that although courses have specified achievement levels, and although teachers recommend students for upper level courses, a

student may choose to take a higher class in most cases; excluding classes with a pre-requisite.   This process of "switching up" can take place *without* teacher recommendation or teacher approval. In fact, this process can take place *despite* the teacher's suggested placement of a student.

SLCs

An exciting offering at Martinsville High School, and yet another aspect which makes this school so special, are the Small Learning Communities (SLCs) created for students. SLCs provide students with a multi-year, team taught, interdisciplinary learning experience. SLC classes are taught in blocks and are only open to students within that SLC. There are currently 6 SLCs operating at Martinsville High School. The first is the Ninth Grade Academy, which is more a technicality since all 9th grade students are considered members of this SLC; there is no option. Two new SLCs, S.T.E.M. Academy and the Business and Entrepreneurial Institute, began with the 2013-14 school year. Additionally, there is a Medical Biology SLC. However, these SLCs stand in the shadow of the school's most popular SLCs, PARLIAMENT@MHS and The Equity Project.

PARLIAMENT@MHS

PARLIAMENT@MHS was founded in 1997 and offers 10th, 11th and 12th graders an interdisciplinary approach to examine government, citizenship and social issues. PARLIAMENT@MHS is operates as a small, self-governing body, complete with a student run government, a student-written Constitution and student-directed departments. Each week, all PARLIAMENT@MHS students gather in Congress (which actually requires students to master and use parliamentary procedures) to participate in student-created resolutions and debates on local, state, federal and international issues.

Students spend three periods a day, every day, for three years in PARLIAMENT@MHS. The PARLIAMENT@MHS foundation is History and English courses. These courses are team taught and blocked so that students receive two periods a day alternating between English and History. All English classes within the PARLIAMENT@MHS are Honors or High Honors, and all the history classes are AP or Honors. The actual PARLIAMENT@MHS curriculum spans topics ranging from War and Conflict to Economic Theory, Literature and History Students to Government and Politics. PARLIAMENT@MHS offers elective classes, including two courses for sophomores: Intro into PARLIAMENT@MHS and the Research Paper. Additionally, all PARLIAMENT@MHS students are required to meet with their PARLIAMENT@MHS teacher/mentor at least four times a year and create and conduct their own service learning project. The final piece of PARLIAMENT@MHS requires students to create "Public Demonstrations of Learning," which are projects to display what they are studying. Sophomores create War Room Museums, which are rooms students must decorate thematically to reflect any war in history and must also write a paper detailing the war. Juniors do Portfolio Presentations, while seniors participate in "We the People" presentation, where students must present information, defend a position and answer questions in a Congressional Hearing format. These events are open to the school community and are highlighted to display the work happening in PARLIAMENT@MHS. Between the academics, PARLIAMENT@MHS also has Institute-wide programs and activities between students and teachers to build community.

The Equity Project

On the third floor opposite the PARLIAMENT@MHS, is The Equity Project. Equity Project is a three-year interdisciplinary SLC founded in 1999. In a tradition

opposite that of PARLIAMENT@MHS, Equity Project examines social movements and their place in history. Like PARLIAMENT@MHS, Equity Project Students are assigned teacher mentors and are responsible for creating, fundraising and executing a service project to which address or promote social activism within their community.

The Equity Project curriculum is also English and History based, with a block scheduling format similar to PARLIAMENT@MHS, where students have English and History blocks on alternating days. All Equity Project Students begin with a "Research, Inquiry and Action Lab" daily to hone their research and social activism skills. The final project of this class is for students to create a direct action plan to tackle a specific social injustice. Finally, Equity Project Students are required to complete 30 hours of community service each school year.

These two SLCs are the most popular and the most prominent SLCs at Martinsville High School.   Their notoriety is not only due to the program design, but rather due to the number of conversations which have emerged about each institute's demographic makeup. In 2012, a student wrote a piece for the school online student newspaper titled, "*PARLIAMENT@MHS and The Equity Project: Is It a black and white Issue?* (Bjerklie, 2012)*"* where the author raises the issue that PARLIAMENT@MHS is seen as white and Equity Project as black. She suggests that the small number of white students in Equity Project and the small number of black students in PARLIAMENT@MHS contributes not only to PARLIAMENT@MHS being perceived as "snobby white kids" and Equity Project as "the ghetto," but that these perceptions impact students' decisions on which SLC to join (Bjerklie, 2012). The tension over this

topic continues to plague MHS and likely explains why despite multiple efforts; the demographics for these two SLCs were never released for this research study.

The Students

MHS is a large high school, with enrollment hovering near 2,000 students for the past 6 years. Table 6 shows the racial breakdown since 2008. While the town is nearly 60% white and 32% black, the nearly equal high school is quite laudable (2010 Census). Students in Martinsville have come to expect such a diverse experience as all the schools in the district are integrated, despite segregated neighborhoods which are still common in Martinsville, as a result of the district's magnet program.

Year	Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Total
2008	842 42.4%	946 47.6%	115 5.8%	77 8.9%	1985
2009	821 42.0%	934 47.8%	115 5.9%	79 4.1%	1953
2010	814 41.1%	973 49.1%	116 5.9%	76 3.8%	1980
2011	794 40.3%	966 49.0%	130 6.0%	79 4.0%	1971

Table 1. MHS Enrollment by Race

The Outcomes

In the absence of student level data, including course grades, test scores, etc., the most accurate way to access the outcomes of a New Jersey high school is student scores on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Exam (HSPA)[6]. Students in 11th grade take

---

[6] Though both the Martinsville High School and Rutgers University Institutional Review Boards approved access to student level data, this data was never made available to me; despite a number of requests in person and in writing.

the HSPA, in both Mathematics and Language Arts Literacy (LAL). Scores exist on a scale from 100-300; and students can pass the test with either a Proficient score (200-249) or an Advanced Proficient score (250-300). Those students falling below 200, receive a Partially Proficient score (100-199) and do not pass the test. Test results from the 2001-2002 school year through the 2010-2011 school year were analyzed for this research. During this time, the gap between the passing and not passing scores of Martinsville's black and white students has persisted in the double digits. Each of the tables below included a proficiency rate for students with an "Economic Disadvantage" label. This sub-group is required to be calculated by NCLB, however does not distinguish the race of these students. The students are included in the charts as a point of comparison, showing the relationship between the outcomes for black students and those of poor students.

Table 3 and 4 show the gap over time. Note that the smallest gap in Mathematics scores was a 27.5 point difference during the 2008-09 school year with the largest gap of 43.3 points being reported during the 2006-07 school year. The gaps in achievement on the LAL HSPA are not as large as the Math gap, though the point difference is still in the double digits. The smallest LAL difference, 10.1 points, was reported recently during the 2010-11 school year; and the largest, 26.3 points, was seen during the 2002-03 school year.

MHS HSPA Math (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	90.8	87	92.6	95.4	93.5	95.6	93.3	93.5	95.4	96.3
Black	48.4	48.3	59.1	60.5	61.8	52.3	60.3	66	60.5	60.2
Econ Dis	44.1	26.5	47.9	56.5	45.4	44.2	55.79	56.9	56.5	52.5
B/W Gap	42.4	38.7	33.5	34.9	31.7	43.3	33	27.5	34.9	36.1
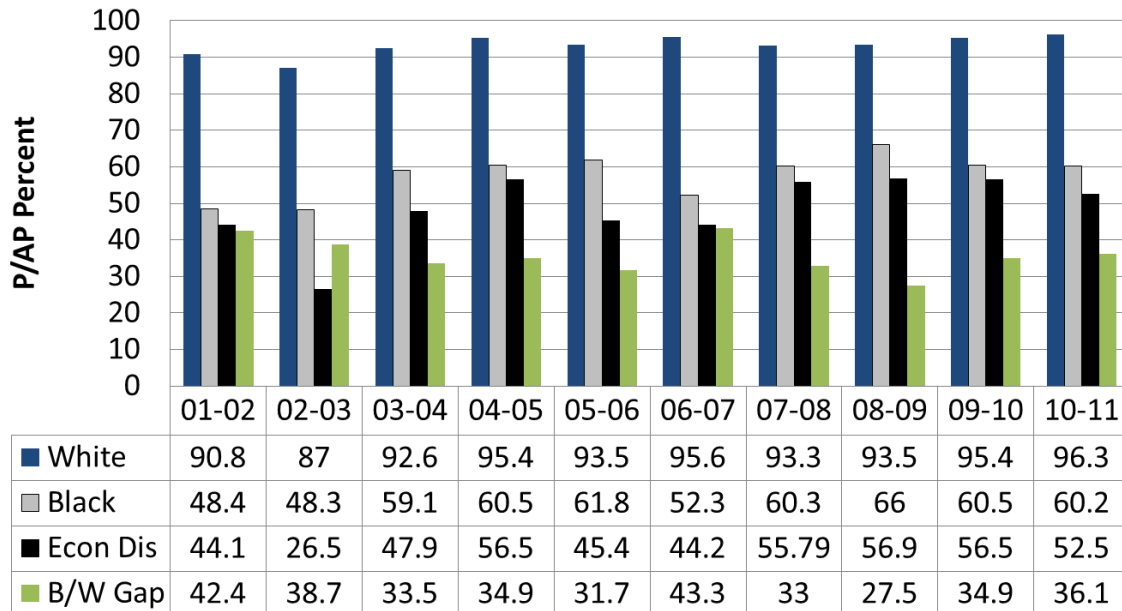
Table 2. MHS Math HSPA Scores P/AP, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Literacy (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	89.5	95.3	95.1	97.2	97.4	98.7	95.9	97	98.4	98.2
Black	71.5	69	78.1	79.1	80	78.9	77.3	79.3	78.6	88.1
Econ Dis	65	44.1	66.2	73.9	66.7			73.8	73.1	80.8
B/W Gap	18	26.3	17	18.1	17.4	19.8	18.6	17.7	19.8	10.1
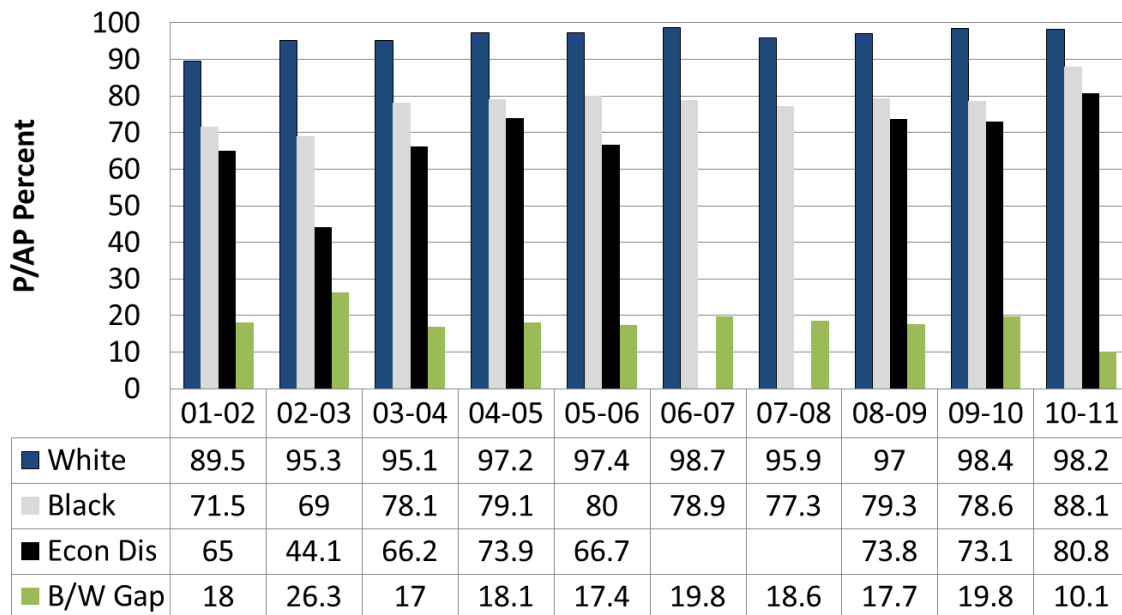
Table 3. MHS LAL HSPA Scores P/AP, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

It is clear that overall MHS has made small gains in both improving the outcomes of all students as well as closing the gap between black and white students. This is more evident in the Math scores, which have only returned to the original 2001 level once in this time period. LAL scores seem slightly less volatile, minus two large jumps in 2003 and 2010. The fluctuations from year to year in both Math and LAL are of interest, and could possibly come from curricular changes, test changes, etc. Further, in-depth analysis of these fluctuations would require student level data.

For the purposes of this research, the data show trends aligned with the research on minority student achievement on standardized tests. First, by separating the Proficient and Advanced Proficient scores, we see that a great portion of the white students who pass the HSPA do so with Advanced Proficiency at least 5 times the rate for black students in Math, and at least 3 the times the rate for black students in LAL. Tables 5 and 6 display the Advanced Proficiency scores. While the Advanced Proficiency rates of both black and white students have grown in Mathematics and LAL, the rate of growth is higher for whites evidenced by the increased gap from 2001 to 2011.

MHS HSPA Math (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	35.5	43.5	53.9	54.8	53.9	53.2	54.8	47.6	54.8	56.6
▨ Black	4.5	5.9	11.6	11	10.2	5.9	11.4	8	11	12.7
■ Econ Dis	5.1	5.9	4.2	1.4	4.5	0	6.8	1.5	1.4	11.9
■ B/W Gap	31	37.6	42.3	43.8	43.7	47.3	43.4	39.6	43.8	43.9
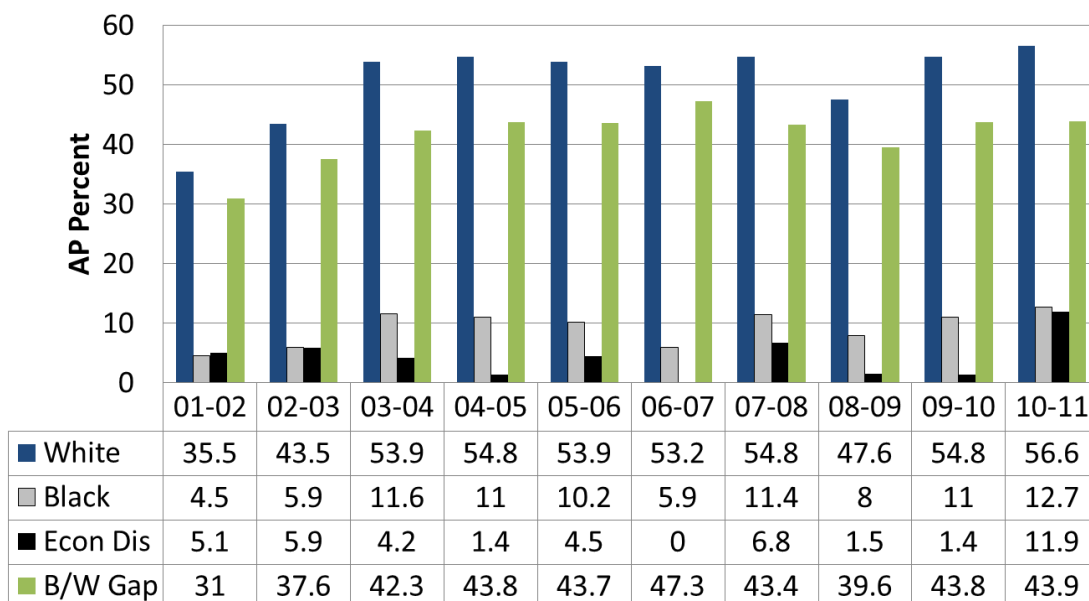
Table 4. MHS Math HSPA Advanced Proficiency Scores, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Literacy (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	26.8	29.8	34.8	50.2	49.8	47.8	22.3	31.6	49	48.4
▨ Black	8.2	6.4	8.2	9.2	10.3	11	8	9.5	7.5	13.5
■ Econ Dis	3.3	2.9	4.2	1.4	6.1			4.6	3	12.5
■ B/W Gap	18.6	23.4	26.6	41	39.5	36.8	14.3	22.1	41.5	34.9
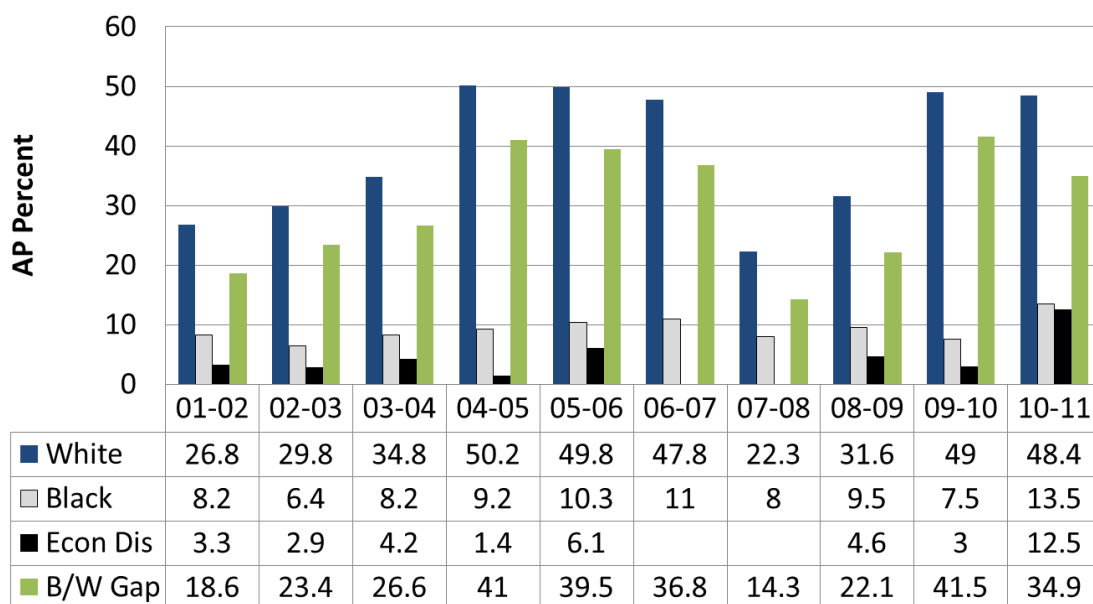
Table 5. MHS LAL HSPA Advanced Proficiency Rates, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html
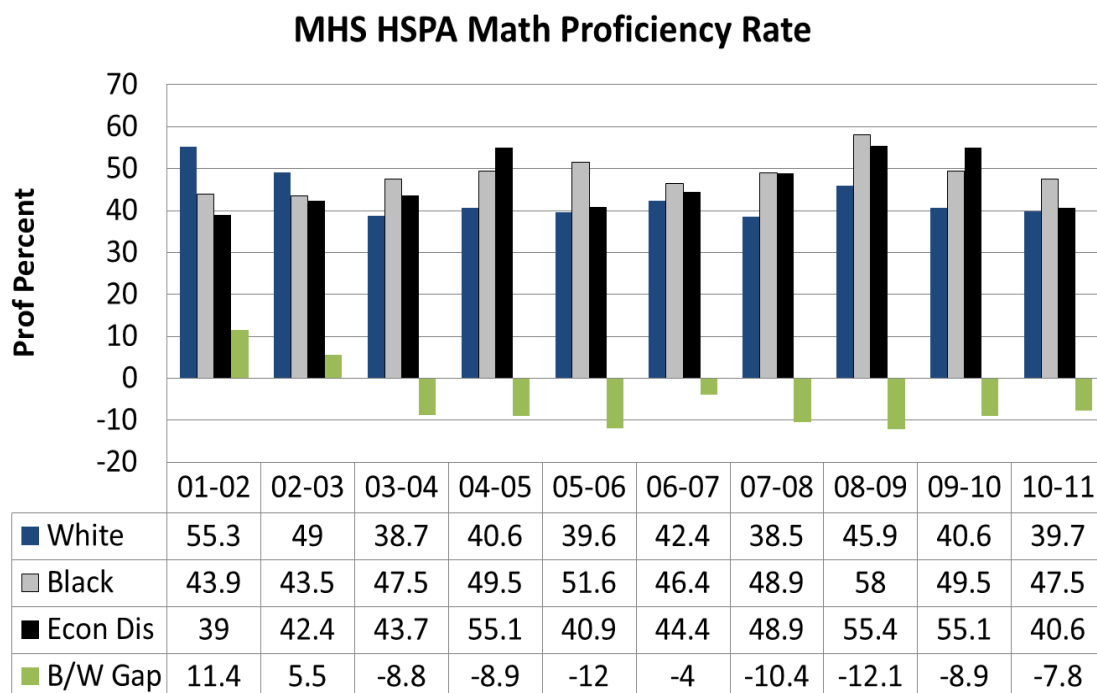
While the increases in the rate of white students who score Advanced Proficient on the HSPA and the increased gap between white and black students scoring Advanced Proficient on the HSPA is troubling; it arguably speaks to the ability of MHS to move more white students from the Proficient level to Advanced Proficient. In fact, an examination of Proficient scores in both LAL and Math will show that black students in Martinsville have outperformed their white counterparts on the HSPA at the Proficient level. Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate the growth quite clearly.

MHS HSPA Math Proficiency Rate

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	55.3	49	38.7	40.6	39.6	42.4	38.5	45.9	40.6	39.7
Black	43.9	43.5	47.5	49.5	51.6	46.4	48.9	58	49.5	47.5
Econ Dis	39	42.4	43.7	55.1	40.9	44.4	48.9	55.4	55.1	40.6
B/W Gap	11.4	5.5	-8.8	-8.9	-12	-4	-10.4	-12.1	-8.9	-7.8

MHS HSPA LAL Proficiency Rate

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	62.7	65.5	60.3	47	47.6	50.9	73.6	65.4	49.9	49.8
Black	63.3	62.6	69.9	69.9	69.7	67.9	69.3	69.8	71.1	74.6
Econ Dis	61.7	41.2	62	72.5	60.6			69.2	70.1	68.3
B/W Gap	-0.6	2.9	-9.6	-22.9	-22.1	-17	4.3	-4.4	-21.2	-24.8

MHS HSPA Math Partial Proficiency Rates

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	9.2	13.1	7.4	4.6	6.5	4.3	6.8	6.4	4.6	3.7
Black	51.6	51.8	47.5	39.5	38.2	47.7	39.8	34.1	39.5	39.8
Econ Dis	55.9	73.5	43.7	43.5	54.5	55.8	44.3	43.1	43.5	47.5
B/W Gap	-42.4	-38.7	-40.1	-34.9	-31.7	-43.4	-33	-27.7	-34.9	-36.1

MHS HSPA Literacy Partial Proficiency Rates

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	10.5	4.8	4.9	2.7	2.6	1.3	4.1	3	1.7	1.8
Black	28.5	31	21.9	20.9	20	21.1	22.7	20.7	21.4	11.9
Econ Dis	35	55.9	33.8	26.1	33.3			26.2	26.9	19.2
B/W Gap	-18	-26.2	-17	-18.2	-17.4	-19.8	-18.6	-17.7	-19.7	-10.1

The growth in the Proficiency rates of black students suggests that MHS has been successful in moving students from not passing (Partial Proficiency) to passing (Proficiency). Tables 9 and 10 show the Partial Proficiency rates of MHS students. The decrease in the rate of Partially Proficient students from 2001 to 2011 is laudable. Table 11 shows the change in proficiency rates from 2001 through 2011. This table highlights that the district is moving students from Partially Proficient to Proficient and from Proficient to Advanced Proficient. To better understand the rates with which this is happening and the students this is happening for requires student level data and a look at what has happened in the district from 2001-2011. However, one clue as to how these gains occurred comes through Martinsville's programmatic approach to improving minority student achievement.

		White			Black		
		2001	**2011**	**change**	**2001**	**2011**	**change**
Math	Adv	35.5%	56.6%	+ 59%	4.5%	12.7%	+ 182%
	Prof	55.3%	39.7%	- 28%	43.9%	47.5%	+ 23%
	Partial	9.2%	3.7%	- 60%	51.6%	39.8%	- 23%
LAL	Adv	26.8%	48.4%	+ 81%	8.2%	13.5%	+ 65%
	Prof	62.7%	49.8%	- 21%	63.3%	71.1%	+ 12%
	Partial	10.5%	1.8%	- 83%	28.5%	11.9%	- 58%

Martinsville's Programmatic Approach

Believing that closing the minority achievement gap must be a concerted, comprehensive effort, the district has developed a wide range of academic support programs, activities, social clubs and parent workshops to address the varied obstacles to achievement that many minority students face…This year, state test scores showed a greater narrowing of the minority student achievement gap than ever before – proof that the Martinsville approach is working (Montclair Public Schools, 2009)

In response to the achievement gap present in Martinsville, the district has adopted a number of programmatic strategies over the years. District support for minority student achievement has come from both district programs as well as from community partnerships. On February 2, 2009 presentation to the Martinsville Board of Education, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Mrs. Kelly Johnson made a presentation to the Martinsville Board of Education detailing the district's progress on minority student achievement. In her presentation, Mrs. Johnson points to the work of researchers Edmond Gordon of Teacher's College—Columbia University, Pedro Noguera of New York University, and Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University. She specifically points to Dr. Gordon's philosophies as the key influence for the district's

approach to closing the academic achievement gap between the district's black and white students.

Dr. Gordon advised that districts "focus on providing supplementary educational programs comprised of both in district programs and community partnerships" (Johnson, Minority High Achievement Report, 2009). As such, Ms. Johnson points to 8 initiatives, both in district and community partnerships, to show "What's Working" in the Martinsville Public Schools to close the achievement gap between black and white students. The most expansive of these programs are: M-PREP, AVID, and STARS.

M-PREP

M-PREP was established in 1999 by a group of African-American parents to respond to the academic gap between black and white students in Martinsville's public schools, particularly pertaining to standardized test scores and top-tier college admission. Serving as an external program, M-PREP partners Martinsville Public Schools to provide programs to African-American students. M-PREP's mission is to "help close the achievement gap between white students and students of color by providing focused instruction through a variety of educational support programs. In addition, we seek to encourage Martinsville minority students to pursue college enrollment, particularly in four-year colleges, and to fulfill the requirements to earn a college degree" (M-Prep, 2010).

M-PREP identified four areas to focus on and created programs to support each target area. The four areas were: helping minority students succeed in advanced level classes, supporting the transition from middle school to high school, narrowing the college admissions gap, and improving performance in elementary and middle schools.

To better support students in advanced level classes, M-PREP offers SAT preparation classes and study groups. This element of the program was intended to increase content knowledge, however in addition, also claims to have decreased student isolation and made students more likely to participate in other school activities. Two years after M-PREP's founding, another programmatic element was added to aid rising high schoolers. In partnership with Martinsville High School, M-PREP offered Literature and Algebra summer enrichment and mentoring intended to prepare students for the district's demanding 9th grade curriculum and overall transition to high school. The College Advocacy Center was created in 2004 to better support parents and families through the college application process; something M-PREP program staffers identified as thwarting the efforts of African-American students determined to go to college. Through this program, students were afforded personalized assistance through the college application process. The College Advocacy Center also partnered with universities dedicated to increase African-American student enrollment to host annual workshops. M-PREP program staffers realized the importance of early intervention as a strategy to closing the achievement gap, and extended the programmatic elements to the elementary and middle schools. Through Mini-M-PREP elementary school children were invited to enhance their literacy skills by participating in M-PREP Reading Circles, book clubs for parents and children. Middle-M-PREP was created for middle school boys, providing tutoring and literacy initiatives for the district's adolescent, African-American boys (M-Prep, 2010).

AVID

The Advancement Via Individual Determination Program (AVID) is a national program used to support student achievement; Martinsville enters a paid agreement with

AVID to have the program in district. AVID targets average students "not reaching their potential," raises the expectations and rigor for these students and provides them with the study skills necessary to meet the new challenge. In addition to study skills, the AVID "system accelerates student learning, uses research based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional development, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change" (AVID). AVID's main philosophy is that once students are equipped with the proper tools (as provided by AVID) and high expectations, they will perform at high levels.

AVID currently serves 15 schools in New Jersey and nearly 5,000 schools nationwide (Fabiano, 2011). In 2009, the AVID program at Martinsville High School was serving approximately 120 sophomores, juniors and seniors; and this number is expected to grow. AVID is an elective course students take in conjunction with their other courses. During this time, students learn "organization and study skills, work on critical thinking and asking probing questions, get academic help from peers and college tutors, and participate in enrichment and motivational activities that make college seem attainable" (AVID).

STARS

Funded by Title 1 funds, the STARS program operates in alignment with NCLB regulations. "The STARS program is dedicated to educational excellence for each and every child. Through the goal of short-term intervention…teachers along with parents will provide academic assistance in Language Arts and Mathematics. Our goal is for all children to attain grade level proficiency" (Johnson, 2007). This is the STARS mission statement, a program whose four components serve over 1,000 Martinsville students (Johnson, Minority High Achievement Report, 2009). The STARS component which

operates at Martinsville High School focuses on providing academic support through the language arts and math departments in addition to HSPA prep. There are placement criteria for students to be admitted into the STARS program. Ninth and tenth graders must be below the 50th percentile on the language arts and/or math TerraNova tests or have a final grade of "C" or below in their language arts and/or math class. Eleventh graders have to a partial proficiency score on the HSPA or a final grade of "C" or below in their language arts and/or math class. Students exit the STARS program upon meeting one of three criteria: a 1 or 2 on a teacher-ranked 4 point scale, proficiency in the appropriate standardized test, or earning an "A" or "B" in their language arts and/or math class. Students identified for STARS hover slightly over 10% of the Martinsville Public Schools population, though over 70% of STARS students are African-American and nearly 40% are identified as economically disadvantaged (Johnson, 2007).

Chapter 5: Methods

Purpose

Despite a concerted, programmatic focus on improving minority student achievement in Martinsville, a pronounced gap remains between the white and black students. This research used program modeling methods to create a theory-based program model, then utilized qualitative methods to test the model with current stakeholders. This research examined the following four questions: (1) what theories are most promising for improving minority student achievement in a mixed, suburban school district? (2) Based on these theories, is there a "best practice" model for solving the problem? (3) Based on these theories, what social, educational and community systems are required to implement this model? (4) What are the possibilities and barriers within the current system for this to occur?

Research Design

Program evaluation models often call attention to the logic underlying a program's theory. This research proactively created a logic model on which to build a program. The creation of this logic model was based solely on the current literature about improving minority student achievement specifically for minority students attending public schools in affluent, suburban communities. This allowed the researcher to find the intersection of the most promising theories for closing the achievement gap. Once constructed, teachers, students, and school administrators had the chance to identify opportunities and challenges to achieving the program's goals, based on their knowledge of the community and school in which they operate.

Program/Logic Model

Weiss (1998) defines program theory as "the mechanisms that mediate between the delivery (and receipt) of the program and the emergence of the outcomes of interest" (p. 69). Logic modeling is a form of program evaluation focused specifically on understanding the causal relationships which impact outcomes and offer great insights into the potential of an intervention to achieve the desired result by examining the underlying theory vis-à-vis expert knowledge and/or evidence (Brousselle & Champagne, 2011). "Logic models are word or pictorial depictions of real-life events/processes that depict graphically the underlying assumptions or bases upon which the undertaking of one activity is expected to lead to the occurrence of another activity or event" (Millar, Simeone, & Carnevale, 2001, p. 73). Constructing a logic model provides a clear understanding of how the intervention is supposed to operate from beginning to end (Millar, Simeone, & Carnevale, 2001; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004; Davidson, 2005). Because Martinsville's efforts to improve minority student achievement have not proven successful in closing the academic achievement gap between black and white students, this research attempted to construct a logic model which would make use of the most promising practices for improving minority student achievement.

Data Collection

This research used both qualitative and quantitative methods. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to probe for deeper understanding about the possibilities and barriers to achieving the program's goal, but also about the nuances of how the school and community operate. The quantitative data show that there is an achievement gap, but do little to explain why; a qualitative approach will add levels of clarity to what

is happening at Martinsville High School to contribute to and/or explain the achievement gap.

School Level Data

This research obtained student achievement data provided by the New Jersey Report Card and Martinsville Public School district reports to demonstrate the presence and extent of the black-white achievement gap over time. This shows the pervasiveness of the gap while at the same time raising questions about the applicability of traditional, class-based explanations to explain such a gap. Data about the make-up of the district and high school are also relevant to show the diversity, both of ethnicity and income, present in the district. Again, this shows the need for new theories about the gap since the underperforming minority students in Martinsville (as a whole) are neither poor, nor attending segregated schools in hyper-segregated neighborhoods.

Minority Student Achievement Literature

While discussions of educational inequity began to surface decades ago, there are a few key watershed moments. The "Nation at Risk" Report detailed how schools' collective poor performance had implications for the future of the United States. Jonathan Kozol's scathing report about the deleterious conditions in some of the nation's most under-resourced schools drew conversations about educational inequity towards questions of resources and school funding. Oscar Lewis's research pointed to a culture of poverty, leading many to look to the home life of minority children and their communities, indicting them for undervaluing education, an inability to postpone gratification, and a host of other behaviors said to negatively impact a student's academic achievement. John Ogbu's research in Shaker Heights, Ohio didn't point to a culture of poverty specifically, but identified a number of parenting practices—even in the affluent

Ohio suburb—which he offered as an explanation for why minority students were not capitalizing on the educational opportunities in the same way as their white counterparts, albeit in the same schools. It was not until Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate employed Critical Race Theory as the lens to research education that researchers began to identify changes in the institution of schools required for minority students to truly achieve their potential; this program model drew from this body of literature. This research argued that race is a key factor to understanding the academic achievement gap, and that attempts to examine the academic achievement gap outside of race is to overlook key components of this phenomenon.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators. This research called on interviews, rather than focus groups, to provide a space for teachers and administrators to speak honestly about the potential barriers to achieving the goals of the program without the fear of exposure or judgment from their respective communities. During each interview, the subject was asked questions about the model to ascertain (1) their perspective on the program's theory, (2) their belief in the potential to close the black-white achievement gap in their school, (3) their belief in the ability of the model to close the achievement gap in their school, and (4) their assessment of how likely program implementation would be, given their knowledge of the politics of their district. This feedback was imperative to success of this research, for this perspective detailed potential gaps between the program's theory and implementation. All interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and coded.

Focus Groups

Student input was just as crucial as the other key stakeholders; however student input came from focus groups. Focus groups allow for a type of collaboration and synergy not present in one-on-one interviews. Having students in groups will allow for a deeper discussion of the possibilities and limitations of the proposed program model from the student perspective. Focus groups were tape recorded, transcribed and coded.

Data Analysis

There were three sets of qualitative data to analyze. The first two sets of data, student focus groups and teacher interviews, were each transcribed and coded to address the research questions. The third set of data came from the teacher interviews, specifically their responses to the program model. For each of the program model components, each practitioner was asked to rank the following for each program component:

(i)   Important: Is this program component important in closing the achievement gap between black and white students?

(ii)   Possible: Would it be possible in a place like Martinsville?

(iii)   Effective: If it happened, would it actually narrow the gap?

These results were tallied and analyzed. The analysis looked specifically for program components ranked important and effective, yet not possible. It should be noted that many teachers gave answered with "I'm not sure" or some variation of that. Due to the amount of "Not sure" responses, these were included as a separate answer category.

Study Participants

School Administrators and Teachers

Most interviews were conducted with teachers, though three school administrators were also interviewed. Teachers were selected across all subject areas and SLCs.

Teachers were recruited from teacher's lounges, hallways, and the main office. If gaps were identified, i.e. no science teachers, science teachers were then targeted. All teachers agreed to participate and were interviewed in private. <mark>Thirty-two teachers and 2 administrators were interviewed as a part of this study, each interview lasted an average of 35 minutes. Interviews were conducted by me and transcribed by an external agency.</mark>

Students

The principal and teachers helped to identify classrooms to target to meet student participant goals. Once classes were identified, a short presentation was made to describe the study. Students volunteered to participate. Focus groups were conducted in racially homogeneous groups. Further, to ensure that all student groups were represented, this research targeted both high and low achieving students to participate. All students were informed that focus groups were to be racially homogenous, and as such, volunteered for the appropriate focus group. High and low-achieving students were recruited from classes which were targeted with the help of teachers. The target groups are listed in the table below. Fifty-one students participated in the focus groups. Each focus group had an average of 5 students and averaged 60 minutes. Focus groups were conducted by me and transcribed by an external agency.

Target Group	Description
Equity Project, White	White students in the Equity Project SLC
Equity Project, Black	Black students in the Equity Project SLC
PARLIAMENT@MHS, White	White students in the PARLIAMENT@MHS SLC
PARLIAMENT@MHS, Black	Self-identified black students in the PARLIAMENT@MHS SLC
White, High-Achieving, non-SLC	High-achieving white students, not in any SLC
Black, High-Achieving, non-SLC	High-achieving black students, not in any SLC
White, Low-Achieving, non-SLC	Low-achieving white students, not in any SLC
Black, Low-Achieving, non-SLC	Low-achieving black students, not in any SLC

Table 6. Focus Group Descriptions

Chapter 6: Constructing the Program Model

Findings

The purpose of this research was to construct a logic model that would improve

the academic outcomes of all students in a mixed-race, suburban high school.   Given the

disparate outcomes for black and white students even within affluent schools, this

research specifically sought answers to the following questions: (1) What theories are

most promising for improving minority student achievement in a mixed, suburban school

district? (2) Based on these theories, is there a "best practice" model for solving the

problem? (3) Based on these theories, what social, educational and community systems

are required to implement this model? (4) What are the possibilities and barriers within

the current system for this to occur?

What Theories are Most Promising?

The achievement gap discourse over the past few decades has grown from looking

at raw test score gaps to testing the impact of living in poverty to examining cultural

practices which some argue threatened the academic achievement of black students.

Rather than look to explain the achievement gap, this research has focused on the

strategies for improving the academic achievement of suburban, minority students.   The

most promising theories have little to do with unlocking a secret for teaching black

children (Ladson-Billings, 2009), instead the most promising theories are surprisingly

simple: black students perform best in environments where they are academically

challenged with rigorous content (Steele, 2009; Chenoweth, 2008; Boykin & Noguera,

2011), where there is an understanding that schooling for black students is a distinct

experience (Perry, 2003; Gosa & Alexander, 2007), and where ALL students exist within an achievement-oriented environment where they are expected to achieve at high levels (Perry, 2003). These theories are most promising because they fundamentally address what school should be: a place where all students are seen as intellectually capable, engaged in ways that value their distinct social identities and are as seen as a welcome member of a high-achieving community. These theories challenge cultural theories, moving beyond the explanations offered by oppositional culture or fear of acting white theories. Research has demonstrated that these "cultural theories" overstate black student's purported aversion to academic achievement and understate the impact of tracking, segregated classes/tracks/schools, and a racialized school environment in which many black students exist (Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Roscigno, 1998; Carter, 2005; Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

To undo the structural racism in educational institutions--a definite pre-cursor to disturbing the connection between race and academic outcomes (Leverett, 2007; Tyson, 2011); schools must not only confront race, they must critically examine race and then re-conceptualize it (Ladson-Billings, 2009). How all children experience schools must become more inclusive, more democratic, where every person is valued and counted, where the possible marginalization or omission of any group is seen as unacceptable and a threat to the well-being of the society (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The program activities and outputs suggested in this model attempt to provide "radical solutions…that seriously undermine the privileges of those who have so skillfully carved that privilege into the foundation of the nation" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 33), not only by addressing

issues of race in education, but also by doing so in a way that reformulates our idea of schools and demonstrates how inclusive they can actually be.

"Best Practice" Model

Using the most promising theories, a logic model was constructed aimed at improving minority student achievement. A logic model has four components: inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

Inputs

The inputs for this logic model were: money, school board, teachers, administrators, students, professional development partnerships, parents, guidance counselors, and time during the school day.

Activities

Based on the research, six program activities were highlighted as promising improved minority student achievement:

i. Conduct professional development for teachers, administrators and guidance counselors on topics pertaining to issues of equity, diversity, culturally competent teaching, etc.

ii. Develop and/or purchase a rigorous, culturally inclusive curriculum.

iii. Partner with equity-oriented, trained professionals to create a safe space/affinity groups to discuss and unpack racialized incidents.

iv. Create and run a "public relations" campaign to change the face of and better publicize minority achievement.

v. Conduct "professional development" sessions for black students to learn and discuss the tools of success.

vi.   Conduct informal teambuilding activities between faculty and students.

vii.   Conduct "professional development" sessions for parents to better equip them to support their children.

Professional Development Sessions for Teachers, Administrators and Guidance Counselors

This proposed program activity would require the staff at Martinsville to participate in professional development sessions focused specifically on examining and developing the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to teach in a mixed-race, affluent school district. These sessions could be scheduled during professional development days or during common planning periods throughout the school day.

It is necessary to allocate time to enhance the capacity of the school's teachers, administrators and guidance counselors. Despite years of professional development on a variety of topics evolving from diversity training to culturally relevant pedagogy, there still remains a gap in how schools as institutions, and those within it, understand the relationship between race and education. First, "confusion about the role and significance of race is particularly evident with respect to the ways in which Americans think about the relationships among race, education and achievement…it has taken some time for educators and school districts to recognize the importance of what is now widely referred to as 'cultural competence'" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 29). The evidence of cultural competence often on display in schools, i.e. celebrations with ethnic food, black and Women's History Month assemblies, etc., are shallow representations of what cultural competence actually is (Ladson-Billings, 2009). While culturally competent teaching ought to highlight cultural practices, the ultimate goal is to teach students to

challenge the tension between their life experiences and the ways society depicts and defines what is fundamentally "American." Yes, it is important to study Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, but not if Rosa Parks remains the non-threatening tired seamstress instead of a key political figure placed strategically to spark a movement (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally competent teaching understands the need for the type of shift as well as the impact of such a shift.

A pre-requisite to culturally competent teaching, particularly for black students, is knowledge of the deep appreciation blacks have had for the power of education. Completely ignoring the ways that blacks have traditionally found ways to educate themselves (amid the many risks in doing so), the connection between blacks and the value of education has been severed, as demonstrated by the comparisons blacks place on education to other ethnic minority groups (Waters, 1999; Perry, 2003). "We have a whole generation of teachers, black and white, who don't have a clue about the history of black education and the African-American narrative and intellectual tradition…schools…need to create social contexts for African-American youth where being African-American is coincident with doing intellectual work and being an achiever" (Perry, 2003, p. 101). However, this cannot happen if the adults in charge are ignorant of such accounts. This program model calls for professional development sessions which are constructed to bring all teachers through a set of experiences that require them to reflect on what it means to know, question and value the cultural experience of others to attain the level of cultural competence required to function in a multi-cultural, global world.

A statement made by a teacher demonstrates the need for this type of professional development: "I think everyone's pretty much aware of the special nature of the [diverse environment] that we teach in." This sentiment was echoed throughout teacher interviews, however being aware that you teach in a diverse environment and knowing how to teach in ways that adequately serve that level of diversity are two different endeavors. Providing all staff with a learning community which helps them respond to this type of diversity will contribute to the academic success of all students (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996; Panasonic Foundation, 2006).

Develop/Purchase a Rigorous, Culturally Inclusive Curriculum

Students need to see themselves represented in the curriculum they study, and this curriculum ought to be rigorous to challenge students intellectually. This model proposes that Martinsville use the expertise of its teachers to develop a curriculum which is inclusive of multiple cultural perspectives and contributions. In the event that such a curriculum cannot be created, the model suggests that one is purchased.

There are many aspects of culture that affect us in many ways: how we identify with others, how we perceive and respond to what is happening around us and culture influencing the goals and aspirations we have for ourselves (Jackson, 2011). Understanding the connection between culture and motivation is crucial for educating black children (Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Whether consciously or subconsciously, African-American students know the feats that "their ancestors" went through to both to acquire knowledge and to hide it for their own safety. These children also understand the value of education as a tool for upward mobility, though the degree to which they build expectancy may depend on their belief that the instruction before them will render

the same rewards as it will white students (Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Mickelson, 1990). This "attitude-achievement paradox (Mickelson, 1990)" occurs when students believe in the power of education (attitude) yet have lower levels of achievement. Mickelson (1990) argues that a set of attitudes shared among both black and white students underlies this paradox.

According to Mickelson (1990), abstract attitudes are "based on beliefs about education and opportunity, as found in the dominant ideology of U.S. society" (p. 45), while concrete attitudes "reflect the diverse empirical realities that people experience with respect to returns on education from the opportunity structure" (p. 45). These two attitudes may sometimes be difficult to resolve. Arguably, most black and white students at Martinsville High School would agree with abstract attitudes that link education to future success as in the statement, "A good education is important to be successful in the future," which demonstrates the abstract belief that education is important (Mickelson, 1990). Abstract attitudes held among black students may even identify their aspirations vis-à-vis their position in the WASP ideology prevalent in the United States. For example, many black students may agree with the statement, "black people like me have the opportunity to be successful if I pay attention and try hard in school." While still abstract, this sentiment acknowledges that though there is a power structure in this country, some blacks will be able to overcome it (Mickelson, 1990). Unlike concrete attitudes which denote the student's opinion of the likely outcomes given his/her efforts. For example, "My father hasn't been promoted even though he went back to school to finish his degree," illuminates an unreliable return on education, causing the student to be skeptical or cautious about his ability to be successful given his perception of the

opportunity structure regardless of the work he does in school (Mickelson, 1990). Mickelson argues that this attitude-achievement paradox greatly impacts the academic achievement level of students; despite the students' abstract attitude (Mickelson, 1990).

The "oversights in curricula and pedagogy [evidenced by] erasing the different histories and social and economic realities of their students [replaced by] token nods to and discussions of difference" (Warikoo & Carter, 2009, p. 374)" reinforces the message that there is a dominant narrative and a dominant opportunity structure. By not challenging the dominant narrative, schools are asking black students to subscribe to a curriculum which undervalues them and arguably will not get them any closer to their goals (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Said differently, to invest students who view the current opportunity structure with skepticism, schools would need to offer a curriculum that challenges the commonly-held narrative which doubts black intellectualism. Such a curriculum would include the contributions of minorities, challenging notions of white hegemony, allowing the legitimization of knowledge from non-WASP sources (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Boykin, 2002).

Space to Unpack Racialized Incidents

A number of researchers have documented seeing or experiencing a racialized event in a school, an event that appears to happen in a particular way because of the race of the participants (Delpit, 1995; Lewis, 2007; Perry, 2003; Stubblefield, 2009; Ogbu, 2003). Because we know these events happen, this model proposes that Martinsville High School hire a consultant or train a counselor to mediate conversations as needed by faculty and students. These conversations should take place in an allocated physical space and time and should function as a safe space for people to process these events.

Conversations about race, racism and racialized behaviors have produced great amounts of tension; and society's response to ignore this reality has been harmful (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

> Discussions and debates about racism create anxiety and conflict, which are handled differently by different cultural groups. For example, whites tend to fear open discussion of racial problems because they believe that such discussion will stir up hard feelings and old hatreds. Whites tend to believe that heated arguments about racism lead to divisiveness, loss of control, bitter conflict and even violence. Blacks, on the other hand, believe that discussion and debate about racism help to push racial problems to the surface—and, perhaps, force society to deal with them (Pine & Hilliard III, 1990, p. 596).

In mixed-race schools, there are bound to be instances which appear to have racial components and since perception is reality, these instances must be respected as someone's truth. "Schools are arguably one of the central institutions involved in the drawing and redrawing of racial lines... [serving] as a location and means for interracial interaction and as a means of both affirming and challenging previous racial attitudes and understandings" (Lewis, 2007, p. 4). Keeping these experiences hidden leads people to make sense of them on their own, which does little to create a more inclusive, equitable environment. These experiences are real for both the white and black people who experience them, and they have implications for how people engage (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Obama, 2008). "Playing the race card," claiming a color-blind ideology, or the fear of being called racist are all harmful constructs emerging from society's inability to discuss race (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Consider the following example from a white teacher:

Teacher: When I first came [to MHS]. . five or six years ago, I knew that M-

PREP existed. And to my way of thinking, M-PREP was a program that was

intended to help minority students improve some of their basic skills…So one

day, early on in my sophomore class, I handed back a paper to a young African

American boy. It had a lot of, it seemed like it had some good ideas, but it had a

lot of grammatical errors in it. And someone had recently been talking to me

about M-PREP and I said to this young boy, "You know, I like the ideas that you

have expressed. It looks like you could work on some of your, your writing skills.

Have you thought about getting involved in the M-PREP program?"   The

next day when I arrived at school I was told that a parent was waiting for me, at

8:00 a.m., no appointment, but a parent was waiting there. The parent was the

mother of this young boy. I took the parent into this conference room. She

blasted me. She was beyond offended that I would suggest to her son that he

enroll in the M-PREP program. How dare I present such an idea to her young

man, to her son, who is so gifted? How dare I even suggest that he need any kind

of reinforcement from the M-PREP program? I will tell you something, I have

never recommended a student to M-PREP since that time.

This experience, as recalled by this teacher, needs to be "unpacked." The teacher in this

quote is having her professional integrity questioned, apparently on the basis of her race

and the race of the student. From the teacher's recounting of the story, it is hard to see

the grounds for her being reprimanded by this parent. However, the implication is that

the teacher was targeting this black student as needing remediation because he is black.

The impact of this experience is that the teacher was silenced. The parent's viewpoint went unchallenged and the student will not receive the writing help he needs—the writing help M-PREP was created to offer. The tension this baggage creates will erode the community in which these three players exist.

In order for schools to attack issues of equity in schools, there must be a place for such examples to be unpacked (Darling-Hammond, 1997). This model calls for a structure for racialized incidents to be processed by those involved, on a regular basis with trained professionals. This structure should not be seen as professional development or anything in its image. This structure should not require is also not a place to determine transgressors and amendments. Rather, this structured space ought to build community, to house and create dialogue for the very real experiences people endure.

Barack Obama's honest reflection during a speech in Philadelphia speaks to the complexity of this issue, the level of honesty needed, and our charge for moving forward.

I can no more disown [Jeremiah Wright] than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother - a woman who helped raise me…but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe… The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges… (Obama, 2008)

Create and Run "Public Relations" Campaign

The fourth proposed program activity for Martinsville High School is to run a "public relations" campaign to widen the scope of what black student achievement looks like at MHS. The school might choose to highlight students who has shown great improvement, creativity, students who have had an impact on the community, etc. The purpose of this campaign would be to challenge whatever restrictions exist and show students achieving in a variety of ways so that more students see themselves in the students identified as successful or high achieving.

The social construction of intelligence continues to exclude, or at least question, the value blacks assign to academic achievement (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Carter, 2005; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Chenoweth, 2008; Delpit, 1995; Jackson, 2011; Mickelson & Everett, 2008; Perry, 2003; Stubblefield, 2009). Furthermore, stereotypical notions of minority achievement (i.e. athletic achievements) reinforce the notion that blacks are not smart or that only certain "types" of blacks are achieving. In either case, it does little to foster a community-wide belief that academic achievement across the black community comes in a variety of ways, shapes and sizes.

> Because schools generally reflect the larger values and beliefs of society, stereotypes about the relationship between race and intelligences are often reinforced within the structure and culture of schools. If unchallenged, we should not be surprised to see black male students gravitating toward basketball and football while avoiding math and science. Stereotypes are powerful; unless educators make a deliberate effort to challenge them, they can have the same

impact on student achievement as older views about the relationship between race and intellectual ability" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 27).

Black students in a place like Martinsville have the task of finding, forming, or strengthening their own identity, both academic and otherwise. Arguably, there are threats to such a process happening in a place where "stereotype threat…a situational threat—a threat in the air—that, in general form, can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists" (Steele, 2009, p. 164) is present. The point to be made here is that black students in a place like Martinsville have to constantly weigh the costs and benefits of fighting to maintain their true identity. In other words, black students may find themselves fighting to maintain their identity in a system that continually questions that very identity. This may be especially challenging in situations where students have identified structures in place which cause them to question whether "one has the interests, skills, resources, and opportunities to prosper there, as well as that one belongs there, in the sense of being accepted and valued in the domain" (Steele, 2009, p. 163).

A PR campaign is a counter-narrative for the school, and contributes to securing "these students in the belief that they will not be held under the suspicion of negative stereotypes about their group" (Steele, 2009, p. 181). More exposed displays of black students achieving becomes a source of encouragement or affirmation for black students who already embody an achievement-narrative, and a new identity for black students who may not have embodied such a narrative (Steele, 2009). Schools can be experienced differently over spectrums of gender, race, class, ability, language, sexual orientation, etc. (Perry, 2003; Steele, 2009; Stubblefield, 2009). Providing a positive image of black

students achieving in ways valued by the broader community may positively contribute to how students experience schools and how students understand the contribution of black students.

Conduct "Professional Development" Sessions for black Students

Next, this program model suggests that MHS develop a curriculum to work with groups of black students to offer strategies for how to operate effectively in Martinsville High School. These sessions could be peer-to-peer sessions which happen biweekly or monthly, or the school can enlist the help of faculty to facilitate the sessions. Topics might include help with scheduling, how to interact with teachers, etc.

Lisa Delpit (1995) wrote about a "Culture of Power" that is present in schools, discussing the ways that non-middle class children were disenfranchised in that they were unaware of how to operate within these rules or codes of power. Schools are traditionally built on middle-class values, so students who embody middle-class values are arguably in a good position to capitalize on success within their school (Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Bourdieu, 2007). Given the gap in both opportunity and achievement that is present in many mixed-race school districts, we must look beyond simply embodying middle-class norms and values, perhaps to a more sophisticated set of strategies and mindsets required for mixed-race schools. Stanton-Salazar (1997) make the argument that schooling for black children "has never been simply a matter of learning and competently performing technical skills; rather, and more fundamentally, it has been a matter of learning how to decode the system" (p. 13).

Conduct Informal Teambuilding Activities

The sixth activity suggested for MHS is allocated time for students and faculty to interact in informal ways. Examples of how this traditionally happens are student-faculty athletic competitions, service learning projects, etc. This could also happen through a curriculum which teachers and students facilitate during homerooms or lunch. This would not be a foreign notion at MHS, as the students and teachers in two of the SLCs (PARLIAMENT@MHS and Equity Project) conduct such events over the course of the year.

The relationship between teacher and student can be wrought with tension; at its worse it is a power struggle. At its best, the teacher-student relationship is fluid, with the roles existing in a flexible space where both student and teacher are learners. The relationship between black students and teacher can be even more strained, particularly when teachers (overwhelmingly white) may be both afraid of and fascinated by black students, particularly black male students (Perry, 2003) and/or do not believe in the brilliance (or potential brilliance) of these students (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996; Hilliard, 1974). "When educators experience difficulty establishing respectful, caring, and mutually beneficial relationships with the students they teach, it is often difficult to create an atmosphere that is supportive of teaching and learning" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 29). A large barrier to teachers building such a relationship is often the need to challenge and deal with one's own biases and negative assumptions about another group, in this case black students (Hilliard, 1974; Singleton & Linton, 2006). Teachers and other school personnel who see black children as lacking, disadvantaged, inferior, or damaged will be unable to effectively teach these children (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). "The prevailing stereotypes make it plausible for ability-stigmatized students to worry that

people in their schooling environment will doubt their abilities. Thus, one wise

strategy…is to discredit this assumption through the authority of potential-affirming adult

relationships" (Steele, 2009, p. 182). Having allocated time and space for teachers and

students to learn about one another, work together, and enjoy each other will arguably

help to humanize each in the other's eyes; without a bond, learning suffers (Zeichner &

Hoeft, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Comer, 1988; Warikoo & Carter, 2009).

Conduct "professional development" sessions for parents to better equip them to support their children

The final program activity proposed for MHS would provide a learning

community for black parents to learn ways to support their children through MHS.

Ideally, this would happen as collaboration between the school, perhaps the local

NAACP and black community organizations (i.e. churches, etc.). These sessions may be

themed-based and held once a quarter to offer parents concretes tools to use to ensure

their children's success.

Black parents have traditionally known how to coach their children on dealing

with the racialized oppressive structure of their time: during Jim Crow when the

racialized oppressive structure was white folks in general, black parents coached their

kids on how to deal with white people. Post-civil rights, and even to this current day, the

most racialized oppressive structure for blacks is arguably the police, and black parents

continue to coach their children on how to deal in tense exchanges with the police. With

the Brown decision in 1954 (and 1955), and the vast majority of desegregation plans not

beginning until the 1970s (Tyson, 2011), most black children in middle-class suburban

schools are experiencing something their parents did not. The lack of context today's

parents have may impact their ability to support their students; a situation complicated by

students who may lack the wherewithal to clearly communicate some of the things they are experiencing in mixed-race schools. Again, this is unlike other generations where common language existed stemming from common experiences: a white person taunting a black person in the Jim Crow Era, racial profiling by a police officer in the post-civil rights era. The term "Driving While black" demonstrates this point. What is the language for a black student who feels isolated in an AP class? Or for the feeling that his teacher doubts his ability? How can students discuss more ambiguous occasions if their parents lack the context in which these students operate?

Theresa Perry (2003) offers language for what black students experience in schools; through a series of questions she highlights what is required of black children in schools today.

- How do I commit myself to achieve, to work hard over time in school, if I cannot predict (in school or out of school) when or under what circumstances this hard work will be acknowledged and recognized?

- How do I commit myself to do work that is predicated on a belief in the power of the mind, when African-American intellectual inferiority is so much a part of the taken-for-granted notions of the larger society that individuals in and out of school, even good and well-intentioned people, individuals who purport to be acting on my behalf, routinely register doubts about my intellectual competence?

- How can I aspire to and work toward excellence when it is unclear whether or when evaluations of my work can or should be taken seriously?

- Can I invest in and engage my full personhood, with all of my cultural
  formations, in my class, my work, my school, if my teachers and the
  adults in the building are both attracted to and repulsed by these cultural
  formations—the way I walk, the way I use language, my relationship to
  my body, my physicality, and so on?

- Will I be willing to work hard over time, given the unpredictability of my
  teachers' responses to my work?

- Can I commit myself to work hard over time if I know that, no matter
  what I or other members of my reference group accomplish, these
  accomplishments are not likely to change how I and other members of my
  group are viewed by the larger society, or to alter our caste-like position in
  the society? I still will not be able to get a cab. I still will be followed in
  department stores. I still will be stopped when I drive through certain
  neighborhoods. I still will be viewed as a criminal, a deviant, and an
  illiterate?

- Can I commit myself to work hard, to achieve in a school, if cultural
  adaptation effectively functions as a prerequisite for skill acquisition,
  where "the price of the ticket" is separation from the culture of my
  reference group? (Perry, 2003, p. 3)

Though black students may experience some or all of these questions consciously and
subconsciously at some point during their schooling, these sentiments are challenging to
articulate. How many parents know and understand that this in some ways, describes the

experience of school for their son or daughter? What are the strategies, on an individual level to combat the impact of this existence? And how do we confront the existence of these sentiments in a way that makes schools more inclusive of all students, while acknowledging that the history of this country requires that policies be in place to address these needs for black children?

If this is the case, the "Professional Development" or information/coaching sessions necessary for parents is not the traditional reprimand for parent with lax rules or whose children play too many hours of video games. This "PD" becomes about teaching parents the reality of what it means to be a student at Martinsville High School and the tools necessary for their students to be successful.

Arguably the difference between this generation's experience and past generations is not necessarily the presence of racism, but today's students need to deal with a level of covert and/or benign racism that parents may not fully be aware of or understand. Furthermore, the consequences of the racism are quite different than generations past; previously physical, visual consequences (i.e. physical violence) are easier to point to than the isolation and identity attacks this generation must deal with.

Program Outputs

The proposed program activities aim to provide experiences to impact people's mindsets and opinions. If successful, the previous set of program activities would lead to the following set of program outputs, or create the environment for these programmatic outputs to be implemented.

i. Implement a school-wide racial balance policy that mirrors the Martinsville Public Schools town-wide racial balance policy.

ii.   Eliminate tracking and institute heterogeneous grouping.

iii.   Maintain tracking, but provide clear pathways to Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

iv.   Establish shared, non-threatening language to discuss the changes required to increase equity for all students.

v.   Establish and enact a standards-aligned, rigorous, culturally-inclusive curriculum across the school

vi.   Establish and agree upon indicators of what culturally responsive teaching practices look, feel and sound like

Implement a School-Wide Racial Balance Policy

In 1979, as part of the town's desegregation plans, Martinsville implemented a district-wide racial balance policy for all schools. Due to the Pics vs. Seattle case these guidelines have shifted slightly, though are still in place and continue to effectively integrate Martinsville's neighborhood schools.   The magnet school system which has been successful in terms of integrating schools did not extend to the high school. Eventually, Martinsville created a series of Small Learning Community (SLCs) at the sole high school; which function as partial institutes or schools within the larger high school. As such, this program model suggests that Martinsville treat the SLCs as they would a brick and mortar school and extend the racial balance policy which governs schools to the high school. Specifically, the district should require racial balance across the SLCs.

Prudence Carter's (2005) study of black and Latino student achievement in Yonkers, New York looked at how these students responded to the threat of acting white, and how the use of dominant and non-dominant capital is received by schools. One key

finding revealed "how schools collude in the perception of what is 'white' through certain practices, especially ability grouping and tracking both of which are notable for disproportional representation of students from various racial and ethnic groups" (Carter, 2005, p. 53). This practice usually ends with students choosing classes based on who will take them. Unchallenged this could lead students to choose SLCs based on the student population within the SLC versus based on the SLC's theme, ultimately creating the situation where the two most popular SLCs are the racial inverse of each other: one predominantly black, one predominantly white. This is the current reality at MHS with Equity Project and PARLIAMENT@MHS, evidence by spending any time on the third floor which houses both institutes. Racially segregated SLCs carries the same risk as racially segregated schools, which is that it "produces and maintains a set of conditions in which academic success is linked with white: students equate achievement with whiteness because school structures do" (Tyson, 2011, p. 6).

Under the current system, both black and white students and parents can choose to encounter or avoid certain groups of students just by knowing the course level or the SLC. The district's magnet program desegregated schools by incentivizing integration, correctly assessing that left to their own devices parents were unlikely to integrate the schools themselves. The absence of a similar intervention at the high school creates the exact environment the district disturbed in the elementary and middle schools. A teacher discusses his opinion of his this operates at MHS.

Teacher: I think there's a prevailing culture in America that, of course, still affects Martinsville and I think it works at home and with teachers and students…our

very smart students are white and our non-performing students are black. And somehow, despite how much we say it's not true. I think the way we schedule our kids and put them into the different honors, high honors…the tracking. There are very few white parents in this town who are going to let their kids take college prep or an honors class; they're all going to push their kids into high honors. And I think the guidance counselors and probably their teachers even say, "Why don't you take high honors and challenge yourselves?" Whereas I think when African American kids sign up people don't question their choice, and they see their friends going into college prep and honors and nobody says anything. And I think that goes for parents and teachers and guidance counselors and administrators.

Given the negative impact of segregated classrooms on all student learning, but particularly black students, it would be ideal for Martinsville to extend the racial balance policy down to the school and SLC level. However, the history of desegregation shows that the measure of success for desegregation plans is rarely the impact on black students. In fact, many desegregation plans are held up as model plans even in the face of low performance among black students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Thus, the dominant logic is that "a model desegregation program is one that ensures that whites are happy (and do not leave the system altogether)" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 32). Martinsville is no exception. The Martinsville Public Schools Magnet Handbook states that Martinsville is, "Dedicated to becoming the national role model for public integrated education" (Montclair Public Schools, 2012).   In the spirit of achieving this goal, this program

model argues that the district should extend the racial balance policy to the SLCs at Martinsville High School.

Eliminate tracking and institute heterogeneous grouping.

The effect of tracking and ability grouping on students has been demonstrated in a plethora of research studies (Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Mickelson & Everett, 2008; Oakes, 1985; Tyson, 2011). Tracking in mixed-race schools has consistently led to an over-representation of white and Asian students in honors and Advanced Placement courses, and an over-representation of black and Latino students in remedial and basic or regular level courses. Martinsville's informal de facto tracking is largely supported by the school's choice philosophy, meaning any student can enroll in any class or any school. In an interview, a teacher offered this reflection on the choice option in Martinsville.

> Teacher: …when I got to the district I was intrigued by the fact that there wasn't supposed to be any tracking. Meaning even in an AP class, you have the opportunity to take it just if you want to. There is choice. That's the one thing we love, choice. So you could be a "D" student in a U.S. History II honors class, be told by your guidance counselor and your teacher, "Listen AP History would not be for you," and you could still take it.

The choice option in Martinsville raises questions about why choice emerged and how it has functioned in the district. While the choice option removes barriers which allows any student to push himself academically, it appears to function in the same fashion as academic tracking. Or at least the choice option in Martinsville renders the same outcomes as tracking.

If the goal of Brown was to bring students together to provide equal educations for all, tracking does the opposite; creating "categories [which] mirror the racial, gender, and social class hierarchies in place outside of school [leading] students to perceive their own and others' assigned placements as accurate and permanent" (Tyson, 2011, p. 11). It is in this way that schools not only maintain racial stratifications, but may in fact create them. Arguably, this open enrollment option (and the choice that it technically offers) is even more harmful. Inevitably, discussions about undoing tracking are met with the same reaction: (1) there's no tracking and (2) any student can take any class s/he wants. These two statements demonstrate a tension between de jure and de facto tracking. For while the school may not have a technical tracking mechanism, there is some combination of structures which produce outcomes mirroring a rigid tracking system. "Schools can either overtly or covertly reproduce racial meanings and inequality in their day-to-day activities by mapping particular racial identities (i.e. whiteness and Asian identity) onto knowledge and intelligence" (Warikoo & Carter, 2009, p. 375). Martinsville's choice model, like tracking, creates the illusion of a connection between race and academic ability, particularly in the minds of students. As such, this model suggests that Martinsville High School get rid of tracking and implement heterogeneous groupings.

Maintain tracking, but provide clear pathways to Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

> Curricular programs—a feature of school structure—are the basis for the differentiation of opportunity within schools. Especially in math and science, curriculum tracking is closely tied to students' academic experiences, as revealed

by their patterns of course taking. Tracking and course taking together account for substantively significant differences in student achievement (Gamoran, 1987, p. 153).

If Martinsville High School is to maintain tracking, they could positively impact course taking by showing students where and how to take and succeed in High Honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Without providing effective guidance for students you end up with four possible scenarios for a student's course placement (see Table 1 below). More active parents—those who understand this structure and opt to put their children in high honors and AP classes despite their child's performance—will usually ensure that their students are in AP classes either from the recommendation of a guidance counselor or by utilizing the system to challenge guidance counselor recommendations (and again with Martinsville's choice model, there is nothing to prevent that from happening). More passive parents—those more like to defer to the guidance counselor's recommendation—will find their children subjected to the recommendation of the guidance counselor. Students of passive parents who are recommended for lower level courses (in Martinsville these are the college prep and honors courses) are more likely to be subjected to racial bias regarding their ability to perform in higher level classes. There is evidence that bias contributes to the racialized tracking seen at mixed-race schools (Mickelson & Everett, 2008; Jackson, 2011).

	Active Parent	Passive Parent (defers to GC)
Guidance Counselor Recommends HH/AP	Student takes HH/AP	Student takes HH/AP
Guidance Counselor *Does Not* Recommend HH/AP	Parent Challenges GC and student takes HH/AP	Student takes College Prep or Honors

Table 1. Impact of Guidance Counseling on Course Selection

The structure at Martinsville High School means high-level classes have different functions depending on your vantage point. The choice option for Martinsville parents allows them to place their children as they please, outside of the recommendation of the Guidance Counselor. Arguably, these active parents who make sure their children are in High Honors and AP classes, understand the value of this and may put their children in high academic class even if that does not match the child's achievement level. More passive parents are more likely to defer to the guidance counselor recommendation, either from a lack of understanding around the importance of AP classes or lack of knowledge about how to get their students on a path to AP classes. This program model recommends providing clear guidance to high-honors and Advanced Placement classes so as to demystify the path to HH/AP and at provide additional knowledge so that at any point a student, teacher, guidance counselor or parent can decide to accelerate a student. Figure 1 below shows an example of this type of guidance. This document was created by the Montgomery Country Maryland School District, distributed to parents in a pamphlet titled, *Understanding your Child's Course Option in Mathematics*, and makes clear the multiple pathways a child can take to upper level math courses. Dissemination of such information may provide parents and students with the additional information required to guide course enrollment. At the very least, it creates an actual guide for those parents who do not have a more savvy understanding of course enrollment patterns.
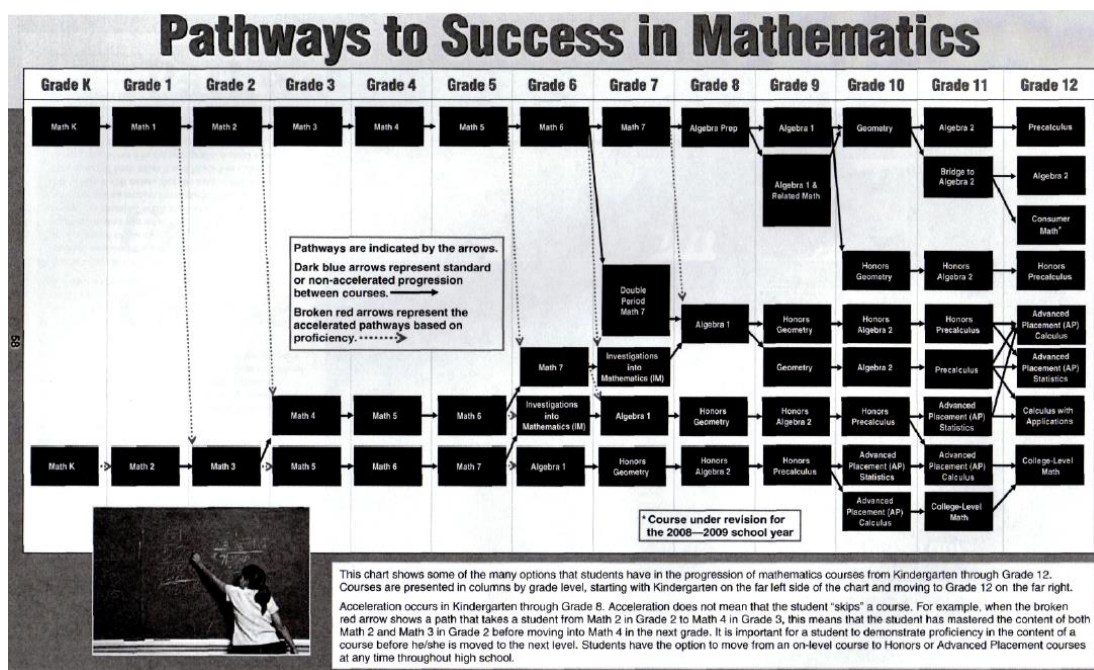
Figure 1. Montgomery County Pathways to Success in Mathematics. Source: (Office of School Performance, Montgomery County Public Schools, 2007)

Establish shared, non-threatening language to discuss the changes required to increase equity for all students.

It has been sometimes difficult to articulate what exactly is wrong about mainstream beliefs and often harder to argue against negative stereotyping and racist practices. There is little agreement on how race is defined or what it means in the training of teachers or classroom practices. We are hobbled by the paradox of a largely white teaching staff whose practices, consciously or not, contribute to the racial achievement gap yet who are unable to see what they are doing. Despite evidence of disproportionate expulsion rates, tracking into vocational or non-academic programs, and limited access to Advanced Placement opportunities, we have yet to agree that these problems exist, must less craft co-racial approaches to fixing them (Taylor, 2009, p. 9).

To create a system that affirms all students and ensures their success is hard work, and while the importance of this work should not be ignored, neither should the challenge. Schools as institutions were not designed to educate students of color. The task of undoing embedded injustice is deep and skillful, requiring commitment and will. Because the task is wrapped in issues of race, class and privilege, there are landmines around every corner. To fully engage in this work, schools must develop language that is concrete, safe and shared so that educators can have discussions about their current reality; there are painful aspects of these tough conversations, but we must find a way for people to work through these difficult parts without shutting down the conversation (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

To keep people engaged in these difficult conversations, there must be language to describe the events that people witness or experience, and how those events connect to the challenge of creating a school that works for all students. Consider the following three statements from teachers. Each of them brings up a great point; however, each point has the potential to be an explosive conversation depending on the language the teacher uses to describe the situation.

> Teacher 1: I call it the coddling affect where sometimes you have non-African American administrators and teachers who are just, "Woe is me [about] the kids." And "They're having this problem and that problem," and then they baby them through. Like, for instance, I have a student who has thirty-six absences in my class. Not because of a family, because his family is fine, they're together. His girlfriend has lunch during my class period. And I would see him…and he got so bold he would walk by and it was the automatic assumption of the counselor that,

you know, he probably has so much going on at home, and that's not the case at all. … And I tell the administrators that when they give me all the reason why I should does all this extra makeup work for the student. I mean valid reasons I understand, but some of these kids are learning how to play that game, and they're learning how to play the "woe is me."

Teacher 2: I have a student in my, an African American student who doesn't hand in her work typed. And I, it's my fault. I have never asked her whether or not she has a computer at home.…But I suspect that she doesn't have a computer at home.…And I accept her work. I don't penalize her for not, for not typing it. And maybe it's my own prejudice that I'm thinking that she doesn't have a computer at home, I don't know. I'm kind of thinking out loud.

Teacher 3: And I'll point out [to my students that a black student] came in here with her halter top…and her Daisy Duke jeans on and she got sent home or down to the office and they gave her a big shirt. But the white girl [wearing the same thing] didn't get a [sent to the office] and nobody said anything.

These instances all have racialized undertones in them. If these instances were discussed among researchers, there is a shared language. Researchers have common words to identify benign racism, white privilege, white guilt, middle-class guilt, gender bias, etc. This language offers researchers a way to examine and interpret these events. This model proposes that an output of a previous program activity (discussing racialized events) would be a set of words, a common language used to discuss racialized incidents without

fear of being called racist, over-sensitive, etc. This may allow the teacher who accepted

hand-written work to hear that she is displaying benign racism in the form of lowered

expectations without her feeling that she is being called racist. Gloria Ladson-Billings

(2009) argues that our current notions of race are more rigid and institutionalized than

before, but that these racial constructions are often hidden in new terms without

identifying race, "notions of 'conceptual whiteness' and 'conceptual

blackness'…categories like 'school achievement,' 'middle classness,' 'maleness,'

'beauty,' 'intelligence,' and 'science,' become normative categories of whiteness, while

categories like 'gangs,' 'welfare recipient,' 'basketball players,' and 'the underclass'

become the marginalized and de-legitimated categories of blackness*"* (p. 19).

This model suggests that schools adopt scholarly language for addressing racial

issues, at least as a starting point until more natural language emerges. Left unchecked,

the absence of such language combined with the existence of so many proxies, may

create skepticism and mistrust in conversations. Having shared language allows a

community to eliminate proxies for race and have actual conversations.

Establish and enact a standards-aligned, rigorous, culturally-inclusive curriculum across the school

Giving challenging work to students conveys respect for their potential and thus

shows them that they are not regarded through the lens of an ability-demeaning

stereotype…In contrast, remedial work reinforces in these students the possibility

that they are being viewed stereotypically. And this, by increasing stereotype

threat in the domain, can undermine their performance" (Steele, 2009, p. 182).

While a program activity is to buy or create a culturally-inclusive curriculum, the program output is to implement such a curriculum with fidelity across all levels and subjects. Even outside of the tracking debate, students in every class must be academically engaged in ways that are rigorous. Extensive research in gifted programs often speaks *not only* to the power of expectations and belief in a child's *giftedness*, but also to the learning environments in which these students find themselves (Jackson, 2011). These learning environments offer opportunities for such giftedness to be displayed. The commitment must be made, in all subject areas, to "bridge learning to interests and abilities, elicit gifted behaviors…expose students to content that builds their frames of reference and engages exploration, support development of the requisite skills to strengthen cognition and enable self-directed learning, and provide opportunities for the application of learning" (Jackson, 2011, p. 25). This must be the goal of schools for ALL children.

Establish and agree upon indicators of what culturally responsive teaching practices look, feel and sound like

Through little fault of their own, white and middle-class teachers are challenged to find ways to connect with their non-white and/or non-middle-class students (Tyson, 2011; Denbo & Beaulieu, 2002). However, this connection—the ability of a teacher to make relevant that which is being taught—is a necessary condition for learning (Ladson-Billings, 2002). The result is often instructional leaders trying to find the perfect set of instructional strategies "to deal with (read: control) 'at-risk' (read: African-American) students [often locating] instruction…as a generic set of teaching skills that should work for all students. When these strategies or skills fail…the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 30). However, research has shown

repeatedly that it is not the students who are lacking, but rather the strategies; and without

proper instructional strategies, even the best teacher will not produce results (Chenoweth,

2008; Delpit, 1995; Boykin & Noguera, Creating the Opportunity to Learn, 2011;

Jackson Y. , 2011). Paul Houston (2001) warns, "If you lean your ladder against the

wrong wall, you will paint the wrong house" (p. 431). The ability to teach in inclusive

ways is a skill (for many a new skill) and while belief in all students is a helpful condition

for achieving this goal, is it not necessary. While many teachers would state that they

believe in the value of culturally responsive teaching, this is inconsequential to the way

they teach,

> As practitioners, we are notoriously poor observers of our own practice and
>
> therefore not very good at judging the correspondence between our beliefs and
>
> our behavior…Resilient, powerful, new beliefs—the kinds of beliefs that
>
> transform the way we think about how children are treated in schools for
>
> example—are shaped by people engaging in behaviors or practices that are deeply
>
> unfamiliar to them…I now care much less about what people say they believe,
>
> and much more about what I observe them to be doing and their willingness to
>
> engage in practices that are deeply unfamiliar to them. (Elmore, 2010, p. 2)

As such, it is important that conversations about culturally responsive teaching come

down from a theoretical platform and be grounded in the day-to-day teaching and

learning which takes place in a school. If a school is to successfully educate all children,

there must be indicators of success and an understanding of what success looks like along

the way. In this instance, the indicators would detail what culturally responsive teaching

practices look like, feel like and sound like. This is not simply a checklist to be followed,

or a set of requirements for use, these indicators should guide the daily reflection teachers go through to ensure they are effectively doing their job.   However because this idea is so foreign to so many teachers, it is the responsibility of the school to hold up examples of what this *thing* is so that teachers have clear images of what their teaching ought to look like, feel like and sound like. Once this is established, when one's practice is *out of alignment*, a teacher is better able to calibrate, or use shared language to get help.

Teacher Perceptions

Throughout the teacher interviews, teacher respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged the unlimited opportunities available to students at Martinsville High School. However, they also acknowledged a number of institutional structures or practices that impact which students take advantage of these opportunities. This research asked teacher respondents to discuss the eco-system in which they operate, and these perceptions form the context in which teachers responded to the program model. This chapter will first describe teacher perceptions of what it means to be a student and/or teacher in Martinsville High School and then discuss teachers' responses to the actual program model.

In discussing the culture of Martinsville High School, two related themes emerged. One, Martinsville High School has a wealth of offerings that some students take advantage of and others do not. Two, the usage of the "choice" option in Martinsville High School has far-reaching implications, on teachers, students and instruction.

The "Option" is There

Teachers and students continually rave about the opportunities available at Martinsville High School. The combination of courses, extracurricular activities, sports, arts, social clubs, and community service clubs is astounding! However, when asked, teachers were able to identify trends about the students who take advantage of the opportunities and the students who do not. One teacher's statement highlights the opportunities available at Martinsville High School:

> Teacher: I don't know of any public high school that offers more to students that [sic] are college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids. You know, there's the whole gamut of levels of classes, there's honors level which is higher than just the regular class, there's high honors level, there's AP classes. The kids who are really onboard with their own education, I don't think they can get a better public school education in many places. That said, I think sometimes as a district we try to [fit] square holes in round peg spots because that's not all our kids.

The perspective offered here was shared by many teachers. First, Martinsville High School is an amazing place for "college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids," and my interviews indicate this is unmistakably true. In everything from the open campus to the flexible scheduling, the school operates like a mini-college. Martinsville High School provides the structures and guidance for students to map out a high school career aligned with nearly any post-secondary objectives. Two offerings in particular demonstrate ways that students can create excellent college preparatory high school experiences: zero period and senior option.

- Zero period allows students to come to school early and take their gym class before the actual school day begins so that they may have an extra instructional period during the day. Many students use this option to double up on math classes or take extra electives.

- Senior Option is available to students who meet a number of requirements (including having passed the HSPA or SRA process, as well as having an attendance record within the specified guidelines) to find career or community service oriented internships with local business, government or faith-based organizations, or schools. Once approved, senior students are released from school time for 4 hours a day, 5 days a week during the last semester of their senior year.

Both of these options demonstrate the commitment Martinsville High School has to creating well-rounded students who are college and career ready. However, both of these options also highlight the ways some students may miss these wonderful opportunities. Zero period is a great example. The likelihood of a "typical" student opting to come to school before 8:00 am to voluntarily add an additional instructional course (meaning more work and more homework) in the place of a gym class (no homework) seems low. It appears that students who take advantage of this option are doing it to make their high school transcript more attractive to colleges. It would be interesting to examine the reasons students opt into or out of zero period and how either group views Zero period in light of their high schools goals.

Senior Option again requires planning and foresight. To participate, students have to meet the academic requirements and have to find the internship and work with the organization to create the activities for the duration of the internship. Neither of these tasks is insurmountable, though they do require planning. However, for students with poor attendance, this program is not an option. In fact, during the data gathering stage of this research, a key challenge was finding high-achieving seniors to interview because they simply were not at school. Students with excessive absences are unable to participate, so the majority of seniors still at MHS from mid-April onward are typically those in tenuous academic standing.

In the above quote, the teacher establishes a dichotomy between two groups of students, "I don't know of any public high school that offers more to students that [sic] are college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids…That said, I think sometimes as a district we try to [fit] square [pegs] in round peg spots because that's not all our kids." Who are these students, both the college-bound and the square pegs? According to a number of teacher respondents, there are three sets of students at Martinsville High School: high-achievers, low-achievers and those students in the middle.

For those students who are not "college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids" there are far fewer options. This teacher refers to this as fitting "square [pegs] in round peg spots," a sentiment expressed by a number of teachers. Furthermore, this polarization of "college-bound" and "*not* college-bound" students seems to sets up a false dichotomy and relieves the school of any responsibility toward these "non-college-bound" students. While some students come to school exhibiting "college-bound, motivated student" behavior, does the absence of such signal a lack of ambition?

Arguably, it is this group of "square peg" students that need to be engaged, And according to teacher interviews, these "square peg" students who do not benefit from all that Martinsville High School has to offer.

The Impact of "Choice" in Martinsville

> Teacher: I don't think there should be allowed to be two small learning communities that are essentially the [racial] inverse of each other… I think the small learning communities should be mixed forcefully, and I think people would "freak out" but I do think that should happen. I think people would be really upset and a lot of people would say, "But that's choice and Martinsville's about choice." And I even think our leader would say and I've heard him say it, "That's where people want to go; we need to let them."

Few teacher interviews got far before getting to Martinsville's Choice Policy and the impact it has had on instruction and classroom segregation. Martinsville High School allows students to enroll in any course he/she would like, irrespective of the recommendations of guidance counselors and teachers students may complete a process which permits them to enroll in the course of their choice. The goals of Martinsville's Choice Policy are arguably well-intentioned, in that such a policy allows students to set ambitious academic goals from themselves without the barriers of testing and teacher recommendations. Further, this notion resonates with some teachers in Martinsville, as it seems a more equitable alternative to the zero-sum game that is AP placement in most schools—where students are filtered through tests and recommendations, a process which inherently leaves some students behind.

Martinsville High School would not provide the exact breakdown of courses by race, but teacher and student anecdotal evidence confirms what research (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Carter, 2005; Gosa & Alexander, 2007; Mickelson & Everett, 2008) has identified as a reoccurring trend, which is that the majority of students in upper level classes are white, even though white students make up less than half of Martinsville High School's population. Because of the Choice Option, this disproportionate representation emerges from some combination of teachers disproportionately recommending white students over black students, white students disproportionately choosing to take these upper level courses, and/or black students disproportionately choosing *not* to take these upper level courses.   Teachers' perceptions of student motivations point to a number of processes at play.

One teacher reflected on a discussion he had with his students after watching a video on the academic achievement gap in Martinsville, particularly in Martinsville High School.

> Teacher 1: Kids can make easy [generalizations] that sometimes can come out the wrong way…They don't come out and say "Black people are less motivated"...But they [say] that the people who tend to be strivers…are predominantly white…And they had various explanations for it, but they kind of all agreed that there a racial divide [between] who takes advantage [of opportunities] and who doesn't.

This teacher is exposing the deductive logic some students use to make sense of what is going on in their school. His identification of the tension between what the students may

believe and what they actually see is a crucial point as it demonstrates the social creation of racism. Based on student focus groups, and on this teacher's perceptions, his students do not inherently question the intellectual ability of black students. This is a good thing and highlights a sentiment expressed by many students. Perhaps resulting from an integrated K-8 experience, white and high achieving students may not perceive low achievement among black students as a cultural deficiency. However, these young people–despite their beliefs about the academic ability of black students—exist in a high school where they witness a clear delineation between "who takes advantage of opportunities and who doesn't." The opportunities being discussed are academic, so what this teacher is discussing is his students' perception of who takes advantage of high academic classes and who does not.

However, the perceptions of who takes advantage of opportunities at MHS and who does not are distorted. The distortion, many teachers pointed out, stems from Martinsville's Choice Policy. This teacher's reflection details one way the Choice Policy at Martinsville High School distorts the academic landscape at MHS.

> Teacher: I [think] students are choosing to take classes with kids that they feel equal to, it has less to do with what they feel like their academic equal is, and a lot more to do with their social equal…I find that…the social groups within the class are so similar and it has nothing to do with achievement. So it's not like the kids that are really truly advanced are taking my advanced course, it's just kids of the same background are taking the same courses.

This teacher is acknowledging that students are utilizing the Choice Option as a way "to take classes with kids that they feel [socially] equal to." This is clearly not aligned with the intentions of having choice in course selection. Perhaps such a manipulation could be justified if it encouraged high-achieving students to take upper level classes, however, this is not the case. As this teacher points out, "the social groups within the class… [have] nothing to do with achievement…it's not…the truly advanced [students] taking my advanced course." This teacher's statement suggests that some students prioritize the social benefits of advanced classes over the academic benefits.

Using the Choice Policy to prioritize social benefits—enrolling in courses with your social rather than academic equals—has a socially detrimental effect in that it contributes to racially segregated classrooms. Another teacher reflects on a conversation she had with a parent, which supports the perception that students and parents utilize the Choice Option as a way to guarantee that their students end up in their preferred class.

> Teacher: I've had parents say to me, "My kid can't be in those classes; nothing gets done in those classes." And I feel like there's an underlying [sentiment] for the parents, [that it is important] who their kid is sitting next to. I really do think that's part of it… I don't think that's all of it, but I do think that's a part of it. [In a conversation with a different parent, the parent expressed] "Well I heard that if you're in the right level classes that everything's good." So there's this perception—and I don't think that she would ever think that there's racism underlying this because I've heard that from upper middle class parents, white and black—that as long as your kid is away from that [certain negative] element [that your child will be] fine.

This teacher is identifying a number of themes. First, she is highlighting that parents seem to want control over who is in classes with their children, for two reasons (perhaps associated). The first reason is that "nothing gets done in those classes" which details a perceived lack of instruction and rigor in classes with "those students." It is worth pointing out that "those students" are black students in lower level classes. This is not to say that these parents doubt the academic ability of black students—which they might, but it does draw attention to a perceived fact that classrooms with majority black students are thought to lack instruction and rigor. However, this teacher's comments also specifically address race, "I've heard that from upper middle class parents, white and black." This teacher's perception that parents are not separating their students on the basis of race is impossible to prove or disprove. There is no way to assess the degree to which race operates as the top priority. What interviews with teachers and students suggest, is that parents both black and white, know that (1) there are racially homogeneous spaces within Martinsville High School, (2) that majority black spaces are less desirable than majority white spaces, and (3) that the Choice Option allows them to place their children in majority white spaces.

Another teacher described a similar situation, in which a parent is trying to ascertain which students are participating in a particular activity *as a condition* for determining whether his own child should participate:

Teacher: My first period class is 11th grade High Honors, I have 30 students, out of the 30 there are maybe 7 or 8 kids of color. [College Scholars was hosting]…a college visit to see Temple and Penn State, one shot $20; we had a few extra slots so I offered it to my juniors. One of the [higher SES Black] parents was almost

insulted, "Well what is this program?" and "What type of kid is in this program?"

I said, "A kid that's interested in going to college," and he said "No, no that's not

what I mean."

This teacher's perception that the parent was "almost insulted" and his recollection of the

parent's scrutiny of "what type of kid is in this program" demonstrates the anxiety some

parents have about with whom their children spends structured school time. Both these

teachers' statements point to parents, both black and white, using "choice" as a way to

separate their students from other students whom these parents believe threaten the

success of their own children. The efficacy of segregated instructional spaces have been

argued for decades, with the Brown decision deeming such spaces unconstitutional due,

in part, to the impact of such separate spaces on the social development of students

(Oakes, 1985; Perry, 2003; Tyson, 2011; Jackson, 2011).

However, in addition to the deleterious impact segregated classes have, there are

also academic repercussions (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Warikoo & Carter, 2009;

Gamoran, 1987). School curricula are designed to scaffold skills so that students are

academically and developmentally prepared for the content in a particular course, at a

particular time. Martinsville's course leveling system specifies performance targets to

guide students into appropriately rigorous learning environments. Arguably, the Choice

Option should be utilized for exceptional students capable of performing at a level which

exceeds their previous performance (as indicated by their grades). Consider the

following two reflections. One teacher respondent discusses the academic impact of the

Choice Option and how his thinking about the option has evolved over time. Another

teacher is discussing the impact on students' self-esteem:

Teacher A: When I got to the district I was intrigued by the fact that there wasn't supposed to be any tracking. Meaning even in an AP class, you have the opportunity to take it just if you want to. There is choice. That's the one thing we love, choice. So you could be a "D" student in a U.S. History II Honors class, be told by your guidance counselor and your teacher, "AP History would not be for you," and you could still take it. And I thought that was a great thing. I've come to the sort of understanding that not everybody is…developmentally or educationally ready for [AP classes]…because they're missing [the] skills that they need.

Teacher B: I think it's just not good for the kid's self-esteem. I mean you see these kids who are sitting in AP classes when they shouldn't be…it just makes them feel worse about themselves. They feel like they're not successful. They don't raise their hands. They feel very nervous. They retreat further and further. I completely believe that kids kind of raise to the challenge [before them], and if you have one kid who's not doing well and twenty-nine other kids who are doing well, yes, that's okay. But if you have the half the class that shouldn't be in there, then it really just breaks it up. In my honors classes I have so many different abilities, and in my AP class…Frankly, many of them should not be in AP class, but because they're white and they're parents are afraid to put them in "the big school" they wrap them into the small learning environment. …But I generally think that they really should be in the level they should be at…placed appropriately.

Both teachers' frustration and concern is felt. Teacher A alludes to a previously raised

issue, that is, what recourse do teachers have for students who are academically ill-

equipped for a particular course? An extension of this question is, whose responsibility is

it to differentiate instruction in such an instance?   The statement, "not everybody is

developmentally or educationally ready for AP classes" highlights the logic behind

having the specified requisite knowledge to enroll in upper level courses.   Teacher B

continues on this point and offers insight into just how many students are out of place, "If

you have one kid who's not doing well and twenty-nine other kids who are doing well,

yes, that's okay. But if you have the half the class that shouldn't be there in there, then it

really just breaks it up." It seems surprising for an institution committed to educating

students to allow students to opt-in to courses for which they are simply unprepared,

when there are academically appropriate course available.

The perceptions voiced by these teachers are further corroborated by the

experience of another teacher detailing an experience wherein a parent's preference for

his student to stay in an upper level course in the face of the student struggling to keep up

with the work.

> Teacher: I've been in IEP meetings where you have kids who are classified who
>
> are in High Honors and AP classes who are completely lost but…I've had parents
>
> say in the meeting, "I want [my child] to be in this class because I don't want [my
>
> child] to be with them…I'd rather he get a C in [this] class than be in that class."

The candor with which parents are discussing their ability to manipulate a system for the

sole purpose of avoiding a specific segment of a population indicates the ways in which

parents see what they perceive to be low-performing students. That this exchange, as the teacher recalls, took place during an IEP meeting—which require a number of school personnel to be present—implies that this type of behavior is acceptable or, at the very least, tolerated.

According to teacher respondents, the overreliance on Choice as a way to separate students from other less desired students has two specific implications on Martinsville High School. One, it distorts the conversation.   This teacher's frustration suggests that the traditional questions asked to examine the academic achievement gap (i.e. why are black students not achieving at the level of white students) may be the wrong questions.

> Teacher: What we always look at when we look at race achievement, we say, "We need to look at our African American population and we need to ask, why aren't they in these [AP] classes, why aren't they taking these classes," right? But the other part of that question is, "Why aren't our white students properly placed in honors level classes [instead of HH and AP]?" And I really think the parents are choosing because they don't want their kids in those other classes with those kids if I can speak frankly. I have no proof of that, but that's the vibe that I feel happens here sometimes: That students are choosing along class and race rather than on academic ability, and the system allows that to happen…I think it's hurt diversity in classrooms because I think a lot of our white students would not make the cut for high honors/AP.

This teacher is making a number of points in this statement. First, that white students over-represented in upper level courses creates the illusion that the phenomenon worth

investigating is why black students are under-represented in upper level courses *rather than* why white students are under-represented in regular classes. This teacher labels this "properly" placing students according to academic ability rather than according to social preferences. The second issue this teacher raises is that "the system allows [this] to happen," which again highlights the tacit agreement that it is acceptable to utilize the Choice Policy in this way. The final issue raised is that the option to "choose" is actually negatively impacting diversity in the classroom. That Martinsville would be better able to capitalize on its prized diverse population *more effectively* if students were required to enroll in courses commensurate with their academic standing.

Chapter 7: Teacher Perceptions and Response to the Program Model

Teacher Perceptions

Throughout the teacher interviews, teacher respondents overwhelmingly acknowledged the unlimited opportunities available to students at Martinsville High School. However, they also acknowledged a number of institutional structures or practices that impact which students take advantage of these opportunities. This research asked teacher respondents to discuss the eco-system in which they operate, and these perceptions form the context in which teachers responded to the program model. This chapter will first describe teacher perceptions of what it means to be a student and/or teacher in Martinsville High School and then discuss teachers' responses to the actual program model.

In discussing the culture of Martinsville High School, two related themes emerged. One, Martinsville High School has a wealth of offerings that some students take advantage of and others do not. Two, the usage of the "choice" option in

Martinsville High School has far-reaching implications, on teachers, students and instruction.

The "Option" is There

Teachers and students continually rave about the opportunities available at Martinsville High School. The combination of courses, extracurricular activities, sports, arts, social clubs, and community service clubs is astounding! However, when asked, teachers were able to identify trends about the students who take advantage of the opportunities and the students who do not. One teacher's statement highlights the opportunities available at Martinsville High School:

> Teacher: I don't know of any public high school that offers more to students that [sic] are college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids. You know, there's the whole gamut of levels of classes, there's honors level which is higher than just the regular class, there's high honors level, there's AP classes. The kids who are really onboard with their own education, I don't think they can get a better public school education in many places. That said, I think sometimes as a district we try to [fit] square holes in round peg spots because that's not all our kids.

The perspective offered here was shared by many teachers. First, Martinsville High School is an amazing place for "college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids," and my interviews indicate this is unmistakably true. In everything from the open campus to the flexible scheduling, the school operates like a mini-college. Martinsville High School provides the structures and guidance for students to map out a high school career aligned with nearly any post-secondary objectives. Two offerings in particular demonstrate ways

that students can create excellent college preparatory high school experiences: zero period and senior option.

- Zero period allows students to come to school early and take their gym class before the actual school day begins so that they may have an extra instructional period during the day. Many students use this option to double up on math classes or take extra electives.

- Senior Option is available to students who meet a number of requirements (including having passed the HSPA or SRA process, as well as having an attendance record within the specified guidelines) to find career or community service oriented internships with local business, government or faith-based organizations, or schools. Once approved, senior students are released from school time for 4 hours a day, 5 days a week during the last semester of their senior year.

Both of these options demonstrate the commitment Martinsville High School has to creating well-rounded students who are college and career ready. However, both of these options also highlight the ways some students may miss these wonderful opportunities. Zero period is a great example. The likelihood of a "typical" student opting to come to school before 8:00 am to voluntarily add an additional instructional course (meaning more work and more homework) in the place of a gym class (no homework) seems low. It appears that students who take advantage of this option are doing it to make their high school transcript more attractive to colleges. It would be interesting to examine the reasons students opt into or out of zero period and how either group views Zero period in light of their high schools goals.

Senior Option again requires planning and foresight. To participate, students have to meet the academic requirements and have to find the internship and work with the organization to create the activities for the duration of the internship. Neither of these tasks is insurmountable, though they do require planning. However, for students with poor attendance, this program is not an option. In fact, during the data gathering stage of this research, a key challenge was finding high-achieving seniors to interview because they simply were not at school. Students with excessive absences are unable to participate, so the majority of seniors still at MHS from mid-April onward are typically those in tenuous academic standing.

In the above quote, the teacher establishes a dichotomy between two groups of students, "I don't know of any public high school that offers more to students that [sic] are college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids…That said, I think sometimes as a district we try to [fit] square [pegs] in round peg spots because that's not all our kids." Who are these students, both the college-bound and the square pegs? According to a number of teacher respondents, there are three sets of students at Martinsville High School: high-achievers, low-achievers and those students in the middle.

For those students who are not "college bound, motivated, wanting to learn kids" there are far fewer options. This teacher refers to this as fitting "square [pegs] in round peg spots," a sentiment expressed by a number of teachers. Furthermore, this polarization of "college-bound" and "*not* college-bound" students seems to sets up a false dichotomy and relieves the school of any responsibility toward these "non-college-bound" students. While some students come to school exhibiting "college-bound, motivated student" behavior, does the absence of such signal a lack of ambition?

Arguably, it is this group of "square peg" students that need to be engaged, And according to teacher interviews, these "square peg" students who do not benefit from all that Martinsville High School has to offer.

The Impact of "Choice" in Martinsville

> Teacher: I don't think there should be allowed to be two small learning communities that are essentially the [racial] inverse of each other… I think the small learning communities should be mixed forcefully, and I think people would "freak out" but I do think that should happen. I think people would be really upset and a lot of people would say, "But that's choice and Martinsville's about choice." And I even think our leader would say and I've heard him say it, "That's where people want to go; we need to let them."

Few teacher interviews got far before getting to Martinsville's Choice Policy and the impact it has had on instruction and classroom segregation. Martinsville High School allows students to enroll in any course he/she would like, irrespective of the recommendations of guidance counselors and teachers students may complete a process which permits them to enroll in the course of their choice. The goals of Martinsville's Choice Policy are arguably well-intentioned, in that such a policy allows students to set ambitious academic goals from themselves without the barriers of testing and teacher recommendations. Further, this notion resonates with some teachers in Martinsville, as it seems a more equitable alternative to the zero-sum game that is AP placement in most schools—where students are filtered through tests and recommendations, a process which inherently leaves some students behind.

Martinsville High School would not provide the exact breakdown of courses by race, but teacher and student anecdotal evidence confirms what research (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Carter, 2005; Gosa & Alexander, 2007; Mickelson & Everett, 2008) has identified as a reoccurring trend, which is that the majority of students in upper level classes are white, even though white students make up less than half of Martinsville High School's population. Because of the Choice Option, this disproportionate representation emerges from some combination of teachers disproportionately recommending white students over black students, white students disproportionately choosing to take these upper level courses, and/or black students disproportionately choosing *not* to take these upper level courses. Teachers' perceptions of student motivations point to a number of processes at play.

One teacher reflected on a discussion he had with his students after watching a video on the academic achievement gap in Martinsville, particularly in Martinsville High School.

> Teacher 1: Kids can make easy [generalizations] that sometimes can come out the wrong way…They don't come out and say "Black people are less motivated"...But they [say] that the people who tend to be strivers…are predominantly white…And they had various explanations for it, but they kind of all agreed that there a racial divide [between] who takes advantage [of opportunities] and who doesn't.

This teacher is exposing the deductive logic some students use to make sense of what is going on in their school. His identification of the tension between what the students may

believe and what they actually see is a crucial point as it demonstrates the social creation of racism. Based on student focus groups, and on this teacher's perceptions, his students do not inherently question the intellectual ability of black students. This is a good thing and highlights a sentiment expressed by many students. Perhaps resulting from an integrated K-8 experience, white and high achieving students may not perceive low achievement among black students as a cultural deficiency. However, these young people–despite their beliefs about the academic ability of black students—exist in a high school where they witness a clear delineation between "who takes advantage of opportunities and who doesn't." The opportunities being discussed are academic, so what this teacher is discussing is his students' perception of who takes advantage of high academic classes and who does not.

However, the perceptions of who takes advantage of opportunities at MHS and who does not are distorted. The distortion, many teachers pointed out, stems from Martinsville's Choice Policy. This teacher's reflection details one way the Choice Policy at Martinsville High School distorts the academic landscape at MHS.

> Teacher: I [think] students are choosing to take classes with kids that they feel equal to, it has less to do with what they feel like their academic equal is, and a lot more to do with their social equal…I find that…the social groups within the class are so similar and it has nothing to do with achievement. So it's not like the kids that are really truly advanced are taking my advanced course, it's just kids of the same background are taking the same courses.

This teacher is acknowledging that students are utilizing the Choice Option as a way "to take classes with kids that they feel [socially] equal to." This is clearly not aligned with the intentions of having choice in course selection. Perhaps such a manipulation could be justified if it encouraged high-achieving students to take upper level classes, however, this is not the case. As this teacher points out, "the social groups within the class… [have] nothing to do with achievement…it's not…the truly advanced [students] taking my advanced course." This teacher's statement suggests that some students prioritize the social benefits of advanced classes over the academic benefits.

Using the Choice Policy to prioritize social benefits—enrolling in courses with your social rather than academic equals—has a socially detrimental effect in that it contributes to racially segregated classrooms. Another teacher reflects on a conversation she had with a parent, which supports the perception that students and parents utilize the Choice Option as a way to guarantee that their students end up in their preferred class.

> Teacher: I've had parents say to me, "My kid can't be in those classes; nothing gets done in those classes." And I feel like there's an underlying [sentiment] for the parents, [that it is important] who their kid is sitting next to. I really do think that's part of it… I don't think that's all of it, but I do think that's a part of it. [In a conversation with a different parent, the parent expressed] "Well I heard that if you're in the right level classes that everything's good." So there's this perception—and I don't think that she would ever think that there's racism underlying this because I've heard that from upper middle class parents, white and black—that as long as your kid is away from that [certain negative] element [that your child will be] fine.

This teacher is identifying a number of themes. First, she is highlighting that parents seem to want control over who is in classes with their children, for two reasons (perhaps associated). The first reason is that "nothing gets done in those classes" which details a perceived lack of instruction and rigor in classes with "those students." It is worth pointing out that "those students" are black students in lower level classes. This is not to say that these parents doubt the academic ability of black students—which they might, but it does draw attention to a perceived fact that classrooms with majority black students are thought to lack instruction and rigor. However, this teacher's comments also specifically address race, "I've heard that from upper middle class parents, white and black." This teacher's perception that parents are not separating their students on the basis of race is impossible to prove or disprove. There is no way to assess the degree to which race operates as the top priority. What interviews with teachers and students suggest, is that parents both black and white, know that (1) there are racially homogeneous spaces within Martinsville High School, (2) that majority black spaces are less desirable than majority white spaces, and (3) that the Choice Option allows them to place their children in majority white spaces.

Another teacher described a similar situation, in which a parent is trying to ascertain which students are participating in a particular activity *as a condition* for determining whether his own child should participate:

Teacher: My first period class is 11th grade High Honors, I have 30 students, out of the 30 there are maybe 7 or 8 kids of color. [College Scholars was hosting]…a college visit to see Temple and Penn State, one shot $20; we had a few extra slots so I offered it to my juniors. One of the [higher SES Black] parents was almost

insulted, "Well what is this program?" and "What type of kid is in this program?"

I said, "A kid that's interested in going to college," and he said "No, no that's not

what I mean."

This teacher's perception that the parent was "almost insulted" and his recollection of the

parent's scrutiny of "what type of kid is in this program" demonstrates the anxiety some

parents have about with whom their children spends structured school time. Both these

teachers' statements point to parents, both black and white, using "choice" as a way to

separate their students from other students whom these parents believe threaten the

success of their own children. The efficacy of segregated instructional spaces have been

argued for decades, with the Brown decision deeming such spaces unconstitutional due,

in part, to the impact of such separate spaces on the social development of students

(Oakes, 1985; Perry, 2003; Tyson, 2011; Jackson, 2011).

However, in addition to the deleterious impact segregated classes have, there are

also academic repercussions (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Warikoo & Carter, 2009;

Gamoran, 1987). School curricula are designed to scaffold skills so that students are

academically and developmentally prepared for the content in a particular course, at a

particular time. Martinsville's course leveling system specifies performance targets to

guide students into appropriately rigorous learning environments. Arguably, the Choice

Option should be utilized for exceptional students capable of performing at a level which

exceeds their previous performance (as indicated by their grades). Consider the

following two reflections. One teacher respondent discusses the academic impact of the

Choice Option and how his thinking about the option has evolved over time. Another

teacher is discussing the impact on students' self-esteem:

Teacher A: When I got to the district I was intrigued by the fact that there wasn't supposed to be any tracking. Meaning even in an AP class, you have the opportunity to take it just if you want to. There is choice. That's the one thing we love, choice. So you could be a "D" student in a U.S. History II Honors class, be told by your guidance counselor and your teacher, "AP History would not be for you," and you could still take it. And I thought that was a great thing. I've come to the sort of understanding that not everybody is…developmentally or educationally ready for [AP classes]…because they're missing [the] skills that they need.

Teacher B: I think it's just not good for the kid's self-esteem. I mean you see these kids who are sitting in AP classes when they shouldn't be…it just makes them feel worse about themselves. They feel like they're not successful. They don't raise their hands. They feel very nervous. They retreat further and further. I completely believe that kids kind of raise to the challenge [before them], and if you have one kid who's not doing well and twenty-nine other kids who are doing well, yes, that's okay. But if you have the half the class that shouldn't be in there, then it really just breaks it up. In my honors classes I have so many different abilities, and in my AP class…Frankly, many of them should not be in AP class, but because they're white and they're parents are afraid to put them in "the big school" they wrap them into the small learning environment. …But I generally think that they really should be in the level they should be at…placed appropriately.

Both teachers' frustration and concern is felt. Teacher A alludes to a previously raised

issue, that is, what recourse do teachers have for students who are academically ill-

equipped for a particular course? An extension of this question is, whose responsibility is

it to differentiate instruction in such an instance?   The statement, "not everybody is

developmentally or educationally ready for AP classes" highlights the logic behind

having the specified requisite knowledge to enroll in upper level courses.   Teacher B

continues on this point and offers insight into just how many students are out of place, "If

you have one kid who's not doing well and twenty-nine other kids who are doing well,

yes, that's okay. But if you have the half the class that shouldn't be there in there, then it

really just breaks it up." It seems surprising for an institution committed to educating

students to allow students to opt-in to courses for which they are simply unprepared,

when there are academically appropriate course available.

The perceptions voiced by these teachers are further corroborated by the

experience of another teacher detailing an experience wherein a parent's preference for

his student to stay in an upper level course in the face of the student struggling to keep up

with the work.

> Teacher: I've been in IEP meetings where you have kids who are classified who
>
> are in High Honors and AP classes who are completely lost but…I've had parents
>
> say in the meeting, "I want [my child] to be in this class because I don't want [my
>
> child] to be with them…I'd rather he get a C in [this] class than be in that class."

The candor with which parents are discussing their ability to manipulate a system for the

sole purpose of avoiding a specific segment of a population indicates the ways in which

parents see what they perceive to be low-performing students. That this exchange, as the teacher recalls, took place during an IEP meeting—which require a number of school personnel to be present—implies that this type of behavior is acceptable or, at the very least, tolerated.

According to teacher respondents, the overreliance on Choice as a way to separate students from other less desired students has two specific implications on Martinsville High School. One, it distorts the conversation.   This teacher's frustration suggests that the traditional questions asked to examine the academic achievement gap (i.e. why are black students not achieving at the level of white students) may be the wrong questions.

> Teacher: What we always look at when we look at race achievement, we say, "We need to look at our African American population and we need to ask, why aren't they in these [AP] classes, why aren't they taking these classes," right? But the other part of that question is, "Why aren't our white students properly placed in honors level classes [instead of HH and AP]?" And I really think the parents are choosing because they don't want their kids in those other classes with those kids if I can speak frankly. I have no proof of that, but that's the vibe that I feel happens here sometimes: That students are choosing along class and race rather than on academic ability, and the system allows that to happen…I think it's hurt diversity in classrooms because I think a lot of our white students would not make the cut for high honors/AP.

This teacher is making a number of points in this statement. First, that white students over-represented in upper level courses creates the illusion that the phenomenon worth

investigating is why black students are under-represented in upper level courses *rather than* why white students are under-represented in regular classes. This teacher labels this "properly" placing students according to academic ability rather than according to social preferences. The second issue this teacher raises is that "the system allows [this] to happen," which again highlights the tacit agreement that it is acceptable to utilize the Choice Policy in this way. The final issue raised is that the option to "choose" is actually negatively impacting diversity in the classroom. That Martinsville would be better able to capitalize on its prized diverse population *more effectively* if students were required to enroll in courses commensurate with their academic standing.

Teacher Responses to the Program Model

In addition to asking teachers about the overall culture of Martinsville High School, to further assess the theory present in the model this research also sought the opinions of practitioners currently working in Martinsville High School. In order to access the practicality of the program model, each practitioner was asked to rank the following for each program component:

- Important: Is this program component important in closing the achievement gap between black and white students?

- Possible: Would it be possible in a place like Martinsville?

- Effective: If it happened, would it actually narrow the gap?

Results

The response summary is detailed in Table 1[7]. What is most interesting about the responses is the connection between important, possible and effective. Of the number of

---

[7] All respondents did not respond to all program elements, therefore the totals may vary.

answer combinations, the most notable were when respondents found the component to be both important and effective, yet not possible. Such a response signals a promising program component that would be threatened by institutional and/or human barriers. For each of these notable combinations, the barrier to implementing the program component was identified by the respondent. This information, triangulated by teacher interviews and student focus group, highlighted the structures required to implement the proposed model. As such, this section reports on the social, educational and community systems that are required to administer a program focused on improving minority student achievement in a mixed-race, affluent high school, such as Martinsville High School.

Program Element	Important			Possible			Effective			Notable:[8] I, E, NP
Program Activities	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	
a. Conduct professional development for teachers, administrators and guidance counselors on topics pertaining to issues of equity, diversity, culturally competent teaching, etc.	20	1	0	21	0	0	13	1	7	0
b. Develop or purchase a rigorous, culturally inclusive curriculum (i.e. a curriculum that includes minority perspectives and contributions)	16	1	1	13	2	2	12	1	4	2
c. Create a space where teachers and students can meet in groups to discuss racialized instances that happen in school with a trained professional.	19	1	0	14	3	2	15	1	2	4
d. Develop and run a "public relations"	17	1	1	14	2	2	11	1	7	1

---

[8] Notable responses notable are when respondents found the component to be both important and effective, yet not possible. Such a response signals a promising program component that would be threatened by institutional and/or human barriers

campaign to really publicize black students achieving.										
e. Conduct "professional development" sessions for black students to learn and discuss tools for success	16	0	1	14	0	2	15	0	2	1
f. Conduct informal team building activities between faculty and students	17	1	0	12	4	3	17	0	1	5
g. Conduct "professional development" sessions for parents to better equip them to support their children	15	0	0	12	1	1	11	0	3	0
Program Outputs	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	
a. Implement a school-wide racial balance policy which mirrors the Martinsville Public Schools town-wide racial balance policy.	9	1	2	1	8	6	7	0	3	5
b. Eliminate tracking and institute heterogeneous grouping.	7	1	2	7	2	2	5	1	2	0
c. Maintain tracking, but provide clear pathways to Honors and Advanced Placement classes.	10	0	1	11	0	1	10	1	0	0
d. Establish shared, non-threatening language to discuss the changes required to increase equity for all students.	15	0	0	10	1	4	15	0	0	5
e. Establish and enact a standards-aligned, rigorous, culturally-inclusive curriculum across the school	12	0	0	11	1	1	11	0	0	1
f. Establish and agree upon indicators of what culturally responsive teaching practices look, feel and sound like	13	0	0	10	0	3	10	0	2	2

Table 7. Teacher Responses to Program Model

Program Barriers

Of the programmatic elements identified as important and effective, yet not possible to implement, all had barriers which fell into the following themes, as identified by teacher comments: community resistance,   teacher buy-in, decreasing concern or lack of interest, and weak administrative leadership and/or will.

Program Barrier #1: Community Resistance

One major theme in the teacher interviews and student focus groups is concern about the response from parents and the impact of their response on school operations. The overwhelming majority of research participants perceived that a small, yet powerful group of parents maintained a heavy influence over the school. In particular, there was the perception that a powerful set of parents want to maintain control over who their children spend classroom time with. As one teacher pointed out, "There are people who are very uncomfortable having their child in certain classes and with certain groups." Another added that the administration appears "…very concerned about making sure the white moms aren't complaining."

Another discussed his perception that parent complaints are powerful in getting the administration to retract programmatic elements:

Teacher: Here you can't do something for one group and if you could the M-PREP thing would be different[9], would be what it was originally; a lot of things would be different. I mean there were certain classes that were supposed to be exclusively for kids of color, man please! That got out, that was changed within hours

---

[9] This teacher is discussing the M-Prep name change from Minority-Prep to Martinsville-Prep.

Additionally, the sentiment that Martinsville is run by a small, powerful set of parents was also discussed among students.

> White PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: My mom is like in the PTA…And she tries to get things done, but you really have to get the support of like everyone. You can't just go and do something, even if it's the right thing to do. You have to fight and fight other people constantly and it's really hard to get something done. The PTA will never back an integrated program simply became all of their kids are pretty much in the same place. I know all of the PTA moms and all of the kids, I see them and they're all in the high-level classes. So they don't have any personal interest invested in bringing this school to—the reason they're in PARLIAMENT@MHS is not because they care about the school. They are trying to get their kids educated. My parents said they want me to have the best education possible. And that's why people [go into] PARLIAMENT@MHS.

> White PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: Yeah like my mom was PTA President of Westwood this year…and it's not true, that she threw the school under the bus just to help my sister. But like a lot of what she did, I think, and like some of the small things, the decisions she made were geared towards my little sister.

The perception that Martinsville Public Schools is run by a small group of parents was pervasive. The student and teacher respondents imply that some parents respond to increasing competition for their children by restricting access to opportunities for other children. Whether this is an actual representation of what happens would need to be researched, however, the belief that this is how things operate is telling. If there is any

validity to these assertions, implementing certain program activities or outcomes could prove challenging.

Program Barrier #2: Teacher Buy-in

Another barrier that teachers identified was teacher buy-in. It is clear that teacher investment is crucial to the success of implementing a program. This theme was evident throughout the interviews. The concerns among those who questioned the ability to get teachers onboard with new initiatives fell into two categories: teacher fatigue and teacher resistance.

Teacher fatigue seemed to stem from those program activities or outputs which would require teachers to shift aspects of their practice or program activities which have been tried before. For example, in response to the program activity to conduct professional development to enhance teachers' understanding of culturally competent teaching, one teacher replied, "I don't mean I'm not willing to be in there and ready to hear something new, but it's like how many times have you heard 'differentiated instruction?' That's like the big buzz-word or how to heal all problems." If we trace the deeper currents of this statement, there are likely a number of teachers who are immediately turned off by education buzz words and "the newest trend" in education reform. And while this opinion should inform how the program activities and outcomes are presented and implemented, this feeling does not diminish the need for the program activities proposed. Quite the opposite, many respondents also discussed their perception that some of the most resistant teachers were those who would benefit the most. Consider the following two reflections from teachers,

> Teacher A: I think we've done [professional development on how to close the achievement gap, diversity, etc.]. I don't think it's been that effective, I'll be

honest…And I think the key there is that a teacher has to buy into it. I mean if a

teacher doesn't believe in culturally responsive teaching, you can have a million

workshops on it, but if they think this is all rubbish it doesn't matter.

Teacher B: You know we have had a lot of [professional development on how to

close the achievement gap, diversity, etc.] in the past, not recently. And I don't

know, I mean you just get a group of people…they're so resistant and those are

usually the ones that need that sort of stuff the most.

These two quotes highlight the shifts in mindset required to change practices in an

organization. Effective professional development sessions ought to employ strategies

which ready participants to be open to new understandings and new ways of thinking.

While these two reflections speak specifically to teacher buy-in, it is important not to

miss the profound point that teacher buy-in must also include getting teachers to have an

open-mind. Thus it is clear that the challenge is to find ways to make teachers

understand the purpose of the program activities and to scaffold them in ways that enable

teachers to receive the information. For one teacher, this barrier caused her to question

the effectiveness of any program activities or outcomes: "I'm not sure of [professional

development on how to close the achievement gap, diversity, etc.] would be effective

because it would mean really getting people to see things that maybe are too difficult for

them to see at times." And yet another teacher identified this barrier, while also

acknowledging the importance of [professional development on how to close the

achievement gap, diversity, etc.]

Teacher: [Professional development on how to close the achievement gap, diversity, etc.] never works and sometimes it becomes uncomfortable, which is important. [To describe] discussions on any ism…I use the analogy that my co-teacher uses all the time: [when] you work out it hurts [which] is good [because] you're getting stronger. That's the whole point.

This attitude offers a great paradigm for investing teachers in the proposed program model, for it captures what is required for teacher buy-in to occur. To really unpack the achievement gap in Martinsville, teachers must be open to learning new ways to operate. Professional development sessions on any equity issues (which would require discussions about race) are painful discussions, but they are also necessary. This teacher's use of the working out analogy is appropriate. As teachers discuss all the "isms" which impact a school in safe conversations which are honest yet non-threatening, they individually and collectively get stronger. However, conversations about "isms" will only happen with skilled facilitation that helps teachers—particularly resistant teachers—to be open-minded and willing to changes their mindsets and practices.

Program Barrier #3: Decreasing concern or lack of interest in diversity
The third barrier identified by teachers is the perception that interest in or concern about integration in Martinsville is decreasing. Martinsville, as a town, has prided itself on establishing and maintaining integrated schools (Anand, Fine, Perkins, & Surrey, Keeping the Struggle Alive, 2002). It is safe to say that this has permeated the schools, and that some people moved to Martinsville—or stay in Martinsville—because they found some purpose in having an integrated school. The perception among the respondents was that this town-wide belief in diversity contributed to the presence of a

conversation about diversity in the schools. For if the school is responding to the community and the community values diversity in schools, it would follow that the schools would want to maintain and highlight their diversity. One theme emerging from teacher interviews is that the town is no longer as interested in these, which in turns allows the schools to ignore issues of diversity. One teacher reflects on the presence of diversity and achievement gap conversations spanning the last four principals,

> Teacher: [The achievement gap] has been a focus, more a focus when Suzanna Craft was principal of this school, when I first started. We've gone through 4 [principals] and I've only been here 13 years. With Suzanna, that was one of [the times] when the district had [goals to close the achievement gap]…they still have goals [though] I honestly don't know them at this point cause they've changed, but the achievement gap was always front and center…and [that focus] kind of went away. I don't know that it's been the focus of the district as vocally and strongly publicly as it should be and I don't know if budget issues took a hold of that or the changing climate in education took a hold of that, but it…used to be an issue that was of more or seeming more importance to the district.

Whether the community fueled conversations about the achievement gap or not, the perception of this teacher is that the absence of a school-wide focus may lead some to believe that the issue is no longer important or of interest. It is interesting to note the ways that teachers interpret the current achievement gap conversation—or lack thereof— by the school administration, other teachers and parents, particularly in light of conversations which once occupied public discourse. Another teacher shared her

disappointment with what she perceived as a lack of interest in seemingly clear equity

disparities at Martinsville High School,

> PARLIAMENT@MHS Teacher: Diversity, it was much better ten years ago than
> it is now. [Back then as a teacher in PARLIAMENT@MHS you would hear] all
> this stuff and you were always kind of having to defend yourself as not being a
> racist Institute—which is a terrible thing—but at least I have to say, at least back
> then people cared whether it was or not. Nobody's even asking the question
> anymore….I feel like, "Wait a second! People should be really bothering us about
> this." We're the ones now that are saying, "Will somebody please help us fix this
> problem."

Taken together these two reflections offer some insight into the importance of clearly

identifying that the academic disparities between subgroups of children is not acceptable

for a school district with a stated commitment to diversity. It is beyond the scope of this

research to identify the connection between having conversations about the achievement

gap and the probability that one is moved to action. However, the stated presence of a

unifying goal is likely to help those within an organization to identify the organization's

priorities.

The sentiment among teacher participants was that the town's decreased focus on

integration, the achievement gap and issues of equity, has influenced the school's focus

on the same issue. Two teachers reflect on their impression of the community's

commitment to maintaining an integrated, equitable experience at Martinsville High

School.

> Teacher A: I think there's an element of the population that does not necessarily care about black achievement.
>
> Teacher B: I think increasingly though, people are moving to this town without [the] knowledge, or [the] desire for, [maintaining an integrated schooling experience]

Crucial to the latter point are the demographic changes which have taken place in Martinsville over the last decade. In 2002, New Jersey Transit finished a one-seat ride from Martinsville into New York City. This has made Martinsville a very attractive suburb for NYC transplants (De Avila, 2012). Unfortunately some of these newcomers to Martinsville are not familiar with the town's battle to integrate their schools (Hu, 2009). This was most evident when some parents started encouraging Martinsville to end the magnet program and return to neighborhood schools (Barista, 2010).

Program Barrier #4: Lack of Administrative Follow-through

The final obstacle to implementing this program model is the perceived lack of commitment and follow-through by the high school leadership. Three different teachers offered reflections on the district's commitment to programs in the past. It is worth pointing out that these teachers were not questioning the organization's capacity (i.e. resources) to maintain the programs, instead these teachers are highlighting the perception that the school lacks the will to implement and sustain programmatic efforts.

> Teacher A: I think that the [high school] doesn't have the fortitude to stick with a program and to place the program where it needs to be…those people that perhaps need it aren't going to get it because there's not going to be enough support for [it]

because this [school] system will bastardize it, take what it wants and it will lose its effectiveness.

Teacher B: I think AVID's a great program, the only thing about AVID here is that we didn't get the entire program. One thing about Martinsville, we pick and choose. If we like a program [and they program manufacturers tell you in order for this to be successful you need to subscribe to the entire thing], we say we like this part, we'll take that component and we'll make it into something. And don't get me wrong, it'll be successful but I think you'll get more success if you do it the way you're supposed to do it. I know they're part of the MSAN (Minority Student Achievement Network), which I was part of for years, and which I thought was great. There was a lot of support [for MSAN] and programs like that. I just think that once we implement something it dies and dwindles. There's this energy in the beginning but then it's not sustained.

Taken together, these quotes question not only the school's desire or ability to implement programs with fidelity, but question specifically the school's desire or ability to strategically and fully employ programs which promise to improve the outcomes for black students. Given the previous comments about how the school responds to community resistance, one may question the motivation behind Martinsville's programmatic efforts to improve minority student achievement. Another teacher offered this firsthand experience about a national program model that the high school purchased to help middle of the road students to achieve at greater levels.

Teacher: I think the AVID program [at MHS] doesn't function as it's supposed to. I was told that I was going to receive additional teachers so I could be outside of that classroom and contacting students, teachers and parents and community and have time to do all those things…none of that happened. I was told that they were going to transform the room so it became an actual AVID room—none of that happened. I also thought I was going to get sent to training—none of that happened. So it became just a tutorial program. I felt that kind of fell by the wayside. I think more often than not unfortunately, Martinsville is a lot about what we see—what's the face that we can put on for the public. So on our website it looks fantastic because we can say we have AVID and we have M-PREP and we have all of these things, but when you have all these programs—and you have maybe a hundred fifty students not graduating or failing, but you only have ten students in these programs, then the programs are just there for show.

It is hard to measure the administration's willingness or ability to implement programs, particularly those programs aimed at improving minority student achievement. Whether the administration is as ambivalent to the success of these students as some teachers perceive seems a secondary issue to how program models are implemented. The tendency of teachers to locate program failures on organizational leadership—or lack thereof—can be both compelling and misleading. However, these perceptions do point to the need to examine the policies and practices which guide program adoption, implementation and measurement. The absence of clear guidelines to direct selecting and executing program models would be a barrier to the implementation of this program model.

Chapter 8: Student Perceptions

Conversations with Martinsville High School (MHS) students clearly demonstrate that these students know they attend a special school. Whether pointing to the diverse student population, the plethora of academic clubs, the open campus or the crew team, these students understand that their high school is not the same as most other high schools. Even more impressive is the number of students who believe that this high school experience will position them for success in college.

The researcher asked MHS students to discuss the opportunities for success in their high school, inquiring specifically about who took advantage of the opportunities and what it takes to be successful at MHS. The most prevalent themes to emerge from

this research are explored in this chapter. One major theme is which students take which courses, a discussion that raised a number of larger issues: the presence of a skill gap for MHS students, academic identity and the impact on course selection, social identity and the impact on course selection, and finally, the ways that academic and social identity intersected for different students.

Diversity at MHS

> High achieving white, non-PARLIAMENT@MHS student: Something one of my history teachers said was we asked him what Martinsville High looked like back in the 60s and he said exactly the same as it does now, because it's diverse but it's not integrated. So we have this credit for being such a diverse school, but it's really our community [that] is diverse, not our school.

Students across 9 focus groups all spoke about the lack of diversity at Martinsville High School. This is an important backdrop for an examination of the academic achievement gap, for on the surface it suggests (i) that students are in fact separated at MHS and (ii) that the basis of this separation is purely racial. However, conversations with the students at MHS offered a more nuanced understanding of the dimensions levels of diversity at MHS.

> High achieving white, non-PARLIAMENT@MHS student: Even though it's a diverse school, it segregates. I don't know what it is but something really pisses me off when someone calls Martinsville really integrated and diverse. I don't remember the last time I had a class that was [racially] equal and I don't know, I just feel like it's almost fake to give our school this reputation of such a [diverse school]. I mean it is diverse, but what about moving it to the next level? What

about making it integrated? Diversity I feel like is a state of mind, like a state of being. What is that doing if you're not integrating it?

This student is highlighting a rather shared experience at MHS, which is that the classes are very segregated. The overall perception from students is that lower-level classes are filled with black students and upper level classes are filled with white students.

> High achieving white non-PARLIAMENT@MHS student: You can walk down [to a] certain wing…and [if] you know that lower level English classes are commonly during these periods or something…and you look in the classroom, you can see all minority students. Then you walk by a period later and you see all white students. If you're walking through the halls of MHS you can definitely see the changes in race in regards to the different levels of classes

This quote immediately raises the question of which students are taking which classes, as well as the pathways by which students enroll in classes. As a part of this research, multiple attempts were made to get course enrollment numbers to identify demographic trends in individual classes. All attempts were unsuccessful, leaving student perceptions as the only form of data.

Which students take which courses?

> White High-Achieving Non-PARLIAMENT@MHS student: We offer any class you want. If these kids wanted to go to an AP class, it's their choice.

Martinsville High School has an extensive course catalog, providing students with the opportunity to take a wide range of courses. As was previously explained, most courses are offered at the College Prep (CP), Honors (H), High Honors (HH), and Advanced Placement (AP) levels (listed here in quality points hierarchy from least to greatest). As

this student's comment demonstrates, students can take any course they choose. This student is specifically speaking about the MHS policy which allows students to override teacher and guidance counselor recommendations and enroll in HH and AP courses as they please. Depending on the student you ask, the learning curve to ascend to upper level courses differs. Look at the differences offered by the following two student reflections

> Low achieving black non-SLC student: I took [a high honors class] in my freshman year. I took an AP class sophomore year, but I really couldn't, I couldn't stay with it, that's why I dropped out. And like me, I'm not a math person, so I would not even think about taking an honors math class because I'm having trouble as it is in a regular math class.

> High achieving white, non-SLC student: This year I took a higher level English than I thought I should take and had an amazing time in the class and I honestly learned so much from it. I was probably the dumbest kid in the class.

These two quotes demonstrate the potential impact course experiences have on students. The first student lacked the skills to succeed in the HH and AP courses, and as such, he dropped out of those courses and took a course more in line with his academic ability. The second student pushed himself to take a higher level course than he believed himself capable, which resulted in his increased learning. These two students function as figurative poster children for MHS students. Both students chose to challenge themselves academically and both were affected by their academic experiences. One student attempted a higher course only to find that he was not ready for it, the other

attempted a course and found that he was ready. This practice of students tinkering to find the proper course level raises questions about how students get into classes at MHS. Additionally, knowledge of MHS and how it operates calls into question the social interactions which influence student choices. In particular, what experience convinced the first student to drop the higher classes—as opposed to get a tutor, for example, and what experience made the second student opt to take a class exceeding his perceived academic ability?

Course Enrollment at MHS: Who takes what and why?

Two themes emerged when students discussed how they chose their courses. All students spoke of the importance of course selection toward future goals, i.e. college. All students also seemed to understand the importance of HH and AP classes, particularly for those students with plans to attend college. The first theme to emerge shows how some students perceived work load of a particular class or SLC.

> Black PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: [Other students are] scared of taking upper-level classes because they are intimidated by it. Like for example, PARLIAMENT@MHS, a lot of people won't take it or are scared from taking it because "Oh, I hear it's so hard, it's so much work."

This quote offers an initial deterrent for students in determining which courses to take. Most interesting is how students respond to this assessment of the work load in particular classes. For some students, a heightened course load was an effective deterrent. For others, it was a necessary evil. One PARLIAMENT@MHS student expressed disdain for the work load yet stayed in PARLIAMENT@MHS because of the appeal the program offered to colleges

White PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: I think it's a poorly run program. It's

not; it's a lot of busy, meaningless work. [But] I think that it does have sort of a

reputation as like a, like a resume builder. But there's no real…no proof behind

that. But I mean I think the general knowledge is that you know there is like sort

of an advantage to having it on your resume, I don't know how big that is…most

people that I know are staying in it…for college.

This begs the question, is PARLIAMENT@MHS the gold standard for prospective

college students? And while the PARLIAMENT@MHS ascent to top notch is beyond

the scope of this research, this quote raises questions about the underground meaning of

specific classes and SLCs. PARLIAMENT@MHS and Equity Project are two places to

further understand how students chart their path through MHS. Each of these SLCs is

themed based, meaning ideally students would choose based on their interest in the

theme. Because many of the classes offered within an SLC are also offered in the general

population, an additional option for those not interested in either theme is to simply take a

more traditional route through high school, minus participating in an SLC.

Choosing an SLC

This research asked students about choosing an SLC.   Based on student

experiences and student perceptions of their peer's experiences, it became clear that there

were multiple factors considered before choosing an SLC. The following three student

reflections offer the most prominent trends of how students end up in an SLC, and more

specifically in PARLIAMENT@MHS or Equity Project.

Interviewer: So how did you all choose PARLIAMENT@MHS? Are you all

future politicians, is that it?

PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student 1: No, no.

PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student 2: No.

PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student 3: We're all future people who want to get into college.

These are further corroborated by the comments of two other PARLIAMENT@MHS students, discussing how they decided to join PARLIAMENT@MHS.

PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student A: [PARLIAMENT@MHS is] very geared towards making you look attractive for good colleges. So the ambitious kids who…want to go to this Ivy League school or go to this engineering school…are likely to do PARLIAMENT@MHS because they think it will help them get into college. I don't know why that affects diversity. But like when we talk about it, a lot of people always say that it's because there is more work. But I don't really know, because of like the reputation it gets, of always being primarily white. But I don't why. . .

PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student B: Yeah, at first I wasn't going to join PARLIAMENT@MHS because it was all like white, Jewish people basically, most of PARLIAMENT@MHS is like white, Jewish people. Not that I have anything against white Jewish people, because I am white and Jewish. But I wanted to join [Equity Project] because I'm really interested in like social activism and that kind of thing. And people actually came up to me and they are like "Oh, you know it's like all black people." And I was like, I was like "I don't care, I like black people." But then I started, people started telling me about how

it was like less organized and I decided that that was a good basis to not join

[Equity Project], so I traded it for PARLIAMENT@MHS instead.

The presence of segregated classrooms and SLCs appeared to be a function of students wanting to self-segregate on the basis of race. PARLIAMENT@MHS white Students A and B challenge that notion, for these two students are arguing that their perceptions of spaces are racialized because of the lack of rigor or organization, not fundamentally because of race. However, each statement includes race as a factor. Each statement should be taken separately.

The first student (PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student A) identifies a connection between ambition and diversity, "… [students] are likely to do PARLIAMENT@MHS because they think it will help them get into college. I don't know why that affects diversity." In unpacking this statement, one must wonder how college aspiration impacts diversity. Perhaps students, rightfully, associate college aspirations with a lot of work, as was alluded to earlier by a black PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: "a lot of people won't take [PARLIAMENT@MHS] because 'Oh, I hear it's so hard, it's so much work.'" The question of interest is how the concepts of demanding coursework and college aspirations have become racialized for these students.

The second student's (PARLIAMENT@MHS white Student B) quote offers insight into the ways by which demanding coursework and college aspirations become racialized. More, this quote tells of the impact of these social constructions. This student is sharing her thought process for choosing PARLIAMENT@MHS versus Equity Project as an SLC. As one would hope, the student is making the assessment based on the theme

of the SLC, as evidenced by her stating, "…I wanted to join [Equity Project] because I'm really interested in like social activism and that kind of thing." The student then goes on to mention the social pressure she received from her peer group, "And people actually came up to me and they are like 'Oh, you know it's like all black people.' And I was like, I was like "I don't care, I like black people." It is tempting to conclude from this that some students at MHS perceive classes with black students to be inferior *because* the students are black. And while the student did not report on why her peers cautioned her in this way, it is clear what the student found when she joined Equity Project, "But then I started [Equity Project], people started telling me about how it was like less organized and I decided that that was a good basis to not join, so I traded it for PARLIAMENT@MHS instead."

It is important not to miss the profound point this student is making, which is that the lack of structure is what pushed this student back into PARLIAMENT@MHS. Though PARLIAMENT@MHS was an SLC with a homogenous population which the student was attempting to avoid ("at first I wasn't going to join PARLIAMENT@MHS because it was all like white, Jewish people basically, most of PARLIAMENT@MHS is like white, Jewish people") and a theme the student was not interested in, the lack of structure—and possibly rigor—sent this student into PARLIAMENT@MHS. If this process is similarly replicated throughout the individual processes for enrolling in courses, it offers great insight into the way MHS is contributing to the segregation in its school as well as to the gap in achievement between black and white students.

Choosing Non-SLC Courses

Further examination of student and parent choices demonstrates that attempts to identify the most rigorous academic spaces in MHS often become racialized discussions,

and that this notion extends to choosing both an SLC as well as courses in general. This conversation with white PARLIAMENT@MHS students highlights the rationale for being in High Honors classes

> Student 1: My mom made me go to HH classes. . . Her impression of Martinsville
>
> High School is that either you get into the top classes or you go to "gang warfare
>
> math."
>
> Interviewer: What is "gang warfare math?"
>
> Student 1: Remedial. It's a basement classes.
>
> Student 2: Even the regular classes or honors.
>
> Student 1: Yeah.
>
> Student 2: Because like geometry regular would be like that.

"Gang warfare math" and other classes at the regular and sometimes Honors level were often described as places where instruction was not rigorous, teachers lacked control and little was accomplished. Students often discussed their firsthand experiences in these classes and many discussed the concept of "switching up." Switching up is when you increase the course level from College Prep to Honors, or Honors to High Honors. While on an absolute scale, "switching up" is a good thing in that it causes students to push themselves, these students were not switching up to be ambitious. Rather, they were "switching up" to avoid what they perceived to be dysfunctional academic spaces. This reflection from two high-achieving, non-SLC white students demonstrates this point

> Student 1: I had Mr. Cuthbert in the beginning of the year for CP Chemistry and
>
> the first two weeks I was in it, it was so disruptive that I switched up because I

couldn't deal with it.

Student 2: I actually have CP Chemistry now [with Mr. Cuthbert] and it's so frustrating sometimes because I like Chemistry and I want to do the work but I can't ask him a question. I can deal with people screaming behind me, but when I ask the teacher a question I expect him to answer me. He's so distracted and stuff it's really frustrating. My grade is fine; I just want to be able to ask my teacher questions.

Interviewer: When you switched out of Chemistry, why didn't you switch to another chemistry class, why did you switch up?

Student 1: Because all CP Chemistry classes are like that.

Both of these quotes speak to the chaos happening in some lower level classes, however they do not clearly make the connection between race and those classes. What the quote does offer is the perception that regular and honors classes are non-academic spaces. As such, it is worth investigating the students in regular and honors classes. Again, the district would not release the actual enrollment numbers or trends for students by course, so the data are student perceptions.

Student Perceptions of Low Level Classes

Black PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: For the students who like really, really try and stay really actively engaged in the school, I think it's a fairly good education.

But then there's a lot of students that like don't seem to care or try. They definitely need like lower level classes, it's like babysitting.

Low-level classes at MHS are typically College Prep and Honors classes. These are the two lowest levels offered in all subject areas. A prevailing notion among higher-achieving students was that those in low level classes are there because they don't care about school or are averse to trying. As such, students with this perception believe that MHS has to provide these spaces—as holding tanks essentially—to capture those students not interesting in pursuing an actual high school career. This white high-achieving, non-SLC student offered her opinion which demonstrates this point

White, high-achieving non-SLC student: Let's say I'm in a high class for English because I like English and I'm not so good at chemistry so I drop down to a low class because I don't care, that's why people are in it. If you really loved chemistry you would push yourself to the point where you can be in that higher class—[if everyone does that] the class ends up being a group of people who really care about what they're learning and are therefore less motivated to disrupt the lesson. But if you're in a lower level class in whatever subject, it gives the impression that you don't care so much. Or [because] some of the kids [are unmotivated], you lose motivation. I feel like when I'm in the higher classes everyone's kind of like we're going to take this seriously. Just the name of the class kind of puts you in the right gear.

This perspective is dangerous, for two reasons. First, it equates ability with motivation, "if you really loved Chemistry you would push yourself to the point where you can be in that higher class." Because MHS has open enrollment, offering students the choice to

take any classes they choose, the perception that ability and motivation are somehow connected could prove troubling. Left unchecked, this connection mirrors a "blame the victim" argument: students are in lower level classes because they do not try hard enough, therefore their academic failure is their own fault. Second, if you adopt the first premise, you may be tempted to assume that there is a common culture among those "unmotivated" people in the lower-level classes. It is this assumption that is extremely dangerous, particularly in a place where the majority of students in lower-level classes are black. This assumption emerged from a number of students.

> High-Achieving white, non-SLC student: I feel like the thing about Martinsville is that there are no requirements to get into an AP class, you can just choose your schedule. So I feel like anyone can choose a really difficult path, but for some reason only, not only, but primarily white people are choosing to go into hard classes.

If you follow this logic, you implicitly arrive at the conclusion that black students are unmotivated. This follows a simple if-then logic pattern: *If* you are in lower-level classes it is because you are unmotivated and *if* the majority of students in lower-level classes are black, *then* the majority of black students are unmotivated. This logic proposition is arguably the link between ambition and race that students experience at Martinsville High School!

However, the students also complicated this notion, identifying other factors which contribute to the number of black students in low level classes. Most important among the other factors were the impact of guidance counselors and teachers.

Guidance Counselors

The students discussed the role of guidance counselors, particularly with respect to encouraging students to take higher level classes. Students across the focus groups acknowledged that guidance counselors should push students to take the hardest schedule possible, though they acknowledged that this was often difficult to achieve given the limited time students have with guidance counselors. Most interesting were the ways that guidance counselors impact different students. Consider the following two quotes, both high-achieving non-SLC students, one black and one white:

> High Achieving white non-SLC: I feel like the way it should work with a guidance counselor is [that the counselor] says, "Here's the hardest possible schedule you can have and then you drop down." Because it's easier to drop down then to go up…My schedule was way too easy, it wasn't challenging me at all, I wouldn't have gotten into a good college with it. I knew I could do so much better and I had to spend 5 days in the guidance office waiting to just to tell him [to put me] in a higher level class.

> High achieving black non-SLC: [Given] the credits that I would get for it for both my GPA and just for school [for taking College Prep and Honors classes]; I would just be like "No." It's pointless for me to take a college prep class if I have the ability to take something higher.

What is most profound in both of these quotes is that for these students, the guidance counselor role is less about advising and far more technical. Neither of these students needed to be encouraged to take upper level courses. Both actually made calculations

about the reduced utility of lower level classes, "My schedule was way too easy, it wasn't challenging me at all, I wouldn't have gotten into a good college with it, I knew I could do so much better" offers one student while another says "It's pointless for me to take a college prep class if I have the ability to take something higher." Arguably for these students, a guidance counselor's encouragement is irrelevant as their understanding of quality points and college admissions guides their course selection process.

However, what happens to a student lacking knowledge of quality points and college admissions? What is the perceived effectiveness of guidance counselors for students who depend on guidance counselors, either for information or for encouragement? Consider the following two students

Low-achieving white non-SLC student A: You also need help from your parents and your teachers. Because at the time you don't really know [that you should take a higher class]. I've seen a lot of kids pass the regular class easy and they didn't get recommended for the next one. And they don't have their parents saying this class is too easy, you should go up….some parents probably listen to the teacher and if the teacher doesn't recommend you then you ain't going up, you're going to stay where you're at.

Low-achieving white non-SLC student B: Or the student doesn't tell their parents that their class is too easy, they think "I'm getting an A, my mom's happy, leave it at that." They don't want to challenge themselves.

A black PARLIAMENT@MHS student offered thoughts on the importance of guidance counselors pushing students to take higher level classes

> Black PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: I think that the whole guidance administration just needs to be really revised, okay. It's just so, so unequal. It depends, if you have like one person [you are] "set" and you have another person you're just "doomed" and you're talking about how to [motivate] students to really want to learn, especially the minority students. And so if they can't get it at home, [it] really [falls] on the guidance counselors to do that.

What this student is highlighting is the perception that some guidance counselors are more invested in their students than others, and that this investment level impacts the students' academic experience. This idea was further corroborated by a low-achieving non-SLC black student who spoke about her experience with her guidance counselor

> Low-achieving non-SLC black student: Your guidance counselors, they don't push you. They are not like as proactive as maybe they could be. Like when it comes to students they maybe [help] students who are like high honors and stuff. At first I got emails from my guidance counselor like "For my star students. . ." And these are some scholarships. And I'm like "Well there's only twenty people on this email." Why is it that? Why isn't the whole school getting them? Why don't all of the guidance counselors give this to all of their students?

A teacher expressed a similar sentiment, offering her perception that the expectations of guidance counselors could have an impact on the courses students select.

> Teacher: I think the guidance counselors and probably their teachers even say [to white students] "Why don't you take high honors and challenge yourself?" Whereas I think when African American kids sign up people don't question their choice, and they see their friends going into college prep and honors and nobody

says anything. And I think that goes for parents and teachers and guidance

counselors and administrators.

Taken together, these student and teacher perceptions offer some insight into the ways

that guidance advising may impact student's course selection.   This teacher perceives

that there is a gap between which students guidance counselors are encouraging to take

higher classes and which they are not. However, based on some of the student accounts,

some guidance counselors are not pushing any students. What is not clear is whether the

gap is between which students the guidance counselor suggests for upper level classes

and which she does not, *or* between students who rely on their guidance counselors for

advisement versus students who rely on their guidance counselors for more technical

scheduling tasks.

Teacher Quality

In discussing the level of instruction in College Prep classes, students across all

focus groups acknowledged that the quality of teaching was perceived as being lower in

CP classes than in other level classes. Students readily acknowledged that in order for

learning to take place, the teacher needed to maintain control over the classroom and that

students needed appropriate supplies. Where the students diverged was about the level of

motivation required of students in low level classes. The issue of student motivation and

instructional quality emerged as a "chicken and egg" debate. Some students adopted the

perspective of this high achieving white, non-SLC student. Here this student is reflecting

on his experience tutoring black students

> High achieving white non-SLC: At M-PREP, the majority of the students don't
>
> want to learn. When I give them a problem and I show them what's wrong, they

just make the same mistake again. Then I show them what's wrong again and they

make the same mistake again. It just gets frustrating and I end up fixing it every

time without them learning it. Eventually it just gets down to that and I feel like

that same thing would probably happen to a lot of the teachers if we have high

level teachers go to low level classes. At least with some of the teachers I know, I

feel like they have the same experience with kids who want to learn versus kids

who don't want to learn.

This student is raising a number of issues in this quote: student motivation and how it

impacts the teacher. What this student alludes to, without naming, is the lack of

academic skill some students may have. This particular tutor is likely not skilled enough

to alter his instructional methods to address the possible skill deficiency of this black

student, thus the tutor arrives at his conclusion that this student is not mastering the

content because he is unmotivated: "At M-PREP the majority of the students don't want

to learn and when I give them a problem and I show them what's wrong and they just

make the same mistake again." What is most telling about this quote is the connection

this student makes between the instructional quality and student motivation, "At least

with some of the teachers I know, I feel like they have the same experience with kids who

want to learn versus kids who don't want to learn." Another student shared a similar

perspective,

Black PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: But then there's a lot of students that like

don't seem to care or try. They definitely need like lower level classes, it's like

babysitting.

The tendency for some students to link student motivation to the quality of education a student receives placing the emphasis on the student to want more for him or herself *rather* than on the teacher or school to invest students in their own education.

However, not all students felt this way. Some students, while acknowledging that student motivation is important, did not feel that lower student motivation meant students deserved a poorer quality education. Consider this exchange between two high achieving white non-SLC students

Student 1: You know your parents are the beginning of your motivation and if you don't have that base it's so hard to motivate yourself.

Student 2: But you should be getting that with teachers…the sign of a good teacher is to see past that.

Student 1: Yes but a teacher can look past that but if the kid doesn't care then it's hard for them to look past that they don't care.

Student 2: I don't actually think that it's that the students don't care. I think it's that the students feel—I don't know how to explain it. I don't really think that minorities students don't care about school, I feel like they feel that no one in school cares about them.

The tension the students are acknowledging points to an important issue in general, which is the opportunity schools have to move students beyond their current plot in life. Beyond student 1's argument about a teacher's ability to teach students who do not care,

the student makes a point that should not be missed: "If you don't have that base it's so hard to motivate yourself." Student 2's response, challenges student 1 by linking student motivation *not to* student ability (as other students had done), but to teacher expectations, "I don't really think that minorities students don't care about school, I feel like they feel that no one in school cares about them."

Expectations of student performance, both the teacher's expectation of the student and the student's self-expectation of himself, emerged in other student focus groups as key determinants for course enrollment and appear to be tightly connected to one another. Consider the following statement from two low-achieving black non-SLC students

Low-achieving black non-SLC student: There are teachers who simply say "This kid isn't trying; I'm not going to try." But you could try and push and then once you see that it's not happening, then you give up. But they just give up like that (snaps fingers) as soon as they see somebody's not trying…Because a lot of them think "Oh, I can't do this" or they don't see it, they don't see the future to be better than what they have.

Low-achieving black non-SLC student: They are just let me take what I feel like I can do. If they don't push themselves, they'll never know how far they can go, they'll never know how far they can go in life and succeed or anything.

These students are challenging the tendency to judge a student's motivation from how much the student is "trying." What is embedded in these statements is that these students have low expectations for themselves, not because of their opposition to school, but because they do not know their own potential. These are "school dependent" (Jackson,

2011) students who will likely not get the push they need if they do not get it from school. Left alone, these students will assess their own abilities and plan their path through high school accordingly, "They are just let me take what I feel like I can do." The result is that these students, who are *unable* and not necessarily *unwilling*, to push themselves; float aimlessly in an eco-system which depends on individual student motivation.

These are sets of students who have made an assessment of their own ability level and seem to understand on some level that they will need help in order to be successful. Something happens as the student attempts to determine the support (s)he will receive from the teacher, and this impacts his/her performance in a way that is not as clearly felt for less school-dependent students.

> Low-achieving non-SLC black student: If you're in a class where you see people are working and you see that the teacher is willing to help you, I think that you are more willing to do it. Because there's teachers who see kids and they [think] "Oh he's not going to do anything" and…just like that, as soon as [they] see you, they're not going to help you. But then there [are] the teachers who actually are willing to help and they are willing to give you that time. You know, they are willing to give the effort to help you out. And I think, it just has, I just think that the school needs to like come together and not just let the kids who are failing, let them fail—because that's pretty much what [the school does].

Afraid to Fail or to Succeed?

Some students have deduced that teachers are not convinced of their ability, they themselves are not convinced of their ability, and there are few academic supports in

place to help them. When you combine this with the racialized notions of achievement

that these students carry from their experiences, the proposition of opting into upper-level

classes is daunting.

Black low-achieving student: When it comes to AP classes. . .I'll put a race on it,

like white people will take advantage of that.

Interviewer: Okay, why do you think that is?

Black low-achieving Student: A lot of kids won't challenge themselves because

they are

afraid of the outcome, that's what I think. Because if you look at, I don't know

any AP class that has more than like three black, African American students in it.

Interviewer: What is the outcome that you're afraid of?

Black low-achieving Student: That. . .I'm not making it. Success doesn't come to

everyone. Like you have a lot of white kids in the class with you and you want to

do good. And you know you hear a kid say "Oh, I got a B" and the African

American student is like "I got a C; I figure that I'm doing fine." Everybody's

looking at you like, "I don't really want to work with him, he has a C-average."

This student's reflection offers insights into the course selection process, there is both a

skill component and a racial component, and the two are linked. This student is voicing

reluctance to struggle academically, with a particular emphasis on struggling in a

classroom of white students. It is not clear whether this student would feel the same

anxiety toward struggling academically in a black classroom or even a mixed classroom.

Worth further investigation is the impact of students' races on the likelihood that this

black student would pursue an academically rigorous AP class.

A slightly different take on the impact of race on achievement and course

selection emerged in this comment made by another low-achieving black student

Low achieving black non-SLC student: If someone realizes potential [in] a black

kid, like a really, like a really smart black kid, it becomes. . . It becomes like

automatic like (snaps fingers) you know when you catch an idea and it shows and

there's a light bulb coming on? It's like "Oh" and now it becomes, everyone

expects you to be "smart."

Interviewer: And is that good or bad?

Low achieving black non-SLC Student: It actually is taking both, I believe.

Because it's good now, it's like "Alright, you know, you can be smart and black

and [still] do your thing on the weekends and hang out and stuff. But then it's bad

because at the end of the day you still, you know maybe aren't going to get the

credit you deserve [compared] to the white kid that's next to you that's just as

smart. You know, the white kid will still just be like an inch or two just better

than you and not like physically or whatever better, but just like thought of as

[inherently smart].   Like he's been [getting good grades easily] throughout

school, [for] years! And you're like over here busting your tail and like he's still

> getting applauded and you just [get] "Keep up the good work and maybe you
>
> could do something one day."

From the point of view of this student, there are two assumptions made about high levels of achievement for black students. First, this student believes that her achievements will not be acknowledged for the full triumph they are because of the white students she will be compared to. Second, this student seems to believe that high achieving white students are not required or do not need to work as hard as she had to work. The basis for both of these assumptions is intriguing and worth examining, though beyond the scope of this research. However, this student was not the first to discuss this competition between black and white students. Another low achieving black student used different language to describe the same sentiment.

> Low achieving black non-SLC: If you're white, you don't have to prove
>
> anything. Like if you're not, you have to prove it. Like when I moved here I was
>
> like "Oh, like I'm not as good because I'm not from here…" And I felt like I
>
> really had to show them that I can do this, even though I'm not from here. And
>
> it's like it's that pressure that you have to do better than white people because
>
> they are already good.

The paradigm these students have created to understand race and achievement must stem from their experiences, however, because they have been unchallenged their impact is pronounced. These students are operating with levels of anxiety which are arguably valid, but which are also shared to a certain degree by all students. A high achieving white student mentioned similar fears of inferiority regarding his how his academic achievement looked in the face of other students' achievement

High-Achieving white Student, non-SLC: If you're in your grade level, like if you're where you're supposed to be, you're viewed as like lesser in Martinsville High School. Like for Algebra. . .I'm, I'm where I'm supposed to be for this grade; I'm in Algebra honors. And then I'm, I have the stigma of being "stupid" because I'm on-level.

This student is voicing the same concern about being viewed as academically challenged by his peers, in the same way that the low achieving black student suffered this set of fears. The point of departure for these two students seems to form across racial lines. Both students are comparing their performance to the performance of white students. The only difference between the two students is their race, meaning the white student may be labeled "stupid" but it will not be because of his race. It is the black student who runs the risk of being labeled "stupid" because he is black.

The students' comments reflect that there are ways which the black student's academic performance will be linked to his race, however this may not happen because of an inherent belief in the inferiority of black students by white students. If this investigation of student perceptions at MHS has done anything, it has complicated our understanding of race and achievement. There is emerging evidence that school structures and interactions play a key role in the social constructions of race and intelligence, *and* that these social constructions in turn impact the structures (curriculum, course enrollment, teacher assignment, etc.) in operation in schools.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study contributes to our understanding of the achievement gap in affluent, mixed suburban districts, a phenomenon which has been treated as a subset of the greater achievement gap discussions though it requires a more critical approach. This study marries theory and practice by identifying some of the most promising practices for minority student achievement then getting feedback from those directly working in schools and with students. The study outcomes highlight programmatic approaches and activities most applicable to improving academic outcomes for minority students in mixed-race, affluent high schools. While the implementation of these strategies is another research endeavor, the identification of such strategies is indeed a significant contribution.

Based on this research, there are principles, or aspects, of the systems operating within the schools. Specifically, there are program outputs which detail necessary

components of the social, educational, and community systems used at Martinsville High School.

Social Systems

The system should be inclusive; there cannot be structured silos that systemically prevent teacher or students groups from interacting, vertically or horizontally. Based on my interviews, the students and teachers in Martinsville High School simply do not know each other. This lack of communal existence seems to contribute to the separation of students into race-based groups. Outside of the educational impact of tracking, the social impact is that students are in segregated classes, and because classes are based on choice, you can *choose* who you want to be around based on which class you take. The result is that certain students will spend entire days with one race of student. Additionally, the teachers assigned to those courses may have the same experience. Thus both the teachers and the students spend a good portion of their days in segregated spaces, gaining little first-hand knowledge of other groups. The following quotes from 4 different respondents (2 teachers and 2 students) speak to the lack of interaction between groups at MHS.

> High-achieving White non-SLC student: I think something interesting that…would help with gaps in general and kind of the separation of races and achievement would be to institute some type of unity between the class of students, I mean our school's so big…I feel like something that would help bridge the ach gap is just to bring people together generally and have the class feel like they want to be together. [Maybe] creating some type of, not a retreat, but

something that would help people come together or at least encourage people to come together.

Teacher A: There are probably common traits [among unsuccessful students]; I haven't worked with those students for a long time so I would have to speculate [as] to what those traits are.

Teacher B: I don't know the names of all the English teachers. I can't name a single math or science teacher. We don't have that community.

White PARLIAMENT@MHS Student: I think that the Principal should mandate that some of the teachers who teach a majority of higher level classes branch out a little bit more and maybe teach remedial or lower level classes as well.

The process for assigning teachers is beyond the scope of this research, and likely involves a deeper look into the procedures for allocating human resources. However, what should not be missed in these four quotes is the impact of operating in such silos. Teacher A's inability to discuss any characteristics of unsuccessful students, "I haven't work with those students for a long time," indicates the lack of an overall cohesive community. That any structure exists which allows a teacher to not work with unsuccessful or challenging students creates (or sustains) a divided ecosystem. The result is that those "unsuccessful" students may not have access to the social systems afforded more successful students.

As a low-achieving black student stated, "It's sort of like a "separate but equal thing," almost everybody feels that way…Everyone's in the same school, but some kinds of kids will be taking this class and other kinds of kids are taking that class." The PARLIAMENT@MHS student's suggestion that higher level teachers "branch out" would help challenge the perception that specific teachers are for the instruction of specific students. To eradicate practices which allow one set of students to have access to one set of teachers, and another set of students to a different set of teachers would eliminate the perceived "separate but equal thing," raised by the low-achieving Black student.

This proposed logic model is designed to help MHS ensure that all students in Martinsville have unfettered access to the opportunities at MHS. Having students and teachers operating in silos does little to create community and only contributes to levels of fear, anxiety and stereotyping. By creating social structures which bring people together, MHS can help to dispel myths and create an environment where students and teachers know more of their similarities than their differences.

Educational Systems

The data indicate the need for three requirements of the educational system in order to effectively address the achievement gap. First, the system *must* provide supports for students who need them, at all levels, and the system must be smart about it! Second, the system must allocate resources in *equitable* vs. *equal* ways to ensure that the students who need the most get the most. Third, the system must hold itself accountable to outcomes, versus access, and create a structure to protect the integrity of its actions, both against shoddy program implementation and external pressure.

A Focus on Teaching and Learning

One key aspect of teaching and learning is lacking at MHS, namely, there appears to be no uniform high standard for instruction. This manifests itself in two ways: (1) the widely stated opinion that College Prep and Honors level courses are places where instruction does not happen all the time and at high levels, and (2) a "freedom to fail" philosophy that allows the students to remain in classes though they consistently do not meet academic performance standards.

It is unacceptable that a specific sector of classes, in this instance College Prep and Honors classes are uniformly regarded by students as being out of control and lacking rigor. Though students are opting to stay in these classes for a variety of valid—and not so valid—reasons, the existence of such classes and the explicit disappointment that these students have is telling. All classes, despite the level, must have effective teachers in the front of the room; schools simply do not work otherwise. The following quotes from three students reinforce this point.

> High-Achieveing, Non-SLC Student: Because in my geometry class, like you'll go in, everybody is talking and the class is like 99% like management and then like 1% actual teaching. And it's like "How can I learn in that kind of environment?" People are walking around, yelling, running around the classroom, getting up, asking ridiculous questions just to be funny. It's like "How am I supposed to learn?" And the teacher, she like seems like she doesn't care that much. All she wants to do is wait for everyone to sit down.
>
> High-Achieving, Non-SLC Student: I hate science, so I'm just going to take the "regulars" version because the honors versions are really hard…. [so] I stayed in

it. There was nothing, there was nothing else I could take. It was a joke. The kids would start like chanting and stuff like that and you're like "I'm trying to learn."

Throughout many conversations with students, similar concerns were raised. While the social implications of such statements are beyond the scope of this research, it is impractical to believe that students in these classes are not harmed in some way. In a school that prides itself on high quality instruction and global opportunities for students, what does it mean for students stuck in classrooms containing neither of these? It is difficult to make the argument that students are avoiding these classes because of the black students in them. The students clearly identify academic concerns which dissuaded them from staying in certain classes, not racial concerns. What seems more likely is that some students run from these classes based on the absence of instruction. Given the perceived absence of rigorous regular level classes, there is no way to test whether or not these students would actually stay in a majority black class (one without academic concerns). Consider the following quote:

Teacher: So right now I have three or four kids that I can think of that if they were not in a PARLIAMENT@MHS, they would probably be in a regular level course, but because of who they are they're in honors. Because [of] the way college prep is perceived in this school, a lot of these kids [are] in honors. [The parents] don't want them in college prep, they want them in honors. But if I were looking at them and looking at their skill set, they belong in the college prep class [not] honors…And every year I have kids who get "Ds" and "Cs" in AP—this

year included—where I meet with them and say over and over again, "You should

not be taking this class for AP. Don't take it AP."

This quote raises a clear and penetrating awareness that there are classrooms

lacking quality instruction exist at MHS and that some students endure these classes

while others opt out of them. While the impact of race on the former point is arguable—

it is not completely clear that people are avoiding classrooms with black students rather

than avoiding classrooms with inferior instruction. What is clear is that the division of

students who stay and the students who opt out happens along racial lines.

That the majority of the low level classes contain black students contributes to the

social construction of race and intelligence in MHS. It is clear that *if* instruction were

stronger in low-level classes, many MHS students would not need to "switch up." This

could lead to classes where students enroll based on their academic ability, and not on

race. Thus, a focus on teaching and learning may break the connection between race and

academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the fact that students across subject areas complain about the

quality, or lack, of instruction in lower level classes, demonstrates the need for a school

system committed to high levels of teaching and learning across the board begs the

question of what principles are guiding instruction at Martinsville High School. What are

the actual distinctions between each course level, what are the required skills to go from

College Prep to Honors to High Honors?

Teacher: We have college prep, honors and high honors…the science department

doesn't [have high honors like] most of the other departments. And I think three

levels is insane…I feel like if we eliminated this ridiculous high honors business we could have a more heterogeneous college prep, honors, kind of a situation.

Interviewer: What do you think is ridiculous about the high honors business?

Teacher: Who says what's better than honors, you know what I mean? Like if it's an honors program then it's an honors program. I guess you could say AP is higher than that because it's a college program. But in high school, why should there be something higher than honors?

The absence of clarity between each of these levels may work to the disadvantage of some students. The students who have successfully navigated Martinsville High School seem to understand that schooling is about an exchange of capital. These students understand that certain AP classes, clubs, sports, etc. have higher cultural capital value and, therefore, they position themselves to attain those credentials. These students are not necessarily focused on learning for the sake of learning, but rather for attaining capital. Combine this with the fact that students and parents use the course levels as a way to either find or avoid certain groups of students undoes the learning aspect of school. The existence of an option for students to take courses *knowing* that the course is beyond their academic reach may send a message that learning does not matter. This extends beyond students who opt to take an AP class (for any reason) and somehow find a way to do well, but the freedom to fail as a strategy may undermine the value of learning.

The logic model that this research proposes requires an education system that promotes the value and utility of learning, investing students in mastering rigorous standards and academic tasks and holding teachers to a high standard of performance. Schools with high academic achievement maintain a laser-like focus on engaging students in rigorous instructional content; they sustain this commitment in the face of parental opposition, and provide scaffolding and support for struggling students (Jackson, 2011; Panasonic Foundation, 2006). As one teacher stated:

> Teacher: There has to be continued support for holding a high level of expectation in courses and I sometimes worry about that—that the pressures are such that teachers feel…they're not going to be supported in holding a high academic standard. I think we bear the obligation to make clear to everyone what excellence looks like, but we also bear the responsibility to say this is how we get there and here are the supports we've built into place, here are the enrichments we've built into place… we bear the responsibility for breaking down [rigorous content] and making it teachable…And it becomes far more than a gatekeeping position, it becomes the work of saying what excellence looks like and how one achieves it.

This teacher's articulation of responsibility makes this reflection poignant. The teacher clearly explains that it is the school which "bears the responsibility…to make rigorous content teachable" through the use of supports and enrichments. In this, he expands what is sometimes view as a singular notion. It is not enough for a school to offer high academic content. This teacher's emphasis on the "continued support…of high expectations" is the function of three practices. First, schools must clearly define

academic excellence, with clarity about what rigorous instruction looks like, and with investment in teaching and learning, the school will be in a better position to create supports and structures to get all students to high levels of performance. Next, schools must provide students with the supports to attain academic excellence. In the instances where students need additional support, there should be supports which are provided to students in inviting ways which do not alienate or target the student as being deficit or lacking. Finally, schools *must* support teachers in maintaining high academic standards.

Provide Academic Supports

It is undeniable that MHS needs to provide academic supports to its students. Students across the board discussed the disruptions and lack of instruction which takes place in College Prep classes. All students also discussed the negotiation between choosing to stay in a class more academically suited to them or going up a level.   A huge factor in this was their perceived ability to do well in the upper level.

> PARLIAMENT@MHS Black Student: EQUITY PROJECT offers high honors and honors classes, although the majority of [EQUITY PROJECT students] take honors classes because they are scared of taking the upper-level classes, not because they aren't encouraged to do so or they are not allowed to, it's just because they feel as though "I am inadequate, so I won't be able to keep up with the Caucasian students in the class."

A number of white students discussed treating black students as everyone else. Traditionally in education, this type of color-blind ideology is frowned upon by Critical Race Theorists (Dixson A. D., 2008; Taylor, 2009); however, the students seem to be making a larger point.   Consider the following three quotes from high achieving, non-SLC white students.

High-achieving, non-SLC white Student: I feel like it would also help fix the gap if we made minorities not feel like minorities. Sometimes I feel like minority achievement programs are kind of confusing because I don't really know how much you can expect to accomplish if you're just translating a class into an after school program. If you maybe institutionalize a program that…you got to pick what you wanted to do and white people could do it too and then you were in a program with white, black, Hispanic, I feel like that would help minorities feel like--and they shouldn't even feel like that and I don't know if they do-- they were on the same

level with everyone else.

High-achieving white non-SLC student: I feel like when you say we're going to help the minorities, I feel like saying you're saying "You're a minority student so you need help," which is kind of a horrible thing to say. I know that there are issues against minorities, but the only way to help that is to act like they are not minorities and not single people out, and to say here are programs to help students who are struggling, here are classes where advanced students can go, don't say it like M-PREP! Part of their mission statement is that it is geared towards black people. I just feel like that's making the problem worse, that's all. I mean it's good intentions, I just feel like it has a stigma.

These students' perceptions of programs aimed at helping black students added an additional perspective to this discussion, and may prove to have implications for successfully implementing a program to improve minority student achievement. The

logic of their arguments went something like this: *if* black students are at a disadvantage because of the history of this country and *if* the school creates programs to help black students improve, *then* black and white students will inherently be separated. Furthermore, there will be a stigma against black people in general, as the school is sending the message that black people are generally deficient. Furthermore, if the programs to help black students are as ineffective and circus-like as all-minority classes, then they will be ineffective anyway! Instead, the students recommend programs that target a range of students.

What is fascinating is that these students might be on to something. Martinsville, through its Global Humanities Program, found ways to provide support to all students, in inconspicuous ways. An English teacher discusses the success of the program below.

Teacher: The ninth grade Global Humanities program was set up with just that [in mind].

Everybody takes the same stuff, everybody does the same thing. They put in a program called "The Writer's Room"…[which] allowed teachers to teach at high honors level and still be able to deal with the kids who were working their way toward that level because [they] had volunteers who came in and worked with the kids one-on-one with every piece of writing in the classroom…Everybody got taught at high honors, but with that support of Writer's Room the kids who weren't high honors got the tutoring, the extra help, the support that they needed to get up to that level.

By using push-in writing coaches that helped all students one-on-one there was no stigma for working with the writing coach, there was no special room. The writing coaches

circulated in the classroom with the students and just worked with students at their desks. This is the kind of "smart" support that must be offered to students.

Act with Integrity & Fidelity

Over the years, Martinsville has promoted a number of initiatives to improve minority student achievement, the most prominent being participation in MSAN, M-PREP and AVID. According to some, a huge threat to the potential of these programs has been the district's lack of commitment to full implementation of the programs, which may be influenced by the district's lack of will to stand up to external pressures. There was the sense among teachers that Martinsville operates to maintain a specific image, rather than to actually improve student achievement. Two teachers offer their perspectives on Martinsville's commitment regarding programs to improve student achievement.

Teacher: I think we do things because it tends to look good on the outside, whether it is working completely, well [organized] and [showing] results, I think [these] almost comes secondary. It almost seems as if the student's achievement within those programs comes secondary to the fact that we just have those programs. To the outside, we have the College Scholars, we have M-PREP, we have AVID, we have the Freshman Academy. Do we care about the results within them? I think that comes secondary. So I think it really is just sort of almost a publicity thing or the image rather than the true reason which should be the achievement of the students.

Teacher: The "M" in M-PREP used to stand for "Minority" and now it stands for Martinsville…So we de-racialized that element of it. I think because of sort of

institutional inertia or culture, there's still a largely African American presence in

the program….But I think the change in the name reflects, I think, a pendulum

swinging [in] a very weird direction here in Martinsville. We're getting more

white as a town, population-wise; we're getting a lot more yuppies and that kind

of thing. And so I don't want to call those programs a "failure" because they have

certainly helped a number of people, but I know that they are probably not

fulfilling the potential that they could.

Given the promise of both AVID and M-PREP, this reality is disconcerting. However, it

also points to the need for the system to have a way to ensure that programs are

purchased, developed and implemented with a clear vision of how it will impact students'

academic performance. Once established, the system must be able to sustain energy and

resources, particularly in the face of external pressure. When the status quo is being

threatened, people tend to cling tightly for fear that they will lose what they believe to be

theirs. While this research acknowledges the importance of having community support,

the educational system must be accountable and find ways to guard against external

pressures if it is to provide a high quality education to all its students.   This leads to the

final requirement.

Community Systems

Regarding the necessary community systems, three required elements emerged

from this research. At the heart of the proposed system is a commitment to equity and

inclusion, thus asking the community to renew its charge of maintaining a truly integrated

and high achieving school for all students.   This boldly proud, liberal town, which has

mobilized in the past to become the first fair trade town in the tri-state area (Fair Trade

Towns, U.S.A., 2008), which successfully defeated NJ Transit through the construction

of "Quiet Zones" prevent train horns from being sounded in the town of Martinsville (De Avila, 2012), must again come together to mobilize around the quality of education in its schools. First, in order for this program to be implemented, the community must see and value the relationship between individual success and the group's success. Second, the community must implement some sort of "checks and balance" system to prevent a powerful, elite few from controlling the fate of all.   Finally, the community must institutionalize its commitment so that newcomers understand the vision that the community holds for its schools.

Connection between Individual and Group Success

Based on my interviews, Martinsville has to begin to operate with a more collective notion of success. The logic model requires a community that can acknowledge that some people need more help than others and that being part of a community means not a scurried race to top, but working together for the collective good. This type of interest convergence is usually seen with athletics, where communities rally about the football or basketball team, but not beyond that. NCLB attempted to connect individual and group success, but was largely unsuccessful and instead led to finger-pointing, blaming and demands for equality across the board, which has been both helpful and harmful to a school trying to raise achievement levels for all students. This teacher reflects on his experience with M-PREP to detail what *cannot* happen in a community focused on closing the achievement gap:

> Teacher: If…we say that there's an achievement gap, the simple solution is [to provide extra supports] to all students [who] need to receive this extra help…if you have the gap and you improve [academic outcomes for all students] it just

moves [the gap] up [it does not] shrink. So the obvious solution is to do

something to this [the lower performing] group exclusively so that it raises it up,

right? That's what the original initiative [of M-PREP] was, but [white] people

were up in arms when [they realized], "Wait a minute, you mean my son can't go

to this?" People were up in arms so they had to change it, but I think that [M-

PREP] would have worked. If you do something [to improve outcomes] with the

bottom group, that's going to [close the gap]. That, to me, makes sense, that's

what I would do.

While this is ideal, student and teacher perceptions of what is possible in Martinsville

suggests that some vocal parents will not adopt such a perspective. The potential for such

an instance suggests the need for a system of checks and balances, the second proposed

required community system.

Checks and Balances

To preserve an equitable system in Martinsville, there should be a checks and

balances system to prevent the will of a powerful few from compromising the good of the

whole. In order for this logic model to work, parents cannot see the school as an entity

capable of manipulation for their own self-interest.   A teacher here notes the growing

number of parents *asking* that their children be referred for special education because of

the benefits such a designation affords:

Teacher: Martinsville is a real college-oriented town. Not just college, I mean this

is an Ivy League town, you know. We have parents coming in to our department,

Special Ed, all the time demanding that their kids get IEPs or demanding that their

kids get 504 so they can get extra time to take their SATs and all that kind of
stuff.

This is exactly the type of manipulation that should be discouraged. Despite the existence
of outliers committed to, "work the system," Martinsville must have structures set up to
protect from this type of abuse.

This logic model requires that the school be able to act and implement programs,
interventions and structures without having to cater to the self-interested requests of
parents. To ignore the potential for disagreement or dissent is naïve, and the school may
make decisions that upset specific groups. Naturally, in situations such as these there
should be discussions and debates to establish the most effective way to move forward.
However, these debates and decisions cannot be governed by powerful community
members, seeking to advance their children at the expense of other children. Both
students and teachers discussed their perceptions of the ways that parents utilize school
structures (i.e. PTA, etc.) to improve the opportunities for their own children. Consider
the following quotes, one from a teacher and one from a white, PARLIAMENT@MHS
student:

Teacher: Here you can't do something for one group and if you could the M-
PREP thing would be different, [it] would be what it was originally [intended to
be]; a lot of things would be different. I mean there were certain classes that were
supposed to be exclusively for kids of color, man please! That got out, that was
changed within hours!

White PARLIAMENT@MHS student: Well my mom is in the PTA; I'm not sure

if she is in the high school PTA, but she is definitely in the Honeywell PTA. And

she tries to get things done, but you really have to get the support of everyone.

You can't just go and do something, even if it's the right thing to do. You have to

fight and fight other people constantly and it's really hard to get something done.

The PTA will never back an integrated program simply became all of their kids

are pretty much in the same place. I know all of the PTA moms and all of the

kids, I see them and they're all in the high-level classes.

What is worth noting here is that the teacher speaks of programs for "one group" but

seems to be speaking about black kids, both quotes reference actions taken to benefit

black students.   The reaction of the community to spaces allocated exclusively for black

students is inconsistent. The fact that it is permissible for black student to—almost

exclusively—occupy special education or remedial classes, yet problematic to create a

program—exclusively for black children—aimed at improving the academic capacity of

black children, is inconsistent and problematic.   It is equally inconsistent and

problematic that a district with a racial balance policy across its district would have

segregated classes and learning communities within any of its schools.

As with any study of this scope, the motivations of *inactivity* are unclear, and

there is not enough evidence to say that those parents in positions of power are

purposefully excluding black students, or any students, from the benefits they secure for

their own children. However, both the potential and perception of this is present in

Martinsville. Wells and Serna (1996), write extensively about the leverage well-

connected parents have in districts such as Martinsville, aiming to provide integrated

academic experiences for all its students. In such cases, both the district and the parents

are aware of the ambient threat posed by affluent, unhappy parents: the option to vote

with their feet and send their children to private school, or leave the town altogether.

Given the very real consequences of such an action, Martinsville must have a way

of holding itself accountable, so as not to be held captive by these dormant threats.

Further, success cannot be linked to the absence of such a threat. Given the nature of this

work, districts like Martinsville should anticipate these reactions and prepare to act in the

face of them. This means setting measures and parameters a district can "stand on" when

challenged by powerful parents, parameters which gauge both the quality and scope of

the intervention, and allow the district to measure the impact on students both before and

after a program or intervention is implemented. In instances where there are gaps

between the intended benefits and the *actual* benefits, the district would be in a better

position to troubleshoot. This is one example of many structures that the school system

can erect to ensure that schools respond to the needs of all children and not just the

children of connected, engaged parents.

Institutionalize

Once Martinsville Public Schools establishes its vision, they must institutionalize

their commitment, finding ways to embed an inclusive, collaborative, achievement

philosophy throughout the organization. Additionally, the district should invest the

current community in their vision and philosophy, and work to orient new families and

community members to the district's culture and commitment.

In 2002, NJ Transit finished a one-seat ride from Martinsville into New York City

(De Avila, 2012). This has made Martinsville a very attractive suburb for NYC

transplants. Unfortunately, some of these people, along with other newcomers to Martinsville, are not familiar with the town's battle to integrate their schools (Hu, 2009). This was most evident when rumblings started about returning Martinsville to neighborhood schools (Barista, 2010).   Martinsville's history is a rich, impressive one, one that should be preserved; knowing the history of Martinsville helps orient people at least toward understanding why the achievement gap is an issue. Even a shallow understanding helps is better than starting from zero. Nonetheless, the program model requires a number of community systems and with Martinsville being as attractive as it is to outsiders, some of the practices need to be institutionalized to prevent newcomers from disturbing forward progress.

Policy Recommendations

The social, education and community systems required to implement this program model offer guidance for the policy recommendations.   The approach is to use programmatic efforts to converge interests so that Martinsville High School is a more equitable place for students to learn. The recommendations made are ambitious, but attainable. Policy recommendations are make both for the district and community levels. It is worth noting that this research follows a recent trend of policy inquiry and research to better understand the use of policy to create more equitable outcomes in mixed-race, affluent, suburban school districts. There are various school districts in New Jersey and throughout the nation which have attempted to create integrated schooling opportunities for their students. These attempts have employed a number of policy options, for example, creating regional high schools or creating a county magnet school.   While each policy strategy advances the stated efforts of these districts to provide all students with a more equitable education, like Martinsville, none of these districts has been successful in

either eliminating the achievement gaps between black and white students or providing a fully integrated high school experience for its students. Future research should pool the learnings from these districts, perhaps in collaboration with the Minority Student Achievement Network (http://msan.wceruw.org/), to establish a robust set of policy initiatives, implementation strategies and measures of success for use across all such districts.

In addition to identifying policy recommendations, it is important to situate them within the CRT framework employed for this research. In particular, one tenet of CRT requires that policies be examined and assessed in their ability to produce more equitable outcomes, not simply more equitable processes. CRT's sixth tenet, calling for a restrictive versus expansive view of equality, is applicable here. This tenet calls attention to process versus outcomes when analyzing the impact of race-based policies. The expansive view of equality calls one to examine the result of a policy, its ability to truly rectify the impact of racial oppression, versus a more restrictive view which uses the current moment as a starting point, more concerned with preventing racial oppression from happening in the future; with little regard for the impact of past transgressions. Education is a progressive endeavor, where previous academic and social experiences impact future performance. As such, to create policies in a vacuum—policies which influence behaviors going forward—is to ignore the positive or negative impacts of extant structures, practices, or policies. The policies recommended should be assessed not only in terms of their implementation or sheer existence, rather, these policies should be assessed insofar as they are able to produce outcomes which clearly demonstrate a more equitable schooling experience for the students in Martinsville High School.

It is recommended that the Martinsville Public School district implement a policy calling for the elimination of High Honors classes at Martinsville High School. The presence of 4 levels of courses does not appear to be academically required and seems to do little more than provide additional ways to separate students at Martinsville High School. To this end, it is suggested that College Prep level classes be eliminated. Honors classes should become the regular level classes and High Honors classes become Honors classes. This shift in courses attempts to eliminate the extraneous High Honors designation without sacrificing rigor. Advanced Placements courses should remain in place. In addition, Martinsville should specify the academic requirements which distinguish each course level and create course enrollment requirements accordingly.

With fewer course levels and clear performance indicators to direct students into the appropriate class, Martinsville should also eliminate the Choice Policy. Despite the stated intention of the Choice Policy, it has operated as a mechanism parents can use to place their students in what they perceive to be their placement, at times in the face of an academic performance that demonstrates that their child should be placed in a more appropriate level course. The social and academic ramifications contribute to Martinsville High School's ongoing struggles to educate all students to a high level. If the Choice Policy is maintained, then Martinsville should extend the district's racial balance policy to extend to Martinsville High School's SLCs. As it stands, MHS is exempt from this policy as the only high school in the town. However, the Small Learning Communities within the high school operate as small schools within the school and should be treated as such. By extending the racial balance policy to MHS, the district and school will be able to set goals for what the racial breakdown of SLCs ought to be

based on the school and district's demographic makeup. These numeric goals will provide guidance toward achieving a more equitable distribution of students in SLCs.

It is also recommended that the Martinsville Public School District implement structures to rotate teachers, ensuring that teachers regularly teach all levels of their respective courses. The ability for teachers to sustain a segregated professional existence in an integrated high school is problematic.   This has contributed to the segregation in the schools, as teachers of high achieving students literally have no contact with other students. According to student and teacher interviews, the unfortunately reality is that high achieving students usually have the higher achieving teachers; if demonstrated, this suggests that Martinsville contributes to unequal access to high quality instruction.

Finally, it is recommended that the district implement a student- and teacher-designed curriculum to guide weekly or biweekly, homeroom-based advisories. An alphabetical homeroom structure would allow these homeroom advisories to be heterogeneous. Having students and teachers work together to create the curriculum for the advisories builds investment and ensures relevance. Most important, the advisory presents a chance for students and teachers to get to know each other outside of the power structure of a classroom, while still providing some guidance to ensure that the experience is worthwhile.

On a community level, I recommend that that the mayor creates a 12-member, town-wide advisory council to operate out of the mayor's office. Martinsville is one of the few districts where the mayor appoints the school board, so while this could be a collaboration, the council should be run out of the mayor's office. The council should be

made up of at least 13 members; of whom 50 % should be students, 25%

parents/community members, 25% teachers/administrators and one member of the

township Civil Rights Commission. This council should be charged with two tasks: (1)

create a "Welcome to Martinsville" campaign to be shared town-wide; and (2) conduct

and publish an annual "equity audit" to include the voice of students, school personnel,

and parents. In order to create the environment for change in Martinsville, structures

must be created to bring people together toward a common cause *and* elevate the voices

of those most impacted. The "Welcome to Martinsville" campaign serves as a way to

orient newcomers to the rich history of this town, in an attempt to invest them in the

modes of operation valued by this town. The "Shop Local" and "Fair Trade" campaigns

are great examples of ways Martinsville as a town attempts to guide the behavior of its

citizens. The equity audit is a way to liberate data detailing the experience of going to

Martinsville High School and is an attempt at holding the school, district and town

accountable for sustaining some of the values this town holds so dear, namely a great,

diverse school system.

Conclusion

There is no question that there is an achievement gap at MHS[10], and that this gap

transcends traditional explanations to explain the disparate outcomes between black and

white students. Martinsville High School and places like it provide interesting places to

examine this gap given its racial and social class diversity.

This research began with a literature review to examine the theories to explain the

academic achievement gap, combined with literature on the black middle class, in an

attempt to better understand how to raise the achievement levels of black students in

---

[10] NJDOE School Report Card

mixed-race, suburban, middle-class high schools. Further, this research employed Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to make the argument that the academic achievement gap in mixed-race suburban high schools was more about race than about class.

The literature on the achievement gap is vast, offering multiple perspectives on the causes and remedies of disparate outcomes among groups of students. This research did not attempt to challenge the current literature, however, this research raises questions about some of the prominent theories regarding minority student achievement. In particular, John Ogbu's theories on the burden of acting white and oppositional culture should be closely examined. Data from student focus groups indicate that black students are not concerned with "acting white" based on high academic performance. Furthermore, academically disengaged students are not operating in opposition to the dominant culture as a condition of maintaining an authentic minority status. Rather, this study found that even academically disengaged students acknowledge the value of high academic performance—for themselves and their peers—however they are unable to capitalize on academic goals with the tools they possess in the school they attend.

In this regard, Edmund Gordon's theories about the use and structure of supplemental programs are applicable, as there are specific soft skills and academic skills which minority students are lacking. From confidence to study skills to academic tutoring, there are ways in which the black students at Martinsville High School would have benefited from access to some of the knowledge and dispositions more affluent students receive everyday—either at home or through paid services. Given the gaps in achievement, access to additional cultural and social capital would likely impact the

capacity of black students in Martinsville. However, the findings of this study raise

questions about the applicability of this theory. Martinsville seems reluctant to fully

embrace the value of its diversity (best demonstrated by the segregated spaces rampant

throughout the high school), which casts doubt on how increased cultural capital would

improve the outcomes for Martinsville's black students. To fully test this, one would

have to research which black students are doing well and which are not. However, the

absence of black students (of any class level) in the school's most well-regarded

academic spaces (PARLIAMENT@MHS and High Honors/AP classes) does little to

support increases in capital as a way to close the achievement gap. This highlights a hole

in Gordon's argument about the utility of supplemental programs.

Due to the existence of raced based educational processes and outcomes, race,

Critical Race Theory proved to be a useful theoretical framework because the six tenets

require that race and the use of race remain at the center of this research. Given the

history of Martinsville, the district's desegregation efforts, and the more recent

resegregation, CRT provided the lens to look specifically at the ways race and racism

prevailed in the actions of people and the outcomes they caused. Furthermore, the use of

all six tenets of CRT in education makes a contribution to the growing field of educators

using CRT in their research. However, this research found evidence that challenged the

applicability of CRT.

There is no dispute that students and parents in Martinsville, white students and

parents in particular, used race as markers to identify the quality of learning taking place

in a specific classrooms. What is disputable is whether parents and students believed

that black students are somehow inferior and therefore are in academically inferior spaces

or if the spaces in Martinsville High School which are academically inferior are overwhelmingly populated by black students. Because this research did not interview parents, this question is somewhat beyond the scope of the research. However, based on student focus groups, the latter seems a more accurate description of the connections being made between race and academic rigor. Students, both white and black, described the countless times that their preference for diversity was squelched by the lack of rigor in lower level classes.   The single issue of a lack of rigor in lower level classes is an issue of pedagogy and school leadership. This issue is complicated when the majority of the students who populate these classes are black. For a school and community to allow and maintain such levels of disproportionate underrepresentation of black and white students in high- and low-level classes suggests the presence of institutionalized racism. CRT proved helpful in examining this trend. However, the extent to which parents and students are making academic decisions *in response to* the racialized conditions created by institutionalized racism is only partially addressed by CRT. This does not deny the impact of race in the decision-making process of Martinsville parents and students, but there also seems an academic motivation. An additional theoretical framework to offer a critical pedagogical lens would have been helpful alongside CRT.

Study Limitations

This study looked to create a program to improve minority achievement in a mixed-race, suburban high school. While the study design allowed the researcher to merge theory and practice by pinpointing the potential impact of popular theories on improving achievement, there were limitations to the study. First, Martinsville has actually implemented two programs that offered great school-wide initiatives to improve academic outcomes for all students: Equity Project and the Global Humanities Program.

While each of these programs has had varied degrees of success overtime, the history of these programs would contribute greatly to telling this story. Their absence is a limitation of this study. There were a number of rumors regarding the creation, implementation and operation of both programs. What would be helpful is to gain a clear understanding of what the programs were intended to do, the degree to which they were able to achieve and sustain success, and the ways the school, district, and community impacted the success of the programs. The creation of a logic model for each program would compare and contrast the program model suggested by this research and those two models.

The second limitation of this study is the absence of student-level, student achievement data. Despite IRB approval to have access to this data, and many conversations with the principal to secure the data; student-level data was never provided. This data is a missing crucial piece as it would allow me to demonstrate the ways race and class intersect with respect to the achievement gap. Without it, there is no way to say—with absolute certainty—that the achievement gap in Martinsville is not actually a gap caused by the performance levels of poor and/or special education students.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the questions posed by the findings of this research, three additional studies are recommended: (1) to examine the outcomes of students by the path taken through Martinsville Public Schools; (2) to identify the choices black students make upon reading the high school; and (3) conduct classroom observations.

There are multiple pathways through the Martinsville Public School system. This research did not look at achievement gaps at the elementary and middle schools levels

over time, which is a limitation of the research. As such, the first suggested study should examine the academic experience and outcomes of students who take one track versus another. The most regarded path goes through two gifted and talented magnet schools, then on to the visual and performing arts middle school. It is worth noting that all three of these schools are located in the predominantly black section of Martinsville, and were created to as a part of the districts integration plan. Future research should examine the academic outcomes of students in this track versus students in other tracks and how they affect track placement in the ninth grade at Martinsville High School.

Associated with looking at the success of students by track, future research should examine the decline in the percentage of black students over time, with a particular focus on the Johnson – Summit – Mount Hope track. Black students make up 41.6% of Johnson, 37.1% of Summit, 33% of Mount Hope and (anecdotally) less than 20% of PARLIAMENT@MHS and a small percent of AP class enrollment. The research should examine the experience of these students and how that experience impacts the choice they make regarding PARLIAMENT@MHS and AP classes. Arguably, these students possess the academic skills and social capital to transition into top tier classes when they arrive at Martinsville High School, so the lack of students taking this path must be caused by some phenomenon. The details of such an occurrence would make a great contribution to understanding the experience of these students.

A third recommended study would conduct classroom observations to examine firsthand the quality of instruction and interaction across instructional levels. A component of this study should look at the actual distinctions between courses at the College Prep, Honors, High Honors and AP levels. While there is actual language about

this in the student handbook, pinpointing the differences between student engagement, rigor, teacher quality, and academic outcomes would be a great contribution.

The intention of this study was to create a program logic model to improve the academic achievement levels of all students. In Martinsville, the first step to fulfilling this is to raise the achievement levels of black students. While this study highlights a number of ways Martinsville High School is disadvantaging black students, this study also highlights the commitment many teachers and students have to making Martinsville High School a truly integrated community. This is a crucial time for Martinsville as the opportunity is present for the district and school leadership to take key steps toward improving the academic experience and performance of all students in Martinsville, black and white. In the absence of a strategic vision and an effective leader, it seems unlikely that the school will be able to improve the performance of black students or any other students. Martinsville High School has a great opportunity to set a vision of high academic excellence for all its students. Anything short of that will not only impact black students, but white students as well.

Works Cited

(1980). *Martinsville's 1980 Community Audit.* Martinsville.

(2005). The Idea of Supplementary Education. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement* (pp. 320-334). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Altenbaugh, R. J. (2003). *The American People and Their Education.* Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education.

Anand, B., Fine, M., Perkins, T., & Surrey, D. S. (2002). *Keeping the Struggle Alive.* New York City: Teachers College Press.

Anand, B., Fine, M., Perkins, T., & Surrey, D. S. (2002). *Keeping the Struggle Alive.* New York City: Teachers College Press.

Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the Street.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Anderson, J. (1988). *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

AVID. (n.d.). Retrieved August 17, 2011, from AVID Elective: http://www.avid.org/sta_avidelective.html

AVID. (n.d.). *What is AVID*. Retrieved May 5, 2011, from AVID: http://www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html

Barista. (2010, January 14). *Martinsville Board of Ed Reviewing School Assignment By Zone*. Retrieved March 29, 2013, from Barista Kids: http://kids.baristanet.com/2010/01/Martinsville_board_of_ed_reviewing_school_assignment_by_zone/

Berg, B. L. (2007). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Bjerklie, S. (2012, February 7). *PARLIAMENT@MHS and EQUITY PROJECT: Is It a Black and White Issue?* Retrieved March 13, 2013, from The Bull at Martinsville High School: http://thebullmhs.com/2012/02/07/Parliament@MHS-and-Equity Project-is-it-a-black-and-white-issue/

Bourdieu, P. (2007). The Forms of Capital. In A. R. Sadovnik, *Sociology of Education* (pp. 83-95). New York: Routledge.

Bowen, W., & Bok, D. (2000). *The Shape of the River.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boykin, A. W. (2002). Talent Development, Cultural Deep Structure, and School Reform: Implications for African Immersion Initiatives. In S. J. Denbo, & L. Moore Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving Schools for African American Students* (pp. 81-94). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

Boykin, A. W., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the Opportunity to Learn.* Alexandria: ASCD.

Brattesani, K. A., Weinstein, R. S., & Marshall, H. H. (1984). Student Perceptions of Differential Teacher Treatment as Moderators of Teacher Expectation Effects. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*(2), 236-247.

Bridglall, B. (2005). After-School Programs, Youth Development, and Other Forms of Supplementary Education. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education: The Hiddle Curriculum of High Academic Achievement* (pp. 35-62). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bridglall, B. L., & Gordon, E. W. (2005). The Institutionalization of Supplementary Education. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum oh High Academic Achievement* (pp. 275-294). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Bridglall, B. L., Green, A., & Mejia, B. (2005). A Taxonomy of Supplementary Education Programs. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement* (pp. 151-189). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Brooks, R. L. (2009). *Racial Justice in the Age of Obama.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Brousselle, A., & Champagne, F. (2011). Program theory evaluation: Logic analysis. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 34*, 69-78.

Carter, P. L. (2005). *Keepin' it Real: School Success Beyond Black and White.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Carter, P. L. (2005). *Keepin' It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Chenoweth, K. (2008). *"It's Being Done": Academic Success in Unexpected Schools.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Comer, J. (1988). Educating poor minority children. *Scientific American*, 42-48.

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). Foreward. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (pp. xiii-xxxii). New York: The New Press.

Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review, 96*(4), 608-630.

Darling-Hammond. (1997). *The Right to Learn.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Davidson, E. J. (2005). *Evaluation Methodology Basics: The Nuts and Bolts of Sound Evaluation.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

De Avila, J. (2012, March 30). *Martinsville Still a Draw for City Implants*. Retrieved February 10, 2013, from Wall Street Journal: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB100014240527023034047045773135811185861 06.html

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004, June/July). "So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There": Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in Education. *Educational Researcher*, 26-31.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction.* New York: New York University Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other People's Children.* New York: The New Press.

Denbo, S. J., & Beaulieu, L. M. (2002). Introduction. In S. J. Denbo, & L. M. Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving Schools for African American Students: A Reader for Educational Leaders* (pp. xi-xv). Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Dixson, A. (2011, April). Democracy Now? Race, Education, and Black Self-Determination. *Teachers College Record, 113*(4), 811-830.

Dixson, A. D. (2008, July 10). What is Critical Race Theory in Education? *Summer Institute; The Metropolitan Center for Urban Educaiton at New York University.* New York.

Elmore, R. F. (2010, January/February). "I Used to Think...and Now I Think...". *Harvard Education Letter, 26*(1), 1-3.

Fabiano, G. (2011, May 9). Englewood program works to lift underachieving students. *Bergen Record*.

Fair Trade Towns, U.S.A. (2008, October). *Martinsville, NJ*. Retrieved February 11, 2013, from Fair Trade Towns, U.S.A.: http://fairtradetownsusa.org/towns/nj/Martinsville/

Ferguson, R. F. (2002). *What Doesn't Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High-Achieving Suburban Schools.* Harvard University, Wiener Center for Social Policy; John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Ferguson, R. F. (2003). Teachers' Perceptions and Expectations and the Black-White Test Score Gap. *Urban Education, 38*(4), 460-507.

Ferguson, R. F. (2007). *Toward Excellence with Equity: An Emerging Vision for Closing the Achievement Gap.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of 'acting white.'. *Urban Review, 18*(3), 176-206.

Gale, D. E. (2006). *Greater New Jersey.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gamoran, A. (1987, June). The Stratification of High School Learning Opportunities. *Sociology of Education, 60*(3), 135-155.

Geronimus, A. T., Hicken, M., & Bound, J. (2006, May). "Weathering" and Age Pattern of Allostatic Load Scores Among Blacks and Whites in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health, 96*(5), 826-833.

Gordon, E. W. (2007, January). Supplementary Education: Educating and Developing the Whole Child. (H. Harding, Interviewer)

Gordon, E. W., & Bridglall, B. L. (2005). The Challenge, Context, and Preconditions of Academic Development at High Levels. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education* (pp. 10-34). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Gordon, E. W., Bridglall, B. L., & Saa Meroe, A. (2005). Preface. In E. W. Gordon, B. L. Bridglall, & A. Saa Meroe (Eds.), *Supplementary Education: The Hidden Curriculum of High Academic Achievement* (pp. ix-x). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Gosa, T. L., & Alexander, K. L. (2007, February). Family (Dis)Advantage and the Educational Prospects of Better Off African American Youth: How Race Still Matters. *Teachers College Record, 109*(2), 285-321.

Gosa, T. L., & Alexander, K. L. (2007, February). Family (Dis)Advantage and the Educational Prospects of Better Off African American Youth: How Race Still Matters. *Teachers College Record, 109*(2), 285-321.

Grissmer, D., Flanagan, A., & Williamson, S. (1998). Why Did the Black-White Score Gap Narrow in the 1970s and 1980s? In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (pp. 182-226). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Hedges, L. V., & Nowell, A. (1999). Changes in the Black-White Gap in Achievement Test Scores. *Sociology of Education*, 111-135.

Hedges, V. L., & Nowell, A. (1998). Black-White Test Score Convergence since 1965. In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (pp. 149-181). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Hilliard, A. (1974). Restructuring teacher education for multicultural imperatives. In W. Hunter (Ed.), *Multicultural education through competency-based teacher education* (pp. 40-55). Washington, DC: AACTE.

Houston, P. (2001, February). Superintendents for the 21st Century: It's not just a job, it's a calling. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 428-433.

Hu, W. (2009, October 30). *For Debate: Who Picks School Board*. Retrieved February 12, 2013, from New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/01/nyregion/01Martinsville.html?_r=0

M-PREP. (2010). *About Us: M-PREP*. Retrieved March 11, 2011, from M-PREP Website: http://M-Prepprograms.org/about/index.html

Jackson, K. (1985). *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Y. (2011). *The Pedagogy of Confidence: Inspiring High Intellectual Performance in Urban Schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (1998). America's Next Achievement Test: Closing the Black-White Test Score Gap. *American Prospect*, 44-53.

Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (1998). The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction. In C. Jencks, & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (pp. 1-55). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Jussim, L., & Kolb, K. J. (1994, September). Teacher Expectations and Underachieving Gifted Children. *Roeper Review, 17*(1), 26-30.

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, M. S. (2009). *Preserving Strong and Integrated Schools in Martinsville.* Ohio State University.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1990). Culturally relevant teaching. *The College Board Review*, 20-25.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2002). But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. In S. J. Denbo, & L. Moore Beaulieu (Eds.), *Improving Schools for African American Students* (pp. 95-102). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). Just What is Critical Race Theory and What's it Doing in a Nice Field Like Education? In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 17-50). New York: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. F. (1995, Fall). Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Leverett, L. (2007). Letter from the Executive Editor. *Strategies, 13*(1).

Lew, J. (2006). *Asian Americans in Class: Charting the Achievement Gap Among Korean American Youth.*

Lew, J. (2007, February). A Structural Analysis of Success and Failure of Asian Americans: A Case of Korean Americans in Urban Schools. *Teachers College Record, 109*(2), 369-390.

Lewis, A. (2007). *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the Color Line in Classrooms and Communities.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

MacLeod, J. (1987). *Ain't No Makin' it: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-income Neighborhood.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Martin, L. L. (2010). Strategic Assimilation or Creation of Symbolic Blackness: Middle-Class Blacks in Suburban Contexts. *Journal of African American Studies*, 234-246.

Mickelson, R. A. (1990, January). The Attitude-Achievement Paradox Among Black Adolescents. *Sociology of Education, 63*(1), 44-61.

Mickelson, R. A., & Everett, B. J. (2008, March). Neotracking in North Carolina: How High School Courses of Study Reproduce Race and Class-Based Stratification. *Teachers College Record, 110*(3), 535-570.

Millar, A., Simeone, R. S., & Carnevale, J. T. (2001). Logic Models: a systems tool for performance managment. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 73-81.

Minority Student Achievement Network. (2009). *MSAN Districts by Name*. Retrieved October 18, 2010, from Minority Student Achievement Network: http://www.msanetwork.org/

Minority Student Achievement Network. (2009). *MSAN Funding Sources*. Retrieved November 18, 2010, from Minority Student Achievement Network Website: http://msan.wceruw.org/membership.aspx

Martinsville High School. (2012). Program Planning Guide 2012-2013. Martinsville, NJ.

Martinsville Public Schools. (2006-2010). *Martinsville Public Schools*. Retrieved October 19, 2010, from Martinsville Magnet System: http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/WebPage.aspx?Id=21

Martinsville Public Schools. (2009, February). *Minority Student Achievement Efforts in the Schools*. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from Martinsville Public Schools: http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/Article.aspx?Id=406

Martinsville Public Schools. (2012, March). *Martinsville's Magnets.* Retrieved February 2, 2013, from Martinsville's Magnets: http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/WebPageFiles/21/booklet.pdf

Martinsville Public Schools. (2013, March 13). *Martinsville's Magnets.* Retrieved March 16, 2013, from Martinsville Magnet System: http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/WebPageFiles/2091/magnets.pdf

Morgan, S., & Mehta, J. (2004). Beyond the Laboratory: Evaluating the Survey Evidence for the Disidentification Explanation of Black-White Differences in Achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 82-101.

Noguera, P. (2004). Going Beyond the Slogans and Rhetoric. In C. Glickman (Ed.), *Letter to the Next President: What We Can Do About the Real Crisis in Public Education* (pp. 174-183). New York: Teachers College Press.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Obama, B. (2008, March). A More Perfect Union. Philadelphia.

Office of School Performance, Montgomery County Public Schools. (2007). *Enrollment in Advanced Placement Participation and Performance in SAT*. Rockville: Montgomery County Public Schools.

Ogbu, J. (1985). A cultural ecology of competence among inner-city blacks. In M. Spencer, G. Brookins, & W. Allen (Eds.), *Beginnings: Social and Affective Development of Black Children* (pp. 45-66). Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.

Ogbu, J. (2003). *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ogbu, J. (2003). *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ogbu, J. (2007). Collective Identity and the Burden of "Acting White" in Black History, Community, and Education. In A. R. Sadovnik (Ed.), *Sociology of Education-A Critical Reader* (pp. 355-377). New York: Routledge.

Orr, A. J. (2003, October). Black-White Differences in Achievement: The Importance of Wealth. *Sociology of Education, 76*(4), 291-304.

Panasonic Foundation. (2006, December). Instruction at the Core. *Strategies, 12*(1).

Parker, L., & Lynn, M. (2002). What's Race Got To Do With It? Critical Race Theory's Conflict With and Connections to Qualitative Research Methodology and Epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 7-22.

Pattillo-McCoy, M. (1999). *Black Picket Fences.* Chicago.

Perry, T. (2003). Achieveing in Post Civil-Rights America. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard III, *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students* (pp. 87-108). Boston: Beacon Press.

Perry, T. (2003). Competing Theories of Group Achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard III, *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African-American Students* (pp. 52-86). Boston: Beacon Press.

Perry, T. (2003). Up From the Parched Earth: Toward a Theory of African-American Achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard III, *Young, Gifted and Black* (pp. 1-10). Boston: Beacon Press.

Pine, G., & Hilliard III, A. (1990, April). Rx for racism: Imperatives for America's schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 593-600.

Prospect, A. (1998, November/December). The Black-White Test Score Gap. *American Prospect*, 62-73.

Roscigno, V. (1998). Race and the reproduction of educational disadvantage. *Social Forces, 76*(3), 1103.

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Rubie-Davies, C. M. (2010). Teacher expectations and perceptions of student attributes: Is there a relationship? *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 121-135.

Rubin, B., Yonemura Wing, J., Noguera, P., Fuentes, E., Liou, D., Rodriguez, A., et al. (2006). Structuring Inequality at Berkeley High. In P. A. Noguera, & J. Yonemura Wing (Eds.), *Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools* (pp. 29-87). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Singham, M. (1998, September). The Canary in the Mine: The Achievement Gap Between Black and White Students. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 9-15.

Singleton, G. E., & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Singleton, G., & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous Conversations About Race.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc.

Stanton-Salazar, R. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(1), 1-39.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youth. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(1), 1-40.

Steele, C. M. (2009). A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 163-189). New York: Routledge.

Stubblefield, A. (2009, July). The Entanglement of Race and Cognitive Dis/Ability. *Metaphilosophy, 40*(3-4), 531-551.

Taylor, E. (2009). The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 1-16). New York: Routledge.

Johnson, T. (2009, February 2). *Minority High Achievement Report.* Retrieved March 13, 2011, from Department of Instruction; Martinsville Public Schools: http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/WebPage.aspx?Id=16

Johnson, T. (2007, April 4). *STARS*. Retrieved August 17, 2011, from
http://www.Martinsville.k12.nj.us/WebPageFiles/623/stars01.html

Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration Interrupted.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Warikoo, N., & Carter, P. (2009). Cultural Explanations for Racial and Ethnic
Stratification in Academic Achievement: A Call for a New and Improved Theory.
Review of Educational Research, 79(1), 366-394.

Waters, M. C. (1999). *Black Identities.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Weinstein, R. S. (1985). Student Mediation of Classroom Expectancy Effects. In J. B.
Dusek (Ed.), *Teacher Expectancies* (pp. 329-352). Hillsdale, New Jersey.

Wright, G. (1998). *Afro-Americans in New Jersey.* Trenton: New Jersey Historical
Commission.

Zamudio, M. M., Russell, C., Rios, F. A., & Bridgeman, J. L. (2011). *Critical Race
Theory Matters: Education and Ideology.* New York: Routledge.

Zeichner, K. M., & Hoeft, K. (1996). Teacher Socialization for Cultural Diversity. In
Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*
(pp. 525-547). New York: Macmillan.

Appendix A: Academic Outcomes Over Time

MHS HSPA Math (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	90.8	87	92.6	95.4	93.5	95.6	93.3	93.5	95.4	96.3
Black	48.4	48.3	59.1	60.5	61.8	52.3	60.3	66	60.5	60.2
Econ Dis	44.1	26.5	47.9	56.5	45.4	44.2	55.79	56.9	56.5	52.5
B/W Gap	42.4	38.7	33.5	34.9	31.7	43.3	33	27.5	34.9	36.1
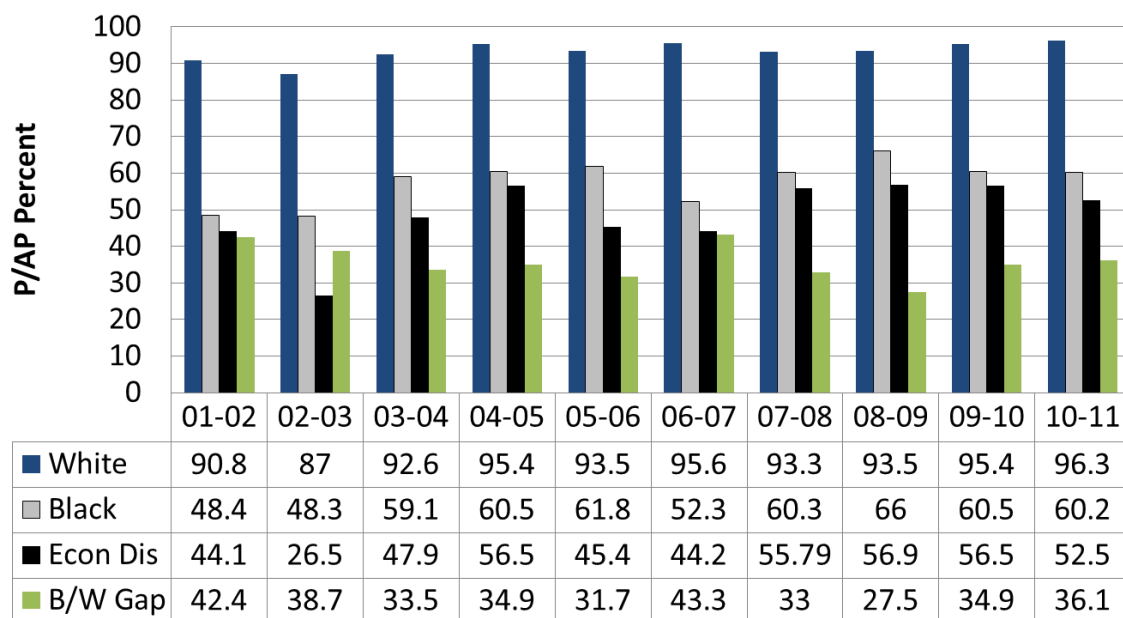
Table 8. MHS Math HSPA Scores P/AP, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Literacy (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
White	89.5	95.3	95.1	97.2	97.4	98.7	95.9	97	98.4	98.2
Black	71.5	69	78.1	79.1	80	78.9	77.3	79.3	78.6	88.1
Econ Dis	65	44.1	66.2	73.9	66.7			73.8	73.1	80.8
B/W Gap	18	26.3	17	18.1	17.4	19.8	18.6	17.7	19.8	10.1
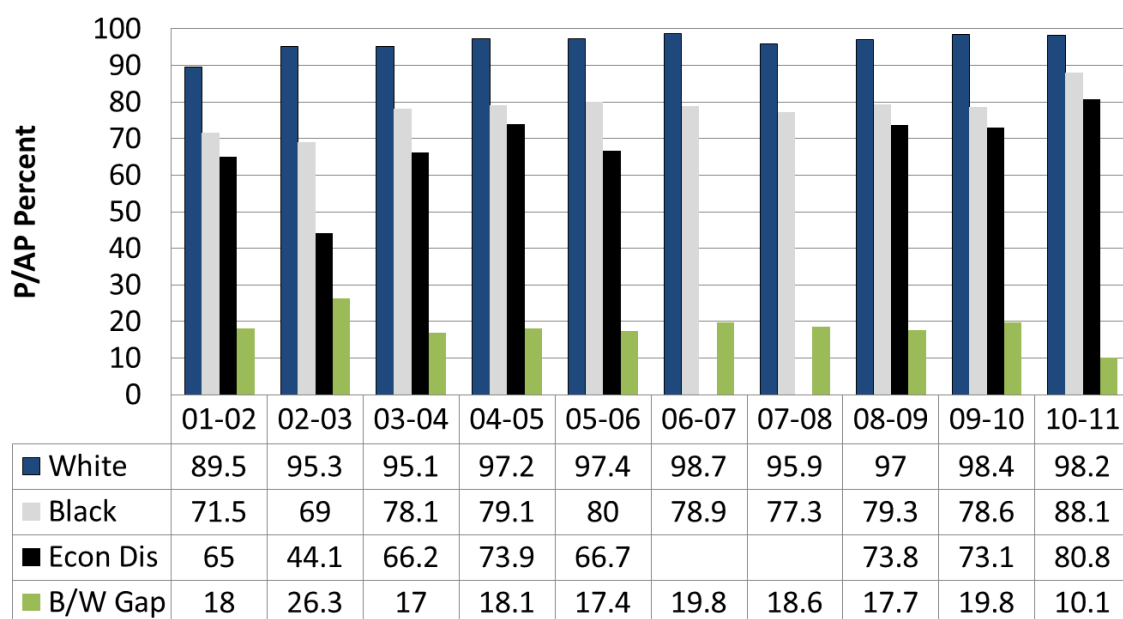
Table 9. MHS LAL HSPA Scores P/AP, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Math (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	35.5	43.5	53.9	54.8	53.9	53.2	54.8	47.6	54.8	56.6
□ Black	4.5	5.9	11.6	11	10.2	5.9	11.4	8	11	12.7
■ Econ Dis	5.1	5.9	4.2	1.4	4.5	0	6.8	1.5	1.4	11.9
■ B/W Gap	31	37.6	42.3	43.8	43.7	47.3	43.4	39.6	43.8	43.9
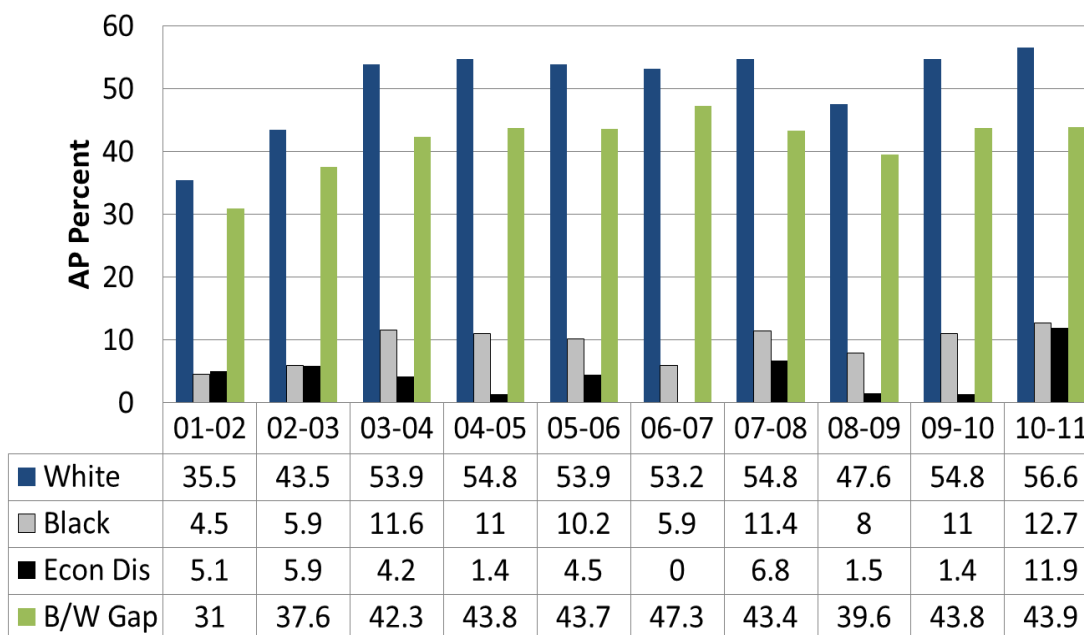
Table 10. MHS Math HSPA Advanced Proficiency Scores, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Literacy (Gr. 11)

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	26.8	29.8	34.8	50.2	49.8	47.8	22.3	31.6	49	48.4
□ Black	8.2	6.4	8.2	9.2	10.3	11	8	9.5	7.5	13.5
■ Econ Dis	3.3	2.9	4.2	1.4	6.1			4.6	3	12.5
■ B/W Gap	18.6	23.4	26.6	41	39.5	36.8	14.3	22.1	41.5	34.9
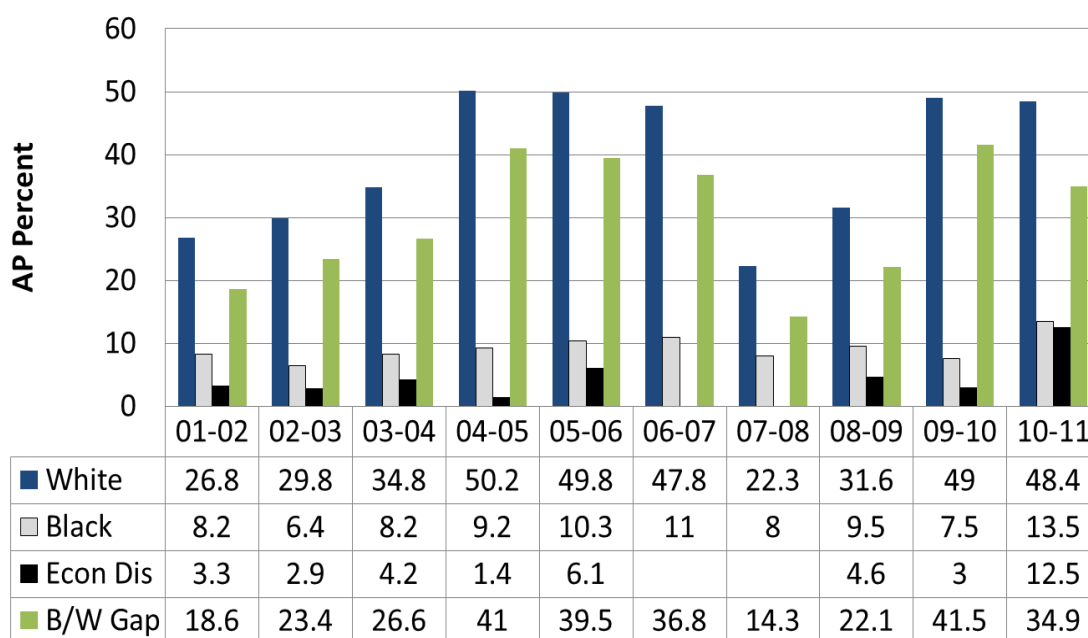
Table 11. MHS LAL HSPA Advanced Proficiency Rates, New Jersey Department of Education Report Card Data; http://education.state.nj.us/rc/historical.html

MHS HSPA Math Proficiency Rate

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	55.3	49	38.7	40.6	39.6	42.4	38.5	45.9	40.6	39.7
▢ Black	43.9	43.5	47.5	49.5	51.6	46.4	48.9	58	49.5	47.5
■ Econ Dis	39	42.4	43.7	55.1	40.9	44.4	48.9	55.4	55.1	40.6
■ B/W Gap	11.4	5.5	-8.8	-8.9	-12	-4	-10.4	-12.1	-8.9	-7.8

MHS HSPA LAL Proficiency Rate

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	62.7	65.5	60.3	47	47.6	50.9	73.6	65.4	49.9	49.8
▢ Black	63.3	62.6	69.9	69.9	69.7	67.9	69.3	69.8	71.1	74.6
■ Econ Dis	61.7	41.2	62	72.5	60.6			69.2	70.1	68.3
■ B/W Gap	-0.6	2.9	-9.6	-22.9	-22.1	-17	4.3	-4.4	-21.2	-24.8

MHS HSPA Math Partial Proficiency Rates

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	9.2	13.1	7.4	4.6	6.5	4.3	6.8	6.4	4.6	3.7
▨ Black	51.6	51.8	47.5	39.5	38.2	47.7	39.8	34.1	39.5	39.8
■ Econ Dis	55.9	73.5	43.7	43.5	54.5	55.8	44.3	43.1	43.5	47.5
■ B/W Gap	-42.4	-38.7	-40.1	-34.9	-31.7	-43.4	-33	-27.7	-34.9	-36.1

MHS HSPA Literacy Partial Proficiency Rates

	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
■ White	10.5	4.8	4.9	2.7	2.6	1.3	4.1	3	1.7	1.8
▨ Black	28.5	31	21.9	20.9	20	21.1	22.7	20.7	21.4	11.9
■ Econ Dis	35	55.9	33.8	26.1	33.3			26.2	26.9	19.2
■ B/W Gap	-18	-26.2	-17	-18.2	-17.4	-19.8	-18.6	-17.7	-19.7	-10.1

		White			Black		
		2001	**2011**	**change**	**2001**	**2011**	**change**
Math	Adv	35.5%	56.6%	+ 59%	4.5%	12.7%	+ 182%
	Prof	55.3%	39.7%	- 28%	43.9%	47.5%	+ 23%
	Partial	9.2%	3.7%	- 60%	51.6%	39.8%	- 23%
LAL	Adv	26.8%	48.4%	+ 81%	8.2%	13.5%	+ 65%
	Prof	62.7%	49.8%	- 21%	63.3%	71.1%	+ 12%
	Partial	10.5%	1.8%	- 83%	28.5%	11.9%	- 58%

Interview Schedule

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Kaili Baucum, and I am doctoral candidate at Rutgers University studying education policy. My research interests are primarily in minority student achievement in mixed-raced, suburban school districts.

Before we begin, let me explain a little about this research project:

This is academic research that seeks to understand more improving minority student achievement in a mixed-race, suburban high school. Although I have permission from Mr. Earle and the Martinsville School Board to do this research, I am not reporting to him or anyone else in the organization. What you tell me will remain anonymous. I will use what I learn for scholarly writing but will not link specific statements with individuals.

Overall, the purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of the experience of Black students in mixed-race, suburban schools from the point of view of individuals such as you.

Basic Rules and Guidelines

In an effort to encourage open and honest dialogue, there will be very limited structure to this interview. Feel free to speak your mind and please allow others to do the same. Additionally, if there is a question that you do not feel comfortable answering you are free to abstain from answering.

You'll notice that we are creating an audio recording of this conversation. The recording will allow me to facilitate this conversation without the added distraction of note-taking, and will allow me reflect upon the details of the conversation while engaging in the analysis phase of this project.

Please rest assured, your comments will not be linked to you in any way and will not be provided to your students, their families, your co-workers, administrators, the principal or any district officials.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Questions

1. What types of educational opportunities exist for students at Martinsville High School?
    Probe: Do you think the opportunities are the same for all students?
    Probe: Do all students take advantage of the opportunities?

        Probe: What students take advantage of the opportunities and which do not?

2. Think about the students who are successful; what makes them successful? What do they do that makes them successful? Do teachers or the school make them successful? How or how not?

3. Now think about students who are not successful; what makes them unsuccessful? What do they do that makes them unsuccessful? What do they do that makes them unsuccessful? Could their teachers or the school help them be more successful? How?

4. Across the country, there is a phenomenon called the *Academic Achievement Gap*, which means that in most places (on average) white students get higher grades, higher SAT scores, take higher level classes, and get into more selective colleges than Black students. Do you agree that this phenomenon exists? Do you see it as a problem? Do you think it exists in Martinsville?

5. For the places where there is actually an achievement gap; could something be done? Should something be done? Why or why not?
        Probe: What could be done?
        Probe: What should be done?

6. Martinsville has implemented a number of programs to help improve minority student achievement (AVID, M-PREP, STARs, etc.), what do you think about these programs?
        Probe: Do you think these programs are necessary? Why or why not?

7. What programs would you create to help minority students achieve at Martinsville High School?
        Probe: What students would you target to participate?
        Probe: What activities would be required?

Thank you very much for your time and participation. If you can think of anything else that you would like to add, please let me know.

Focus Group Guide

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Kaili Baucum, and I am doctoral candidate at Rutgers University studying education policy. My research interests are primarily in minority student achievement in mixed-raced, suburban school districts.

Before we begin, let me explain a little about this research project:

This is academic research that seeks to understand more improving minority student achievement in a mixed-race, suburban high school. Although I have permission from Mr. Earle and the Martinsville School Board to do this research, I am not reporting to him or anyone else in the organization. What you tell me will remain anonymous. I will use what I learn for scholarly writing but will not link specific statements with individuals.

Overall, the purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of the experience of Black and white students in mixed-race, suburban schools from the point of view of individuals such as you.

Basic Rules and Guidelines

In an effort to encourage open and honest dialogue, there will be very limited structure to this focus group. There is no particular order in which you need to speak, and I invite you to respond to my questions freely, honestly, and completely. If you feel the urge, you can also respond to or build upon a comment of one of the other participants

The only expectation is that of a polite and orderly environment where everyone will feel comfortable participating in the discussion. Feel free to speak your mind and please allow others to do the same. Additionally, if there is a question that you do not feel comfortable answering you are free to abstain from the discussion.

You'll notice that we are creating an audio recording of this conversation. The recording will allow me to facilitate this conversation without the added distraction of note-taking, and will allow me reflect upon the details of the conversation while engaging in the analysis phase of this project.

Please rest assured, your comments will not be linked to you in any way and will not be provided to your teachers, parents, or principal.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Questions

1. What types of educational opportunities exist for students at Martinsville High School?
   > *Probe:* Do you think the opportunities are the same for all students?
   > *Probe:* Do all students take advantage of the opportunities?
   > *Probe:* What students take advantage of the opportunities and which do not?

2. Think about the students who are successful, who get A's and B's; what makes them successful? What do they do that makes them successful? Do teachers, or the school makes them successful? How or how not?

3. Now think about students who are not successful, who are failing; what makes them unsuccessful? What do they do that makes them unsuccessful? Could their teachers or the school help them be more successful? How?

4. What about the students in the middle, students who get C's? How would you describe them?

5. Across the country, there is a phenomenon called the *Academic Achievement Gap*, which means that in most places (on average) white students get higher grades, higher SAT scores, take higher level classes, and get into more selective colleges than Black students. Do you agree that this phenomenon exists? Do you see it as a problem? Do you think it exists in Martinsville?

6. For the places where there is actually an achievement gap; could something be done? Should something be done? Why or why not?
   > *Probe:* What could be done?
   > *Probe:* What should be done?

7. Martinsville has implemented a number of programs to help improve minority student achievement (AVID, M-PREP, STARs, etc.), what do you think about these programs?
   > *Probe:* Do you think these programs are effective? Why or why not?

8. What would you include in a program created to help minority students achieve at Martinsville High School?
   > *Probe:* Who would you target to participate?
   > *Probe*: What activities would be required?

Now, I want to talk a little about what it's like to go to mixed-race school.

9. What is it like to go to a mixed-race school?
   Probe: How "mixed" do you think MHS is?
   Probe: What is the best thing about going to a mixed-race school? The worst?

10. Do you know people who go to schools with mostly one race (like an all-black or all-white school)? How do you think their experience is different than yours?
    Probe: Which school would you prefer? Why?

11. Do you interact with black/white students? When? How?
    Probe: Does Martinsville High School do anything to encourage inter-racial interaction? If so, what? If not, should they?

12. What questions and/or advice would you offer Principal Earle to make Martinsville High better? What advice would you offer your teachers? Your classmates, both black and white?

Thank you very much for your time and participation. If you can think of anything else that you would like to add, just let me know.

Appendix C: IRB Approval

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

May 8, 2012   **P.I. Name:** Baucum
                                                                      Protocol #: E12-437

Kaili Baucum
45 Church Street, Apt B7
Montclair NJ 07042

Dear Kaili Baucum:

Notice of Exemption from IRB Review

Protocol Title: "Creating a School-Based Program for the High Academic Achievement of All Students: All
                    Means All"

The project identified above has been approved for exemption under one of the six categories noted in 45 CFR 46,
and as noted below:

Amendment to Exemption Date: 5/1/2012   **Exempt Category:**   1

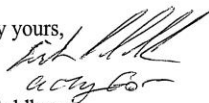This exemption is based on the following assumptions:

- **This Approval** - The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that
  was submitted.

- **Reporting** – ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems
  that arise, in the course of your research;

- **Modifications** – Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and
  approval prior to implementation;

- **Consent Form (s)** – Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if
  you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed
  documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;

Additional Notes: **Amendment to Exemption Granted on 5/1/12 for Title Change from: "A**
                             Program Evaluation of Three Montclair Minority Student Achievement
                             Programs" to: "Creating a School-Based Program for the High Academic
                             Achievement of All Students: All Means All "; Submitted District Site,
                             Authorization Letters; Language Changes to Application, Protocol, Interview &
                             Focus Guides

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.
The Federalwide Assurance (FWA) number for Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be
requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Sincerely yours,

Sheryl Goldberg
Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
gibel@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Jeffrey Backstrand

Attachment 3: Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

I am a student in the Urban Systems Program at Rutgers University-Newark, working on a Ph.D. in Education Policy. To complete my dissertation, I am conducting a study about ways to improve academic achievement among African-American students attending mixed race high schools.

A large part of my study is to create a program model for use in a school like Montclair High School. To make sure this program would work in a place like Montclair, I need feedback from minority students and teachers who actually attend or work at Montclair High School. This is where you come in; I would like to include both White and African-American students and teachers (of any racial background) in my study.

Participation is pretty simple. Students who participate will either be asked to complete a short survey or to participate in a focus group (a discussion with myself and 5-6 other students). Teachers who participate will be asked to sit for a one on one interview with myself. The focus groups and interviews will all ask questions about a program model created for Montclair High School. Students who participate in the focus groups will be given pizza during the focus group.

Any questions should be directed to the lead researcher: Kaili Baucum, kbaucum@pegasus.rutgers.edu, 201.694.9047.

Sincerely,

Kaili Baucum

APPROVED
Date: 5|1|12

Initial_____

Attachment 4 - Parental Consent: Survey

Your child has been invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Kaili Baucum, who is a doctoral candidate in the Urban Systems Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine the best way to create a program to improve minority student achievement at Montclair High School.

Approximately 20 children between the ages of 14 and 18 years old will participate in this portion of the study, and each child's participation will last approximately 60 minutes.

The study procedures include participating in a focus group with other Montclair High School students. As a part of participating in this focus group, each student will complete a short survey asking for demographic information. This focus group will be tape recorded and transcribed for use in the researcher's dissertation.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information your child and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your child's identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about your child includes: neighborhood, parents' occupation and education status, course selection, grade point average and Montclair High School Small Learning Community, for example Social Justice, Civics and Government Institute. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for 3 years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

Your child has been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be better understanding of how to improve minority student achievement at Montclair High School. However, he/she may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. Your child will receive pizza and soda while participating in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose for your child not to participate, and you may withdraw your child from participating at any time during the study activities without any penalty to your child. In addition, your child may choose not to answer any questions with which you/your child are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at kbaucum@pegasus.rutgers.edu or 201.694.9047.

If you/your child have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

APPROVED
Date: 5/1/12

Your child will also be asked if they wish to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study:

Name of Child (Print) _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

AUDIOTAPE AND/OR VIDEOTAPE / PHOTOGRAPHY ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to allow your child to participate in a research study entitled: [*Insert Study Title*] conducted by Kaili Baucum. We are asking for your permission to allow us to include audiotape (sound) recording of your child as part of that research study. You have to agree to allow your child to be recorded in order to participate in this part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team.

The recording(s) will include no names, but will include student discussions of teachers, classes, friends, parents, or their experience at Montclair High School.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet with no link to students' identity and will be retained for three years prior to the completion of the study.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record your child as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Name of Child (Print) _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

APPROVED
Date: 5|1|12

Initial_____

Attachment 5 Student Assent: Focus Group

ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
(please modify with study specifics)
Investigator: Ms. Kaili Baucum
Rutgers University
Study Title:

This assent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the researcher or your parent or teacher to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand before signing this document.

1. **Ms. Baucum is inviting you to take part in her research study. Why is this study being done?**
   We want to find out the best program to help minority student achievement at Montclair High School. Student achievement includes getting good grades, taking high honors/AP courses, scoring high on the HSPA and SAT, and getting into a good college. Between 18 and 20 students will be a part of this portion of the study.

2. **What will happen:**
   First you will participate in a focus group. A focus group is basically a group conversation where I ask you and other Montclair High School students questions about a program model for Montclair High School. After the focus group, you will fill out a short survey that tells me a little about yourself. You will not use your name anywhere on this survey or in this focus group. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer and you may take a break if you need one. With your permission indicated below, I will make an audio recording of you.

3. **What does it cost and how much does it pay?**

   You don't pay to take part in this study. We will have pizza and soda for you to make up for the time you give us.

4. **There are no foreseeable risks in taking part in this research.**
   It is unlikely that anything bad or uncomfortable will happen from participating in this research.

5. **Are there any benefits that you or others will get out of being in this study?**
   All research must have some potential benefit either directly to those that take part in it or potentially to others through the knowledge gained. The only direct benefit to you may be talking to your classmates about your high school.   The knowledge gained through this study may allow us to develop more effective programs to assist minority students at Montclair High School and other schools like it.

   It's completely up to you! Both you and your parents have to agree to allow you to take part in this study. If you choose to not take part in this study, we will honor that choice.
   No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. If you agree to take part in it and then you change your mind later, that's OK too. It's always your choice!

6. **CONFIDENTIALITY: We will do everything we can to protect the confidentiality of your records.** If we write professional articles about this research, they will never say your name or anything that could give away

APPROVED
Date: ___5|1|12___

who you are. We will do a good job at keeping all our records secret by following the rules made for researchers.

7. **Do you have any questions?** If you have any questions or worries regarding this study, or if any problems come up, you may call or email the principal investigator Ms. Baucum at: kbaucum@pegasus.rutgers.edu or 201.694.9047.

You may also ask questions or talk about any worries to the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Your parent or guardian will also be asked if they wish for you to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Please sign below if you assent (that means you agree) to participate in this study.

_____
Signature   Date

Name (Please print): _____

Investigator's Signature: _____Date: _____

Audiotape and/or Videotape / Photography Addendum to Consent form

You have already agreed to allow your child to participate in a research study entitled: [*Insert Study Title*] conducted by Kaili Baucum. We are asking for your permission to allow us to *include audiotape (sound)* as part of that research study. You have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in this part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team.

The recording(s) will include no names, but will include student discussions of teachers, classes, friends, parents, or their experience at Montclair High School.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet with no link to students' identity and will be retained for three years prior to the completion of the study.

By participating in this study/these procedures, you agree to be a study subject and you grant the investigator

APPROVED
Date: 5|1|12

named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

_____
Signature   Date

Name (Please print): _____

Investigator's Signature: _____Date: _____

APPROVED
Date: 3/1/12

Initials_____

Attachment 4:
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Kaili Baucum, who is a doctoral student in the Urban Systems Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine an effective program model for improving minority student achievement in Montclair High School and places like it.

Approximately 30 subjects between the ages of 22 and 65 years old will participate in this portion of the study, and each individual's participation will last approximately 60 minutes.

The study procedures include participating in a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes the courses you teach at Montclair High School. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

You have been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be: improved understanding of how a program can improve minority student achievement at Montclair High School and places like it. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at: kbaucum@pegasus.rutgers.edu or 201.694.9047.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

APPROVED
Date: 5/1/12

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

AUDIO ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: [Insert Study Title] conducted by Kaili Baucum. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape (sound) as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in this portion of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team.

The recording(s) will include no names, but may include identifying information such as the courses you teach and/or the students you work with.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet and labeled with subjects' name or other identifiable information and will be retained for three years.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.
Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

APPROVED
Date: 5/1/12

VITAE

Kaili Baucum

1979   Born in New Brunswick, New Jersey

1997   Graduated Plainfield High School, Plainfield, New Jersey

2001   Graduated Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; B.A., Public Policy Studies

2001- 2004   Elementary School Teacher/Teach for America, Bronx, New York

2004 – 2006   Program Director, Teach for America-Camden, New Jersey

2005   M.A.T., Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY

2006 – 2007   Managing Director, Program, Teach for America-New Jersey

2007 – 2013   Graduate Student, Rutgers University-Newark