AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF RESEGREGATION IN WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM: PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

by
Margaret Mary Crowe
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Gail Collins, EdD, Committee Chair

Tony Ryff, PhD, Committee Member

Anthony Pellegrino, PhD, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine community stakeholders’ perceptions of resegregation in Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) in North Carolina. Stakeholder perceptions of resegregation were defined as the stakeholder’s awareness of the change in the racial student demographics in WCPSS since the removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate. The theory guiding this study was critical race theory, as it is focused on societal and legal constraints placed on individuals based on race or ethnicity, which aligned with this study because stakeholder decisions regarding student school assignment policies can influence student resegregation. The central research question guiding this case study asked, “What are the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS?” Purposive and snowball sampling was used to collect data from 11 participants who belong to one of three stakeholder categories: community members with past or present outreach or advocacy work associated with the school district, past and current school administrators, and parents of past or present students enrolled in Wake County Public Schools. Data collection included individual interviews, focus groups, and a reflective questionnaire. Data analysis included interpretive readings and explanation building from the review of individual interview and focus group transcripts as well as the reflective questionnaire responses. The findings of the study showed most participants had a low-level of awareness about resegregation trends and student diversity within WCPSS. The findings of this study indicated factors other than race are potentially causing the shift in student demographics.

Keywords: segregation, desegregation, school assignment policy, resegregation, white flight
Dedication

This study is dedicated to the precious souls throughout U.S. history who were denied access to an equitable and inclusive education, to the most vulnerable and oppressed in our society, and to a future where education is focused first and foremost on the sanctity and dignity of every student and not race, ethnicity, or economic status. To God for giving me the opportunity to continue to do his work; I hope that I can continue to be an instrument to do his will in my life’s work. To my children for their support and sacrifice during this journey, I love you more than life. To my grandmothers who wanted an advanced education but sacrificed their wants to provide for their families. To Mr. Federspiel who introduced me to the concept of college when I was 12 years old. To Jay for inspiring me to finish this journey so that we can go forward and do meaningful work.
Acknowledgments

To Dr. Collins, my sincerest appreciation for taking a chance on me and this study to serve as my chair. Your tireless efforts, patience, and support during this process were instrumental in my reaching completion and removing barriers along the way. May the Lord continue to bless you and your family.

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List of Abbreviations

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1955 (Brown II, 1955)*

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1 (PICS)*

Wake County Public School System (WCPSS)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Despite more than 50 years of legislation, funding, and public outcry to ensure education equity and a diverse student population, U.S. student demographics are trending towards less diversity and increasingly segregated schools (McPherson, 2011; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Some of the most vulnerable students in the education system are unjustly receiving substandard educations in comparison to their White peers based on school assignment policies, systemic racism, and colorblindness (Frankenberg et al., 2017; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Rothstein, 2014). Less diverse classrooms correlate directly to lower academic achievement, gaps in education, and lower access to education resources for racial and ethnic minorities (Owens et al., 2016; Potter & Morris, 2017; Tienda, 2017). Recent research infers that a shift in the racial and ethnic demographics within school systems is evidence of a resegregation trend (Ayscue et al., 2016; Billingham, 2019; Davis et al., 2015). A resegregation trend should alert community and school leadership to investigate causation and to take action to address increasingly segregated schools and classrooms.

Chapter One describes the background of segregation and desegregation in the United States and specifically in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). The historical background on segregation and desegregation in the United States and in Wake County provides the baseline knowledge needed to further explore a possible resegregation within the WCPSS. Following the background of this study, I describe my motivation for conducting the exploratory case study, philosophical assumptions, and my paradigm that guide this study. The philosophical assumptions directly correlate to the need to address issues of potential inequity and injustice in education. The problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study are discussed
to provide a framework for the direction of the study. The central question and sub-questions are included, followed by a definition of terms used in the study. The chapter concludes with a summary.

**Background**

The United States has struggled to establish social policies to ensure equal access to education for minorities since the creation of the United States. Laws preventing the education of free Blacks or enslaved Blacks prior to the Civil War were prevalent, but mainly concentrated in the South. Educational opportunities for Blacks in post-Civil War America were limited and segregated. The Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) provided statutory authority to separate students by race. With the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, school districts were forced to desegregate to ensure diverse schools with equal access to education for Black students. Because of massive resistance campaigns built on racism, desegregation of students took nearly two decades to achieve. For the next three decades, desegregation policies remained intact nationally. With additional federal rulings and the Supreme Court’s decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle* (2007) making it unconstitutional to establish school assignment policies solely based on race, demographics in public schools nationwide are increasingly segregated (Frankenberg et al., 2017; McPherson, 2011; Orfield, & Frankenberg, 2014). Despite efforts since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to desegregate schools, the ability of school systems to ensure equal access to education for racial and ethnic minority students has been inconsistent at best (Frankenberg et al., 2017).

**Historical Context**

Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have been subject to a long history of unequal treatment under the law. Free Blacks in the North were rarely allowed an education.
Laws in the South prevented enslaved Blacks from being educated. Reconstruction efforts introduced education for freed slaves and somewhat expanded on educational opportunities for Blacks in the North. Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1865 to assist with Reconstruction efforts, as well as provide aid and education to freed Blacks (Foner, 2015). The bureau was responsible for constructing over 3,000 schools that provided education for over 150,000 students (Foner, 2015). The Bureau’s efforts during Reconstruction provided for minimal education for Blacks, but also laid the foundational practice of separating Black students from White students in separate educational settings.

By 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* for separate but equal facilities and accommodations for Black and Whites; this ruling is often regarded as one of the worst Supreme Court decisions on an issue of racial equality (Ayscue et al., 2016; McPherson, 2011). While the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was not directly related to education, the result of the Supreme Court decision affected schools nationally. Social norms segregated educational settings by race; *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) provided statutory permission for separate schools for Black and White students. Public schools in the United States remained legally segregated for nearly 60 years until additional Supreme Court rulings on school segregation.

During the nearly six decades after *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), there were numerous court cases addressing inequities and segregation in education (*Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County*, 1899; *Berea College v. Kentucky*, 1908; *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 1938; *Briggs v. Elliot*, 1952; & *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 1954). Additionally, the founding of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 as well as the collaborative work between the NAACP and civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall beginning
in the 1930s until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) established the precedents needed to bring a formal case addressing the unconstitutionality of segregation in schools (Dieble, 2016; Tran, 2019).

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregating students by race was unconstitutional (McDermott et al., 2015; McPherson, 2011). The federal court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) led to the mandatory desegregation of U. S. public schools across the country (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). The process of desegregation did not happen immediately and many school districts were forced by additional court orders to desegregate. The following year, for example, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education II* (1955) to address the resistance by states to desegregate. The court order stated to desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” but this language did little to expedite desegregation, and leaders were empowered to loosely interpret the meaning of “with all deliberate speed.”

Initially, North Carolina resisted the Supreme Court orders to desegregate (McMillian et al., 2018). Instead of deliberately developing state and local level plans to integrate schools, North Carolina adopted the Pearsall Plan of 1956. The plan allowed White families to reject desegregated schools if they deemed the school environment “intolerable” (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987). While most North Carolina school districts resisted integration by all means available, the Raleigh City School System in Wake County voted in 1960 to end segregation beginning with one student (Sharpe, 2014). In 1960, less than 2% of North Carolina school districts were desegregated (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987). The process to desegregate in Wake County was deliberate, but unhurried, and until 1976, the city schools in Wake County and the WCPSS operated as separate systems (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). Of note, the creation
and maintenance of city school districts within county school boundaries allowed for segregation of students. Prior to 1976, the city schools in Wake County educated a predominately Black student population. The merger with the WCPSS allowed for purposeful desegregation of all schools within Wake County. This practice can still be seen in school systems around the United States today.

With the merger in 1976 of the city schools in Wake County and the WCPSS, desegregation of the schools in Wake County outpaced other districts in North Carolina to become a known as a model of desegregation (McDermott et al., 2015; McMillian et al., 2018) until the early 1990s with the removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate (Ayscue et al., 2016). A shift from a race-based school assignment policy to a residence-based (also known as a socioeconomics-based) school assignment policy in Wake County School District in the early 2000s resulted in racial and ethnic student demographics shifting away from the former 15% to 40% minority-to-White ratio (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018) to a dozen schools in the WCPSS with a White population below 10% (WCPSS, 2021). The emergence of less diverse schools is potentially indicative of a resegregation within the school district.

Social Context

To fully understand the complexities associated with ensuring diversity within school systems, it is important to address the phenomenon of race as a social construct and why individuals are labeled by race and ethnicity in the first place. There are no genetic tests that can identify a person by race or ethnicity (Wailoo et al., 2012). Western Europeans justified enslaving Africans and conquering indigenous people in North and South America based on the belief Africans and American indigenous people were inferior to Whites (Sussman, 2014). Research findings of 19th century anthropologist Josiah Nott claimed evidence of the inferiority
of Blacks (Lowance, 2018). The 400-year enslavement of Africans and Blacks in America further solidified the social construct of race and superiority of Whites (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

In 2020, the social construct of race was woven into every aspect of American culture, policies, and practices. In looking at the social construct of race and education today, every public school district in America reports student demographic information broken down by race and ethnicity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). While this is common practice, it may be a practice of habit versus tracking the information to make meaningful decisions on education policies and programs. In the WCPSS, racial and ethnic student demographics were historically used to ensure diverse schools; however, beginning in the early 1990s with the removal of court-order mandates to desegregate, the WCPSS has experienced a shift in student demographics away from diversity and into more homogenous schools (Ayscue et al., 2016).

Why do diverse schools matter? Ensuring racial and ethnic diversity in schools is more complex and important than merely balancing the numbers. The benefits of diverse schools include increased academic outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities (Lewis et al., 2018; Zucker & Patterson, 2018), increased positive mental health benefits (Graham, 2018), and an increased sense of community among racial and ethnic minorities when given the opportunity to attend more diverse schools (Graham, 2018; Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018). Additionally, it is important to recognize inequities among students simply based on a human level and the right to be recognized and treated as an equal. If there is a resegregation trend occurring that separates students based on race or ethnicity, community stakeholders have a responsibility to guarantee access to equal educational opportunities for all students. Although there is no legal mandate that requires school or community leaders to care about the rights of students, the implementation and enforcement of equal rights within any aspect of society still relies heavily on legal mandates.
Researchers suggest that resegregation by race is occurring in schools nationally (Ayscue & Orfield, 2015; Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Davis et al., 2015). In particular, more recent research has focused on larger school districts, which typically have a more diverse student population. This exploratory case study took place in Wake County, North Carolina, in the WCPSS. Once a model for desegregation, current research points to a potential resegregation trend within the WCPSS (Ayscue et al., 2016; McDermott et al., 2015). Wake County is a large school district in North Carolina and one of the largest school districts in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Wake County’s student population growth increased nearly 13% since 2011 with a student population over 160,000 (WCPSS, 2021). With more than half of the student population identifying as a racial or ethnic minority, any potential resegregation trends are in need of further evaluation. A segregation of White students, currently the minority in the WCPSS, from racial and ethnic minorities would result in enclaves of all-White schools. This is particularly concerning as segregated schools characteristically have lower academic performance and higher levels of poverty (Ayscue et al., 2016; Kucsera et al., 2015). As a community, Wake County stakeholders have contributed in meaningful ways over the past 20 years to promote racial and ethnic diversity within their school system.

Theoretical Context

While the segregation and desegregation of students based on race was well-documented in history books and case law (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education, 1954; Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896), modern day resegregation of students is not so easily defined or validated. Changing demographics within school districts may indeed lead to an unintentional increase in segregated schools. However, linking changing demographics and segregation and desegregation practices
in schools throughout U.S. history requires additional consideration and exploration to determine if there is a causal link. The critical difference between segregation (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896) and desegregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) practices of the past and a potential resegregation of students today is the absence of a purposeful decision by individuals in power to change the school demographics based on race or ethnicity.

Critical race theory specifically addresses the idea of less overt ways of discriminating based on race (Bell, 1995). The underpinnings of critical race theory call attention to policies and programs that are covertly racist and may lead to processes or policies that negatively affect individuals based on race or ethnicity (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). One of the tenets of critical race theory rests upon the concept that only when the interests of Whites converge to promote racial equality will laws and policies benefit racial and ethnic minorities (Bell, 1995; Jackson, 2011). Interest convergence is a critical phenomenon that needs to be considered when evaluating policies and programs affecting student demographics and diversity within schools. The assumption is that racist practices occur due to a lack of understanding or ignorance about race and ethnicity, often perpetuated by the uneducated, and that “educated people are not prejudiced” (Guinier, 2004, p. 116). However, *educated* policymakers are not exempt from enacting policy and practices that benefit Whites over traditionally marginalized racial and ethnic minorities.

The interest convergence phenomenon must also be taken into consideration in post-Civil Rights era legal practices related to education. Current research findings on resegregation trends in the WCPSS outlined a purposeful resegregation of students by race and ethnicity. Considering that segregation and desegregation in schools were a result of legal mandates, it would follow that resegregation would need to be the result of laws or policies aimed at separating students by
race and ethnicity. At this time, there are no federal, state, or local laws or policies that require the resegregation of students based on race or ethnicity. However, the absence of policies or laws to promote racial equity or race-neutral policies could have contributed to inadvertent resegregation of students, potentially due to interest convergence. The absence of polices or laws aligns with the origins of critical race theory and how legislation, or the lack of legislation, works in a way to benefit Whites. Therefore, this exploratory case study sought to evaluate the understanding and perceptions of stakeholders of a potential resegregation phenomenon and possibly reveal inadvertent policies or practices that would lead to a resegregation of students.

**Situation to Self**

I have a lifelong devotion to public service and to servant leadership. As a White woman who was raised in the northern part of the United States, the topic of race and ethnicity was not a prominent part of my upbringing. I was raised in an economically depressed area where poverty was the key issue, and the population was predominantly White. The cultural norms in my community were to adopt a color-blind perspective towards race and ethnicity. Those norms still exist today and have resulted in my hometown still being predominantly White. My awareness of issues with race and ethnicity in a way that applied to programs and policy decisions emerged during my Air Force career. I spent 13 of 20 years in the service working in diversity programs that directly affected Air Force policies and programs related to minority officer recruiting, Black pilot recruiting, minority officer retention, as well as Black general officer retention.

As the Air Force representative for all of the historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic serving institutions in the southeastern part of the United States, my awareness of the inequities and injustices in education grew exponentially. After retiring from the military, and upon the autism diagnosis of my youngest child, I transitioned to the field of education.
From my experience in the K–12 classroom, and specifically special education, I became quickly aware that Black and Brown students were disproportionately placed in my special education classes with no clear indication of learning or emotional disabilities, but instead significant gaps in their education for unknown reasons. From this K–12 teaching experience, my research interests expanded into exploring issues affecting underserved student populations and social justice in education. This eventually led me to enroll in a doctoral program and a desire to complete a dissertation study looking specifically at an issue of diversity and equity in education.

My goal for this case study was to explore the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation and its effects on minority students. Three stakeholder categories were established from the following populations: community members with past or present outreach or advocacy work associated with the school district, school administrators, and parents of past students enrolled in Wake County public schools. Understanding the challenges of addressing a topic that was potentially sensitive, I strove to follow Yin’s (2014) recommendations to “be a good ‘listener’ not trapped by existing ideologies or preconceptions” and to “stay adaptive, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities” (p. 73). I also strove to remain focused on the dignity and sanctity of every person who participated in the study. Reflecting on the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, I hoped to be a “person who hears generously, responds prudently, enquires diligently, mediates attentively [to] make great progress in wisdom” (as cited in Boland, 2006, p. 468).

The first philosophical assumption I had towards this study was based on an ontological approach towards socially constructed realities (Patton, 2015) about race and the value that the participants and I placed on a resegregation phenomenon. An ontological philosophical assumption explores the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By relying on an ontological
assumption, I was able to explore and evaluate the relationships between each participant’s perception of cultural norms and social structures that may contribute to a resegregation within the school district.

The second philosophical assumption I had towards this study was based on an axiological approach towards the participants, and the overall topic of resegregation, as it pertains to “role of values in inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38). My values, as well as those of the participants, were considered in the study as they related to each individual’s social agenda (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within the argument of race as a social construct (Bell, 1995), I explored how my values impact inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as well as how the participants’ values influenced their perceptions about resegregation trends and the importance of diversity within the student population.

The paradigm guiding the study was constructivism, examining “the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others” (Patton, 2015, p. 96). In this study, I explored how community stakeholders’ perceptions about racial and ethnic demographics in the school district potentially contribute to a resegregation trend. Given the long history in Wake County of community support for desegregation and maintaining diverse schools, it was possible that stakeholders were unaware of changing racial and ethnic demographics in the school district. Before I accepted the quantitative research findings stating there was a deliberate resegregation of students occurring in the WCPSS, I needed to first explore if there was an awareness of changing demographics.

**Problem Statement**

The problem was that since the removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate public schools, there has been an increasing trend of resegregation of White and racial and ethnic
minorities in the WCPSS (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). While changing demographics in a school system is not a cause for alarm in itself, students attending schools with high minority or ethnic population experience more racism and increased negative stereotypes about race and ethnicity (Ayscue et al., 2016). Additionally, changing demographics that demonstrated either a shift in placement of racial and ethnic minority students into less diverse schools or the increase in White enclave schools is a reason to take note. Segregated schools have a negative effect on academic achievement and socioeconomics, with minority students experiencing higher levels of poverty and lower academic outcomes (Owens et al., 2016; Potter & Morris, 2017; Tienda, 2017). The goal for school systems should be to preserve racially and ethnically diverse schools to foster equitable educational opportunities for all students.

While the demographic changes in the WCPSS were documented in a few quantitative studies, researchers assumed the phenomenon of resegregation was indeed occurring and that individuals connected to the phenomenon were aware of the trend (Frankenberg et al., 2017; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). The two major challenges in establishing the validity of a resegregation trend are first defining the term resegregation and then validating that resegregation actually exists in a school system. Shifts in demographics in a school system may not validate a resegregation trend. Past practices of desegregation were deliberate and the result of legal mandates (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954; Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896). Therefore, resegregation, as it is explained in current research, assumes a deliberate act to separate White and minority students (Ayscue et al., 2016; Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Davis et al., 2015; Frankenberger et al., 2017; McDermott & Fung-Morley, 2018). While quantitative research has found demographic changes in the WCPSS over the past 20 years, qualitative research is just
beginning to explore the phenomenon. Using qualitative methods to examine this issue helps to evaluate and “understand a complex social phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 5). Before a resegregation trend can be validated, there needs to be a body of evidence to demonstrate awareness and intent to segregate students by race or ethnicity. This study used an exploratory case study design to look at the perceptions of stakeholders of resegregation in the WCPSS to understand the complexity of a potential resegregation phenomenon.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore stakeholder perceptions of resegregation in the WCPSS. Stakeholder perceptions of resegregation were defined as the stakeholder’s awareness of the change in the racial demographics in Wake County public schools since the removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate. The theory guiding this study was critical race theory, as it is focused on societal and legal constraints placed on individuals based on race or ethnicity (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2014).

**Significance of the Study**

The following section highlights the theoretical, empirical, and practical significance that this study may have to the current research on resegregation in the WCPSS. Current research on the WCPSS addresses the phenomenon by quantitative measures; therefore, a more holistic evaluation using a qualitative approach is needed. The theoretical section that follows introduces the potential relationship between critical race theory and possible resegregation practices within the WCPSS. The empirical section evaluates the changing demographics in the WCPSS. The practical section reviews the importance of understanding the consequences of change demographics within a school system.
**Theoretical**

In this study, I sought to add to the evolving body of literature on critical race theory as it pertains to educational practices that affect students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Critical race theory originally focused on issues of inequity and injustice towards Blacks (Bell, 1995), but in recent years expanded to include other racial and ethnic minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). While desegregation practices in the WCPSS were targeted toward Black and White students, today the student demographics include other racial and ethnic minorities potentially affected by changing demographics within the school district. While the WCPSS is no longer held to legal mandates to desegregate (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle*, 2007), the race-neutral policies may potentially have an adverse effect on student demographics. Bell (1995) wrote that race-neutral policies fail to ensure that policies and practices affecting minorities are truly color-blind. However, in the case of the WCPSS, current research has not conclusively validated a resegregation phenomenon (McMillian et al., 2018). Additional research is needed to understand if there was a deliberate act by stakeholders to segregate students by race and ethnicity or to create policies and programs that Bell (1995) deemed as promoting the interests of Whites.

**Empirical**

Although historically, segregation issues were centered on disparities between White and Black students, today segregation includes other racial and ethnic minorities (Crenshaw, 2011; Fuller et al., 2019). Current student demographics in the WCPSS show that more than 56% of the student population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority (WCPSS, 2021). Significant increases in the Asian and Hispanic population since 1998 (Ayscue et al., 2016) add to the shifting demographics in Wake County with a projected growth of the Hispanic population of
78.11% by 2030 (NC Office of State Budget and Management, n.d.). Along with demographic changes within the county, the WCPSS experienced a shift in student demographics resulting in less diverse schools (Ayscue et al., 2016; Frankenberg et al., 2017). With changing demographics due to migration (McMillian et al., 2018), along with potential public policies influencing resegregation (Diem et al., 2015), additional research in this area is needed to explore all potential causes and correlations of a resegregation of White and racial and ethnic minorities. This exploratory case study addressed one area missing from existing literature: the perceptions of stakeholders in Wake County on resegregation trends. Studying the perceptions of stakeholders provided an opportunity to evaluate attitudes towards race, diversity, and equity in a school system and their effect on diversity in schools (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Zucker & Patterson, 2018).

**Practical**

Historically, racial and ethnic minority students experienced unequal access to quality education in the United States (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Williams & Houck, 2013). In the 60 years since the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), school systems are more segregated than prior to legal mandates to desegregate (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). While the limited research on resegregation demonstrates a potential correlation between school assignment policies and shifting housing migration of Whites, no causal link has been established that definitively demonstrates a willful intent by policymakers or stakeholders to segregate White and racial or ethnic minority students (Billingham, 2019; McDermott & Fung-Morley, 2018; Richards, 2014; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). However, studies demonstrating the negative effects on the academic achievement of minority students when attending high minority population schools are well-documented (Ayscue & Orfield, 2015; Celeste et al., 2019;
When attending low diversity schools, racial and ethnic minority students experience higher dropout rates (Juvonen et al., 2018), lower academic outcomes (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Taggart, 2018), and more segregated lifestyles post-secondary education (Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018; Orfield et al., 2012). Any data trend that shows a shift in student demographics away from diverse educational settings warrants additional research.

**Research Questions**

I used an exploratory case study approach to explore the perceptions of community stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS through the following questions. The central question explored the general perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS. The tenets of critical race theory framed and guided a more in-depth look at stakeholder perceptions as they pertain to the origins of resegregation, importance of diversity among the student population, and race-neutral school policies.

**Central Research Question**

What are the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS?

Current literature did not address the perceptions of community stakeholders about resegregation, making the assumption as that those connected to the education system are aware that resegregation is already occurring; thus, research findings were presented as an absolute that the phenomenon was valid (Ayscue et al., 2016). This study sought to provide an expanded evaluation of the phenomenon using a qualitative approach because resegregation cannot be validated by quantitative measures alone.

**Sub-Question 1**

What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the origins of resegregation in the WCPSS?
In line with the central research question on perceptions pertaining to a resegregation phenomenon, the limited research available was aimed at quantitative measures demonstrating a shift in student demographics and assuming the phenomenon existed to begin with and therefore was measurable (Ayscue et al., 2016). The assumption going into the study was that participants had different lived experiences related to race, equity, and access to education, as well as knowledge about WCPSS history related to desegregation.

**Sub-Question 2**

What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the importance of diversity in schools?

The limited research on the WCPSS failed to address perceptions of stakeholders about the importance of diversity in schools. The demographic changes in the WCPSS caused a shift in the diversity within schools, causing researchers to question whether the schools could achieve a rebalancing of White and minority students without a court order (Williams & Houck, 2013).

**Sub-Question 3**

How do the perceptions of stakeholders about the relationship between race-neutral policies and resegregation reflect the phenomenon of interest convergence outlined in critical race theory?

The WCPSS has experienced several changes in leadership and school assignment policies over the past decade that may have influenced the demographic changes within the school district (Ayscue et al., 2016; McDermott et al., 2015; McMillian et al., 2018). Current research was missing a validated awareness of the phenomenon and a deliberate decision by policymakers to promote and enact policies that cause resegregation. However, understanding that critical race theory specifically addressed that only when the interests of those in power converge with those of racial and ethnic minority were the latter’s needs taken into
consideration (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), the potential existed for interest convergence to have some influence on changing demographics in the WCPSS.

**Definitions**

This section presents a list of key terms to provide readers an understanding of terms related to resegregation:

1. *Race-Neutral* – The deliberate ignoring of race as a basis for policies, legislation, or practices affecting racial and ethnic minorities (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).
3. *School Resegregation* – The re-separation, after desegregation, of White students from students who identify as racial or ethnic minorities (Billingham & Hunt, 2016).
4. *School Segregation* – The deliberate separation of White students from students who identify as racial or ethnic minorities (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896).
5. *White Flight* – The migration of White families to areas that are home to predominately higher income White families and schools with a predominately White student population (McMillian et al., 2018).

**Summary**

The journey from separate but equal discriminatory legal mandates to desegregation under *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) could be considered a cultural victory. Black students were no longer required to attend separate schools from White students. While desegregation was one step in decreasing the equity gap between White students and Black students, it was far from a cultural victory as students of color never fully received an equal education as their White peers (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). By the mid-1990s, the legal mandates were lifted to
desegregate and to promote an educational culture of colorblindness where educational policies focused on the person and not the race (Frankenberg et al., 2017). Current trends since the removal of the legal mandates to desegregate show a potential resegregation of students with no clearly causal link (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). With limited research available to validate an intentional resegregation of students by race and/or ethnicity, stakeholder perceptions were used to answer the research questions to evaluate a potential resegregation phenomenon more fully.

To fully explore the phenomenon of resegregation in the WCPSS, critical race theory guided and framed the potential existence of stakeholder policies or practices that could lead to a resegregation of students by race and ethnicity in the WCPSS. Currently, students in the WCPSS are subject to a race-neutral assignment policy with students typically assigned to their neighborhood school (WCPSS, 2021). As schools have shifted away from desegregation practices to race-neutral policies over the past 20 years, there has been a simultaneous shift in student demographics in the WCPSS (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Proponents of critical race theory could argue that race-neutral policies harm and reduce opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities by favoring the interests of those in power over racial and ethnic minorities (Bell, 1995). Using critical race theory to evaluate the possibility of interest convergence in the WCPSS can assist in validating or refuting policies and practices in the WCPSS that lead to a resegregation of students.

The WCPSS was once a model of successful desegregation until the removal of legal mandates to desegregate (McDermott et al., 2015). Over the past 20 years, the student demographics have shifted within the schools and have led to the assumption the shift was due to a potential deliberate resegregation of students (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). The
validation of a resegregation phenomenon requires a multi-faceted research approach. To fully explore a resegregation phenomenon, research needs to extend beyond quantitative measures of demographic changes and an assumption that demographic changes are a deliberate act on behalf of those in power to separate students by race and ethnicity. To establish the validity of a resegregation phenomenon, research should include both qualitative and quantitative studies to build a holistic picture of a complex phenomenon. The goal of this study was to start at the beginning of the research process by conducting a case study to explore the perceptions of stakeholders in one school district, the WCPSS.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

To understand a resegregation phenomenon, it is important to first explore all possible correlations and causal links to a change in student demographics. Current research assumes a resegregation phenomenon already exists (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2019) without questioning whether resegregation can occur if there is no deliberate act or willingness to separate students by race and ethnicity. Historically, the act of segregation (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896) and desegregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) were deliberate acts to separate or bring back together students based on race. Therefore, it would follow that resegregation would be a deliberate act to separate students now by race and ethnicity (Ayscue et al., 2016).

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the potential phenomenon of resegregation in one school district, the WCPSS. This chapter begins with detailing the theoretical framework guiding this study, critical race theory, to lay the foundation as to why exploring the phenomenon of race as a social construct and the consequences in education systems when color-blind and interest convergence potentially influence policies and practices. Next, the related literature outlines the origins of segregation and desegregation in public schools and how desegregation in Wake County became the model for education desegregation after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Included in the related literature are the laws, policies, and practices after desegregation that may be contributing to a resegregation trend in the WCPSS, as well as current research suggesting a purposeful resegregation of students influenced by community stakeholders. The chapter concludes with a summary.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was critical race theory (Bell, 1995). The goal of critical race theory is to empower racial and ethnic minorities to overcome social constructs, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that result in systemic oppression (Bell, 1995; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In the WCPSS, a demographic shift away from more diverse schools to a potential resegregation of students by race and ethnicity caught the attention of researchers concerned with a deliberate act by those in power to divide students (Frankenberg et al., 2017; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Applying critical race theory to this exploratory case study helped to frame the phenomenon as a possible social construct that developed over time, or one that always existed, that sought to divide students by race or ethnicity. Critical race theory frames race as a social construct that purposely seeks to disenfranchise racial minorities (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Powers, 2007).

Exploring the perceptions of stakeholders in Wake County regarding a potential resegregation trend could reveal deliberate or inadvertent social constructs that lead to a division of students by race and ethnicity.

Origins of Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory originated in U.S. law schools in the 1970s as extension to the Civil Rights movement that left significant gaps in equal rights implementation for Blacks and an ever-present culture of racism (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2014; Powers, 2007; Rosiek, 2019). Derrick Bell (1995), a Harvard University professor, is often credited with developing the basis for critical race theory, though he claimed it was more of a collaborative effort by other legal scholars and advocates dedicated to unveiling hidden systemic racism (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Bell (1995) argued that the legal system after the Civil Rights
Movement was color-blind and instead asserted that the legal system was a social construct where the power is in the hands of Whites and undermines the progress and equality of racial minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Martinez, 2014).

Bell collaborated with Richard Delgado to specifically address the Supreme Court’s color-blind rulings that continue to perpetuate the liberal progressive ideology that color-blind is synonymous with equal. Looking specifically at court rulings such as Brown v. Board of Education (1954) as a victory against racial oppression and bias, Bell (1995) and his colleagues argued that equal was relative to the interests of those in power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Early critical race theorists disputed that those color-blind legal rulings promoted equality, arguing that they instead perpetuated and affirmed racial biases (Bell, 1995). Bell and Delgado were later joined by Jean Stefancic and Kimberle Crenshaw arguing that legal rulings would and do continue to favor the interests of Whites and only converge with the interests of racial and ethnic minorities as a by-product of White interests (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Therefore, segregation or resegregation trends in education systems are potentially due to purposeful or even inadvertent policies and programs enacted that favor the interests of Whites.

**Major Tenets of Critical Race Theory**

The major tenets of critical race theory are centered on the damage caused by race-neutral policies that perpetuate systemic racism (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Powers, 2007; Vue et al., 2017). Critical race theory is grounded on the concept of race as a social construct (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Vue et al., 2017). When considering the definition of race, critical race theorists defined race not as a description of a person’s DNA but as a metaphor for how racial and ethnic minorities fit into society and their subsequent lack of
power (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, race became a by-product of societal norms that disenfranchise racial minorities (Bell, 1995; Powers, 2007).

Critical race theorists believe that racial and ethnic minorities are adversely affected by the White power structure that seeks its own interest over other races and ethnicities (Bell, 1995; Jackson, 2011). While supporters of the Civil Rights Movement believed removing race as a factor in social policies to support equality was a societal victory, Bell (1995) argued that the liberal post-Civil Rights Movement race-neutral policies did nothing more than ignore cultural racism. The development of race-neutral or color-blind policies and legal mandates encouraged the ideal that the law is no longer biased against racial and ethnic minorities (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Viewing the policies and legal mandates through a color-blind lens undermines the need for a critical look at systemic racism (Vue et al., 2017). Therefore, color-blind practices contribute to normalizing existing systemic racism (Martinez, 2014) and injustices towards racial and ethnic minorities (Powers, 2007). Critical race theorists maintain that to overcome the injustice and racist practices that are part of societal norms today, Whites must recognize their inherited privilege of being White and how White privilege contributes to an ongoing problem with racial bias in law, policies, and practices (Bell, 1995; Jackson, 2011; Martinez, 2014; Powers, 2007).

**Critical Race Theory and Education**

Critical race theory as a framework for educational studies was first seen in Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) article, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education.” Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that racism is a social norm, as seen in education systems across the country, where students in higher income neighborhoods, typically White, have access to better funded schools. Funding in schools is often tied to property tax revenue. The higher the
value of the housing areas, historically the better funded the school system. The premise of their argument was that society was based on “property rights rather than human rights” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57). With racism as a societal norm, it would follow that school systems would naturally reflect the racial norms of society (Bell, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The relationship between critical race theory and education encourages educators and researchers “to understand and challenge ways changing structures of racism mutate to reproduce educational inequality both in and out of the classroom across time” (Garcia et al., 2018, p. 151).

The inequality in education between Blacks and Whites existed from the creation of the United States. Arguably, despite legislation enacted to enforce equity in education, inequalities exist today.

The Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) required equal access to all schools regardless of race or neighborhood, but it took nearly 20 years for the ruling to manifest as a reality in school districts across the United States. Desegregation has never been fully realized in most school districts in the United States, as White enclaves were covertly and overtly created, often described as white flight as a response to forced desegregation (Ayscue et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Bell (1995) drew on the writings of W. E. B. Dubois on separate but equal education and proponents of desegregation to conclude that despite legal intervention, education systems continued to fail to adequately represent the voice of Black families (Crenshaw et al., 1995). In response to the failings of desegregation, multicultural education attempted to address substandard education for racial and ethnic minorities, yet it did little to improve the equal education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Despite the attempts by researchers (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rosiek, 2019) to apply critical race theory to education to
address unequal access to education and systemic racism within the school system, their efforts have seemingly done little to advance education equity (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018). However, when looked at through the perspective of race as a social construct that influences decision-makers (Bell, 1995), critical race theory has the potential to bring awareness to those in power who inadvertently or purposefully construct policies aimed at satisfying their own interests first (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

**Relationship to Study**

Although the origins of critical race theory were focused on the law and the subsequent oppression of Blacks that occurred through a color-blind social construct, the theory evolved to a place where it can be applied against a more fluid environment that looks at how racially biased social constructs affect all aspects of society, to include education (Crenshaw, 2011). Since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), The WCPSS has been considered a model of desegregation, ensuring diverse schools (Ayscue et al., 2016). There was very little movement in desegregating the schools in Raleigh and Wake County until nearly 15 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). A merger of the city schools in Wake County and Wake County schools led to a desegregation plan that was inspired by city and county stakeholders to reduce the degradation of Raleigh neighborhoods and the business district (Williams & Houck, 2013). Since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the WCPSS experienced a series of desegregation efforts and school assignment policies to ensure a racial balance in the school district (Ayscue et al., 2016; Williams & Houck, 2013). Policies included race-based, race-neutral, income-based, and neighborhood-based policies. It is unclear how the evolution of the policies, specifically pertaining to race-neutral policies, affected the change in student demographics in the WCPSS.
A shift in the school system’s student demographics away from a diverse student population appeared to coincide with the removal of legal mandates to desegregate in the late 1990s (McDermott et al., 2015). Current research has targeted this shift in Wake County’s student population tied the demographic changes to a resegregation trend of White students from racial and ethnic minorities, implying in the research findings that resegregation was deliberate and based on systemic racism (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015). While other research looked at the resegregation trends as a byproduct of color-blind school assignment policies (Ayscue et al., 2014) and subsequent housing migration or *white flight* as a result of race-neutral assignment policies (Taylor et al., 2019), none of the research available at the time of the study could conclusively show evidence of intent by stakeholders to desegregate students by race or ethnicity.

Using critical race theory’s tenet of interest convergence applied to an education topic (Capper, 2015), exploring the perceptions of community stakeholders about changing demographics in the schools, as well as a potential resegregation trend, is key to understanding if race or ethnicity contributed to social norms and practices in Wake County. Color-blind or race-neutral policies and practices in the school district assume that race has no social significance and that students have equal access to highly quality education regardless of race or ethnicity (Vue et al., 2017). Critical race theorists reject the idea of equal access to education and call attention to the necessity of equity over equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Equal education does not necessarily equate to equitable education. Policies and practices in education must take into consideration the barriers in place that prevent racial and ethnic minorities from receiving an equitable education in an equal setting.
In line with critical race theory’s interest convergence tenet, only when the interests of those in power converge with the interests of racial and ethnic minorities are racial and ethnic minority needs taken into consideration (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical race theory does not require those in power to be aware of oppression or systemic racism in order for it to occur (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Jackson, 2011). When exploring the perceptions of stakeholders, critical race theory guided the research to address and explore whether those in power may ultimately guide and influence policymaking (Vue et al., 2017). Current research has attempted to assert causality between school assignment policies in the WCPSS and a resegregation without exploring intent of power holders in the county. It was imperative to use critical race theory to explore the perceptions to stakeholders in Wake County to determine if there were themes in the policies or practices affecting the diversity of the student population and potentially causing a resegregation within the school district. By using critical race theory as a theoretical framework, it was possible to identify, or even discount, hidden systemic racism as a reason for resegregation trends. However, caution is needed when applying critical race theory in social science research as the critical race theory research is often heavily based on empirical methodology (Rosiek, 2019). This research methodology is consistent with current research on resegregation in the WCPSS that relies heavily on demographic changes in an attempt to prove causality between student assignment policies and overt bias by power holders towards racial and ethnic minority students.

**Related Literature**

Demographic data alone are unable to fully explain a change in student diversity within the school district. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the history of segregation and desegregation in the United States and the WCPSS, as well as potential causes of demographic
shifts that lead researchers to assert that a purposeful resegregation of White and racial and ethnic minorities is actively occurring in the WCPSS. The related literature section begins by addressing the historical significance of segregation and desegregation in public schools in the United States, followed by the history of desegregation efforts in the WCPSS. The literature review section concludes with a review of policies and practices in the WCPSS and Wake County that were potentially related to a shift in student demographics over the past 20 years.

**Historical Significance**

Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have been subject to a long history of unequal treatment under the law. Since the colonial times, arguably until today, there has been a disparity in equal access to education between Whites and racial and ethnic minorities. Education was typically reserved for wealthier Whites or for Whites who needed to learn to read the Christian Bible. Prior to the Civil War, a small sect of free and enslaved Blacks was educated, often through clandestine means. Educating slaves was against the law in the South. Post-Civil War education of Blacks in both the North and South was limited and most often segregated by race. Slowly, efforts to educate more Blacks began with the establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau as part of the Reconstruction efforts. Segregation of students by race continued through a series of legal rulings and social practices until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Brown II* (1955). Even after the Supreme Court rulings in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Brown II* (1955) to desegregate after a nearly 100-year practice of segregating students by race, there was significant resistance by the Whites across the United States to maintain all-White schools.
Reconstruction and Establishment of Segregated Public Schooling

Prior to the Civil War, there were a small number of public schools established in the North for Blacks. In the South prior to the Civil War, education opportunities for Blacks did not exist. Through a series of antiliteracy state laws throughout the southern states, it was illegal to educate Blacks (Hale, 2016). After the Civil War, freed slaves, White Christian missionaries, and a limited number of northern and southern Whites helped to establish schools for Blacks. However, the main organization to fund and oversee Black schools was the Freedmen’s Bureau (Jones, 2018; National Archives, 2016). Academic content in the southern Black schools targeted reading and writing skills through textbooks specifically designed for ex-slaves called freedmen’s textbooks, as well as by using Christian Bibles (Brosnan, 2016). Despite the well-intentioned advocates for the education of Blacks, segregation remained a standard practice in the United States. Even with the dissolution of laws preventing Blacks from being educated, there was frequent opposition to Black education that included acts of violence against organizations or individuals supporting the education of Blacks (Howard, 1867).

For the first few decades after the Civil War, schools in both the northern and southern states remained mostly segregated by race. With a nearly 90% illiteracy rate among former slaves (Hillstrom, 2014; Hoffer, 2012), the demand for teachers and schools for Black children was tremendous. While schools were slowly constructed for Blacks in the United States, with the majority of the efforts targeting southern states and freed slaves, the practice of segregated schools was a social norm. Curriculum taught in Black schools reinforced the narrative of Blacks being inferior to Whites and encouraged a continued subjugation of Blacks to White power holders (Brosnan, 2016). For example, curriculum was often based on White Christian teachings that disregarded any reference to Blacks or Black history (Green, 2016). Whites attempted to...
control the type of education Blacks received, reflecting critical race theory’s tenant of interest convergence, evident in most post-Civil War education policies and laws.

By the late 1800s, the practice of separate or subjugated access to public facilities was solidified through state and local Black Codes or Jim Crow laws (Jones, 2018), and eventually formalized in the Supreme Court’s ruling on *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), often regarded as one of the worst Supreme Court decisions on an issue of racial equality, required separate but equal facilities and accommodations for Whites and Blacks (Ayscue et al., 2016; Hutchinson, 2015; McPherson, 2011). This legal ruling allowed for separate but equal schools for White and Black students. Public schools in the United States remained segregated, but rarely equal, for nearly 60 years (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014) until additional Supreme Court rulings on school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Brown II* (1955). Even then, equal became a very subjective term when describing educational opportunities for racial or ethnic minorities.

**Desegregation Efforts between Plessy and Brown**

Post-Civil War desegregation efforts were minimal in comparison to what was needed to afford Blacks equal protection and access under the law. In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), Chief Justice Harlan wrote that the U.S. Constitution was color-blind in that there was no system in place that held one citizen in higher authority or privilege than any other (Hutchinson, 2015). Equal under the law was technically accurate, but equal within society could not exist without additional systematic and institutional changes throughout the U.S. Separate, but equal, under the law failed to translate to *sameness* in terms of access to quality education or facilities for Black students in comparison to White students (Hillstrom, 2014; Hoffer, 2012). By 1901, U.S. Congressman George H. White, the only Black representative at the time, highlighted in his
farewell speech before Congress that despite societal resistance, there were significant advancements in Black education since the Civil War (Hillstrom, 2014). Representative White (1901) noted that since the beginning of Reconstruction,

We have reduced the illiteracy of the race at least 45 percent. We have written and published near 500 books. We have nearly 300 newspapers, 3 of which are dailies. We have now in practice over 2,000 lawyers and a corresponding number of doctors. We have accumulated over $12,000,000 worth of school property and about $40,000,000 worth of church property. . . . We have raised about $11,000,000 for educational purposes. . . . We have 32,000 teachers in the schools of the country. . . . We have done it in the face of lynching [and] burning at the stake. (as cited in Hillstrom, 2014, pp. 172–173)

Despite the relatively quick advancement in Black education and support systems, the education of Blacks post-Plessy occurred mainly in segregated facilities, which some inferred was a preference of Black families (Andrews, 2014).

Despite being able to quantitatively demonstrate the accomplishments in Black education, segregation remained the norm until the mid-20th century. There would be no other Supreme Court cases to address segregation in schools until the landmark case, Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. The United States Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) that segregating students by race was unconstitutional (McDermott et al., 2015; McPherson, 2011). The federal court ruling on Brown v. Board of Education (1954) led to the mandatory desegregation of U. S. public schools across the country (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). The process of desegregation did not happen immediately, and many school districts were forced by additional court orders to desegregate
(Brown II, 1955; Executive Order 10730, 1957; Lee v. Macon County Board of Education, 1967; Racial Imbalance Act, 1965). In Brown II (1955) the Supreme Court ruled that school districts should desegregate with “all deliberate speed.” This term was loosely interpreted and allowed many school districts to delay desegregation for over a decade.

While some celebrated Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and Brown II (1955) as a victory for Black rights, Derek Bell (1995) suggested that Brown v. Board of Education (1954) was not a win for the Blacks but another example of White interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Understanding that social pressure was building to dismantle separate but equal schooling, Bell (1995) believed that Whites in power supported desegregation but in a manner that was acceptable to Whites. While an argument for interest convergence was made, Thurgood Marshall, attorney in the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) case asserted there would be no resistance to court-ordered desegregation across the United States and wrongly assumed that the process for school districts to desegregate would take no more than 5 years (Hustwit, 2019). Bell (1995) argued that interest convergence drove the decision to desegregate, but within the boundaries of those in power still being able to control the speed and extent of desegregation. Theoretically, interest convergence was a response to public and political pressure to desegregate with no real intent to provide equity and inclusion universally (Guinier, 2004). This practice of interest convergence was a potentially valid reason for resistance to desegregation of schools but can also be refuted by the decades-long fight by individual states and school districts, supported by White advocates, to desegregate (Fiel & Zhang, 2018). Nonetheless, the court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) was applied inconsistently across the United States, with only a few states moving to desegregate without additional court orders for over a decade.
Desegregation Post-Brown and Resistance

Immediately following Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the evidence was extensive to show overt resistance to desegregated schools. One year after Brown II, 101 U.S. congressmen signed a petition in opposition to desegregating schools (Allen & Daugherity, 2006). Some states, cities, and municipalities passed laws or implemented procedures that heavily influenced the ability to control where Black students were assigned to school. In Las Vegas prior to and continuing after the ruling in Brown v. Board of Education (1954), Black families were forced to reside in the western part of the city (Horsford et al., 2013). To maintain residential segregation, business and government leaders forced Black families to settle west of the railroad tracks, known as West Las Vegas (Horsford et al., 2013). West Las Vegas segregation policies remained in effect until the early 1970s with nearly the entire population of West Las Vegas residents identified as Black (Horsford et al., 2013). Segregating by residential districts allowed the city leaders to control where students attended school and ensured segregated schools.

Even more extreme was the leadership in Prince Edward County School District in Virginia that closed down all of its public schools after Brown v. Board of Education (1954) for 5 years until a Supreme Court mandate in 1959 ordered the reopening of schools (Sampson, 2017). At the time more than 20% of Virginia school districts had followed suit by closing down the entire school district rather than desegregating (Day, 2014). Then, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy visited Prince Edward School District, and when interviewed about his visit said, “The only places on earth not to provide free public education are Communist China, North Vietnam, Sarawak, Singapore, British Honduras—and Prince Edward County, Virginia” (as cited in Library of Virginia, n.d., para. 4). Virginia political leadership had already publicly committed to what came to be known as the Southern Manifesto, a deliberate rejection of the ruling in
Brown v. Board of Education (1954) in southern states that allowed for continued segregation of students by race (Day, 2014). The Southern Manifesto supporters, congressman and senators from southern states, pledged to “use all lawful means to bring about the reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution” (Badger, 1999, p. 517). The manifesto, established by White elites in Congress, was yet another example of delay tactics to avoid desegregating schools (Driver, 2014). The manifesto was not enforceable, but rather a message from the political elite to the Supreme Court and the public that desegregation of schools would be resisted by all lawful means (Badger, 1999; Brown Henderson & Brown, 2016; Day, 2014).

After Brown v. Board of Education (1954), there was no consistent school desegregation plan in the United States for nearly 15 years. School districts were creative in how they perpetuated school segregation. In New Kent County, Virginia, the school district allowed freedom of school choice (Green v. New Kent Board of Education, 1968). There was little change in the demographics within the schools, with White families remaining at all-White schools and Black families remaining at all-Black schools. The idea of school choice for Black families in New Kent post-Brown v. Board of Education (1954), as well as in other school districts, was not likely a matter of true freedom of choice, but rather public pressure to remain in all-Black schools. The Supreme Court ruled in 1968 in Green v. New Kent Board of Education the freedom of choice was not a purposeful desegregation strategy by the school board, but rather abrogated the responsibility to families to ensure schools were desegregated. Other school districts modeled the freedom of choice plan to demonstrate their attempt at desegregation (Day, 2014). After the Supreme Court ruling, desegregation in New Kent occurred through forced busing, with violent opposition by some Whites (Allen & Daugherity, 2006). There was only a slight decline in segregated schools, with most Blacks attending schools between 1954 and 1971.
with Black populations of at least 90% (Boozer et al., 1992, p. 281). By 1971, most school districts in the United States had finally implemented purposeful desegregation plans, mostly consisting of forced busing.

**Desegregation Today**

Although it has been more than 60 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, schools across the United States continue to reflect a disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities in comparison to White students. While some school districts were able to successfully desegregate after the 1970s, others continued to struggle to keep a balance, compounded by the removal of legal mandates to desegregate based on race by the 1990s. In the early 1990s, a series of federal court cases contributed to the unraveling of desegregation laws, in favor of allowing school districts to implement diversity plans (*Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, 1991; *Freeman v. Pitts*, 1992; *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1995). In 1992, a review of educational data on student demographics since *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) showed that segregation within schools and school districts was significant across the United States, and in city centers it was commonplace for up to 90% of the student population to be comprised of racial or ethnic minorities (Boozer et al., 1992, p. 275). The emergence of resegregation trends since the early 1990s points to efforts by school districts to use factors other than race to determine school assignment policies.

Race-neutral school assignment policies became the norm under the pretense of equality for all students. These color-blind policies were one of the foundation elements of critical race theory that Bell (1995) warned against. By 2007, the Supreme Court ruled on *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007), otherwise known as PICS, deciding that assigning students to schools based on race was no longer constitutional. Justice
Kennedy cast the deciding vote in the case noting, “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race” (PICS, 2007). While this ruling no longer held school districts to desegregation requirements, Justice Breyer’s dissenting opinion warned of the aftermath that may ensue from disregarding race and diversity in education (PICS, 2007). Justice Breyer’s opinion is evidenced in the changing demographics in many school districts nationally.

Today’s education equity advocates, including Oliver Brown’s daughter, Cheryl Brown Henderson, warn that a continued segregation or resegregation of racial and ethnic minorities is a result of more than just the removal of laws mandating desegregation; it is the result of a systemic problem (Brown Henderson & Brown, 2016; Tillerson-Brown, 2016). Brown Henderson and Brown (2016) encouraged today’s schools to consider carefully how they evaluate school assignment policies. For example, the option of school choice was a way for White families to avoid schools with a predominately Black population. Brown Henderson and Brown (2016) asserted, “School choice must come with a mandate for racial equality and equal opportunity” (p. 418). If education policies required a mandatory component to ensure racial and ethnic diversity of the student population, the removal of legal mandates to desegregate in favor of color-blind policies has been counterproductive for equity education.

Following Brown v. Board of Education (1954), U.S. schools have been desegregated but never fully integrated or equal. In Milliken v. Bradley (1974), addressing ongoing segregation of students based on a residence-based school assignment policy, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall predicted in his dissenting opinion the reality of school demographics today—students divided by race within school districts. Justice Marshall wrote in his dissenting opinion,
Desegregation is not and was never expected to be an easy task . . . it may seem to be the easier course to allow our great metropolitan areas to be divided up in to two cities—one white and the other one black, but it is a course, I predict, our people will ultimately regret. (*Milliken v. Bradley*, 1974, p. 814)

Despite repeated calls by education advocates to address the inequity in U.S. schools for racial and ethnic minorities, schools are more segregated that pre-*Brown v. Board of Education* (Hilbert, 2018; Orfield et al., 2012). What is unclear from analyzing school assignment policies since PICS (2007), or likely even post-*Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), is whether stakeholder and school leadership have deliberately enacted policies to maintain more segregated schools. There is evidence of school assignment policies geared toward providing equity through magnet schools, school choice, controlled school choice, and charter schools (Hilbert, 2018). However, the net result of those policies throughout the decades, as well as the removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate, has potentially impeded the ability to maintain desegregated schools.

**Current U.S. School Diversity and School Assignment Policies**

The power given to the states under the 10th Amendment allowed for state-control of public education. The additional decentralization of power within states allowed for school assignment policies to be controlled by local school boards. As seen in *Green v. the County School Board of New Kent* (1965), local school districts have significant control over the public education of K–12 students. In *Green v. the County School Board of New Kent* (1965), the school district closed the school system for 5 years rather than desegregate. School districts continue to exercise significant control over school assignment policies affecting the equity and inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities within the school district. What is unclear was whether school assignment policies are deliberately or inadvertently developed to restrict equitable access
to education. Student demographics or changing student demographics within school districts are not enough to determine intent, as in prior cases like *Green v. the County School Board of New Kent* (1965) and *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974). More recent research looks closely at student assignment policies as a causal link between shifting demographics in school districts, potential inequity in education, and also the intersectionality of both potential causal factors.

The removal of court-ordered mandates to desegregate has left education researchers and stakeholders contemplating how long even the model integrated school districts will remain diverse (Taylor et al., 2019). There appeared to be a steady decline in the overall diversity U.S. schools, regardless of school assignment policy, between the early 1990s and removal of mandates in 2012 (Reardon et al., 2012). Individual districts will vary, but demographic shifts away from diverse student populations appears to coincide with forced desegregation. Controlled school choice was popular among larger school districts with a higher percentage of racial and ethnic minorities to achieve post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) desegregation demographics (Frankenberg, 2017). Under controlled school choice, parents rank-ordered a select set of schools (Garland, 2013). The goal for school districts is to be able to control how many White or racial and ethnic minority students attended each school, but it also opens up the possibility of families selecting the same schools.

School choice policies allow parents to pick any school within their district. This option requires the school district to potentially bus students great distances to the preferred schools. Similar to controlled school choice policies, there is a significant disparity between preferred and non-preferred schools in a district (Garland, 2013; Hilbert, 2018). School choice trends show that predominately White schools in higher income areas are more preferred than schools in low-income areas with higher racial or ethnic minority populations (Hilbert, 2018). This is true
regardless of the race or ethnicity of the family prioritizing their school preferences. Voluntary integration, as part of controlled school choice and regular school choice policies, appears to be ineffective at establishing diverse schools (Taylor et al., 2019). Other research points to the need for social reform directed at systemic changes providing for equity in housing, employment opportunities, and education for racial and ethnic minorities, as well as students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, in order for an organic integration of students to occur regardless of race or ethnicity (Thompson-Dorsey & Roulhac, 2019).

School districts across the U.S. appear to be unsure as to what type of student assignment policy to enact that adheres to the PICS (2007) ruling to refrain from using race as the sole factor in school assignment but at the same time consider race to ensure a diverse student population (Frankenberg, 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). In larger school districts in recent years, population increase and demographic changes within the school district due to migration have further complicated the ability to forecast and plan for racially-balanced classrooms (Garland, 2013). Residential segregation, coupled with race-neutral or voluntary integration school assignment policies, appear to have a symbiotic relationship. What is unknown is whether residential segregation is causing more segregated schools, or a more homogenous student demographic in a school is causing residential segregation. Despite the variety of school assignment policies used throughout the U.S. since PICS (2007), race-based school assignment policies continue to yield the highest level of student diversity within a school district (Taylor et al., 2019). This leaves school districts in a quandary over the right school assignment policy to ensure a diverse student population, assuming this is a priority.
History of Desegregation in Wake County

After Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the desegregation of public schools was a slow process with a few exceptions. The Southern Manifesto, adopted by southern states in defiance of the Supreme Court’s decision in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) left the state’s political leaders at odds. North Carolina initially rejected the Supreme Court decision to desegregate (McMillian et al., 2018). Unlike states such as Alabama and Mississippi, North Carolina senators and congressmen were divided on whether to sign the manifesto (Badger, 1999). Ultimately, both North Carolina senators signed the manifesto as well as eight North Carolina representatives, with four North Carolina representatives rejecting the manifesto (Badger, 1999). The manifesto allowed school districts across North Carolina to continue to reject forced desegregation. At the same time in 1954, the North Carolina Governor Umstead initiated the Pearsall Committee that eventually lead to the Pearsall Plan (Batchelor, 2015). The Pearsall Plan allowed school districts extensive leeway in student assignment policies, enabling school districts to continue to avoid desegregation.

Along with the Pearsall Plan, the North Carolina legislature passed the Pupil Assignment Act (1955). The Pupil Assignment Act (1955) decentralized the state authority over desegregation policies and gave power to the individual school districts to decide how to proceed with the Brown II (1955) ruling requiring “all deliberate speed.” The Pearsall Plan “assured that no child would be forced to attend a school with children of another race by providing state-supported vouchers, enabling parents to choose a nonsectarian private school for their children” (Thompson-Dorsey & Roulhac, 2019, p. 428). At the time, the city schools in Wake County and one other prominent North Carolina school district used tax money to fund schools, with Wake County not yet consolidated with the city schools in Wake County (Baker, 2015). The use of tax
money to fund schools allowed for wealthier communities to have better funded school systems. Both school districts were resistant to complying with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) or *Brown II* (1955) and developed school assignment policies that perpetuated continued segregation, fully supported by Governor Hodges (Batchelor, 2015).

For the next few years from 1956 to the early 1960s, there was a series of token efforts to desegregate (Allen & Daugherity, 2006; Batchelor, 2015). The city schools in Wake County and Wake County Schools board members considered allowing Black students to transfer to White schools. All requests were denied and appeals were denied in North Carolina and federal courts (Baker, 2015). The *Green v. the County School Board of New Kent County* (1968) in Virginia put national pressure on school districts to purposefully desegregate. Despite this ruling, the city schools in Wake County and Wake County Schools continued to resist integration for nearly another decade. Finally, in 1975 the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) under the Nixon Administration served notice to the city schools in Wake County that federal funding for their schools would be denied (Mickelson et al., 2015). The threat of no funding for schools was the final push needed for Wake County and the city leadership to consolidate the school system in 1976, setting in motion the framework for a 20-year diverse and balanced student population for the WCPSS (McMillian et al., 2018; Mickelson et al., 2015).

While the WCPSS was one of the earliest school districts to desegregate without additional court orders, it still took over two decades to fully desegregate their schools (Ayscue et al., 2016; Diem et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). From the mid-1970s to 2000, the WCPSS retained a student assignment policy that ensured 15% to 45% of the student population was a minority (Ayscue et al., 2016; Diem et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015). This practice ensured a balance of White and minority students in every school across the
school district. During the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the WCPSS along with most school districts in North Carolina experienced some of the greatest advancements in educational outcomes for all students but most especially for Black students (Batchelor, 2015). The main student assignment policy during this time was based on a system of busing students to a designated school to ensure the 15% to 45% Black-to-White student ratio (Ayscue et al., 2016; Mickelson et al., 2015). Under the forced busing school assignment policy, the achievement gap between Black and White students decreased, graduation rates increased for Black students, and the public support for a diverse and equitable school system was backed by the prominent leaders and business owners in Wake County (Mickelson et al., 2015; Sharpe, 2014).

The stability that had been experienced in the WCPSS for nearly 20 years since the HEW mandate started to quickly dissolve due to new legislative rulings on desegregation and student assignment policies. In the early 1990s, federal rulings allowed school districts to develop diversity policies over forced desegregation (Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, 1991; Freeman v. Pitts, 1992; Missouri v. Jenkins, 1995). In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled in Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1 that race could no longer be the sole factor for school assignment policies. This Supreme Court decision did not implicitly require school districts to abandon desegregation efforts, but the net effect of the ruling gave school districts greater latitude to redesign school assignment policies without regard for diversity or racially balanced schools. The WCPSS, responding to federal and Supreme Court rulings along with a simultaneous population boom, transitioned from a 2-decade period focused on racially balanced schools to a school district in constant conflict with stakeholders over implementing the right school assignment policies. Researchers are now asserting that these school assignment policy changes over the past 20 years led to a purposeful resegregation of
students in Wake County (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013).

**Resegregation Trends in the WCPSS**

The Supreme Court formally defined *segregation* and *desegregation* in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). As a result of these legal rulings, policies and practices were enacted across the United States that purposefully defined, and enforced, the demographic structure of the student population. In the Supreme Court decision in PICS (2007), making school assignment policies based solely on race unconstitutional, Justice Clarence Thomas noted that removing the requirement to assign students to schools based on race would not lead to a resegregation. Though the term resegregation was not formally defined in law, the changing demographics in school systems to less diverse student populations can be considered resegregation. The question is whether the growing trend of resegregation is purposeful, as in the historical precedent set by segregation and desegregation laws, or a phenomenon with no clear causal link.

The WCPSS is potentially experiencing resegregation without a clear causal link to specific school assignment policies, overt systemic racism, population growth, or population resettlement as the catalyst for the changing demographics within the school district (Ayscue et al., 2016; Williams & Houck, 2013). Current research is conflicting as to why resegregation is potentially occurring. One theory is the concept of *white flight*, the migration of White families to areas in Wake County that are home to predominantly higher income White neighborhoods, and subsequently, schools with a predominantly White student population (Ayscue et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2015; McMillian et al., 2018). A second theory that overlaps the *white flight* theory is that minority parents are no longer willing to have their students bused to schools far from
their neighborhoods to ensure a diverse student population (McMillian et al., 2018). A third theory is that school assignment practices in the past 20 years have led to resegregation within the school district and leadership is no longer concerned with diversity within the schools (Ayscue et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2015; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). A final possibility for resegregation trends is that shifting student demographic changes are due to a significant population growth over the past 20 years and subsequent demographic change in the overall Wake County population (Diem et al., 2015; NCES, 2019). The answer is potentially an intersectionality of all of the documented theories.

**Population Growth and Demographic Changes**

U.S. public schools continue to experience a change in the demographics of the student population. In the years between 2000 and 2017, the White student population in the U.S. decreased by 11%, the Black population decreased by 1%, and the Hispanic population increased by 9%, now nearly double the Black student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). From 2010 to 2020, Wake County experienced a 25.4% population growth (Wake County, n.d.). From 2010 to 2019, there was a 21% increase in the Black population, a 10.4% increase in the Hispanic population, and an 7.7% increase in the Asian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The WCPSS experienced a drastic change in student demographics between 1989 and 2010. The White student population decreased by nearly 24%, the Black population decreased by 10%, the Asian population increased by 62%, and the Hispanic population increased by 287% (Ayscue et al., 2016). The Wake County student population today is 45% White and 56% belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group (WCPSS, 2021). The shift in the demographics is potentially problematic if resegregation trends continue.
Typically, an increasing racial and ethnic minority population would indicate a decrease in income and education level, but the contrary is true in Wake County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). More than half of Wake County’s population has a bachelor’s degree or higher and average incomes are 128% higher than the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). One reason for the higher income levels in Wake County is the growing research industry and subsequent businesses supporting the industry growth. Wake County is home to a large research conglomerate, bordered by three cities in North Carolina, employing a significant population with advanced degrees. Many employees of the research conglomerate live in Wake County, and the local government seeks to maintain high educational standards in the school system to attract more research businesses to the area (Ayscue et al., 2016). Typically, the focus of the changing demographics and impact on the school district is on the White and Black population, but the growing Asian and Hispanic populations also require careful consideration when analyzing the impact of population change on resegregation trends.

**White Flight and Rejection of Busing**

_White flight_ is a social phenomenon identified as the purposeful migration of families to residential areas that are predominantly White (Hernandez, 2019; McPherson, 2011). This phenomenon is two-fold in that it is not only the resettlement of White families into White neighborhoods, but also the conscious decision to do so to avoid living in a diverse neighborhood (Logan et al., 2017). Residential segregation has been a societal norm since the first freed Blacks. Collectively, Black families have never experienced the same level of access to higher socioeconomic neighborhoods. Historically, racial and ethnic minorities have experienced “confinement to certain neighborhoods, [which] in turn limits where Black and Latino parents may send their children to school and so perpetuate the cycle of exclusion from opportunities for
upward mobility that have enabled many poor whites to rise” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 116). Residential segregation was a social norm prior to Brown v. Board of Education (1954), continued after the ruling, and has increased since the PICS (2007) decision (Fiel & Zhang, 2018). Without court ordered mandates, school districts are free to choose neighborhood-based school assignment policies that inevitably result in a more segregated school system (Davis et al., 2015; Reardon et al., 2012).

Typically, White neighborhoods are characterized by higher incomes and correlating higher academic outcomes (Owens et al., 2016). Conversely, the more segregated and diverse the school, the higher the poverty level and the lower the academic outcomes (Ayscue et al., 2016; Lane & White, 2010; Mickelson et al., 2013). Therefore, the net result of an ongoing white flight, and the increase in White housing enclaves, correlates directly to a negative effect on racial and ethnic minority student academic outcomes (Logan et al., 2017).

Until the release from court-ordered mandates to desegregate (PICS, 2007), minority students were being bused throughout Wake County to ensure a diverse student population at all county schools (McMillian et al., 2018). The school district had the option to allow busing to continue to ensure more balanced and diverse schools however, the idea of subjecting minority students to even longer busing routes was rejected by their parents (Ayscue et al., 2016; McDermott et al., 2015). The trend for White families to move to neighborhoods at the outer limits of the county and away from more diverse neighborhoods, leaves limited options for minorities students who either cannot afford to live in more affluent neighborhoods or who reject spending hours a day busing to access Whiter schools.
WCPSS School Assignment Policies

For the past 20 years, the WCPSS has experienced racial demographic changes in its schools, which are possibly due to school assignment policies (Ayscue et al., 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). Simultaneous with the federal rulings allowing for schools to move from race-based school assignment policies to diversity policies (Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, 1991; Freeman v. Pitts, 1992; Missouri v. Jenkins, 1995), the population boom put tremendous demand on the WCPSS to restructure and build new schools as well as rethink the school assignment policies. From the early 1990s until the time of this study, the WCPSS transitioned through socioeconomic, diversity, and race-neutral school assignment policies (McMillian et al., 2018; Thompson-Dorsey & Roulhac, 2019). In the 1990s, the WCPSS utilized a socioeconomic school assignment plan. The socioeconomic plan mandated that at least 40% of students in any given school must be enrolled in the federal free or reduced lunch program (Thompson-Dorsey & Roulhac, 2019). While not race-based or a diversity program, the majority of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program were dual-identified as racial or ethnic minorities. The socioeconomic plan helped to maintain a diverse student population similar to the post- Brown v. Board of Education (1954) desegregation practice requiring that 15% to 45% of the student population must be identified as Black.

In 2000, a new school assignment policy was put into place that was race-neutral and was based on a formula that took into consideration income level and achievement level (Diem et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). This policy slightly changed the demographics within the school district away from the diversity balance under desegregation (McMillian et al., 2018). By 2006, diversity within the student demographics had declined to the point that if the race-based school assignment policies of post-Brown v. Board of Education
(1954) were still in effect, nearly a third of the school district’s schools would be out of compliance with the legal mandates (Ayscue et al., 2016). In 2010, a newly elected school board implemented a controlled-choice school assignment policy (Ayscue et al., 2016; Williams & Houck, 2013). A controlled-choice student assignment plan stopped short of giving parents a choice, reminiscent of the Southern Manifesto, where their child attended school. Parents were able to rank order their preference of schools with the school district being the final authority on placement.

By 2012, the WCPSS School Board enacted a parental-choice school assignment policy (Diem et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). Under the 2012 plan, parents could choose their student’s elementary school. After elementary school, students were assigned to neighborhood schools. Schools in minority and/or low socioeconomic neighborhoods were selected less often than schools in White, more affluent neighborhoods (McMillian et al., 2018). This phenomenon, based on residential segregation practices, often leads to inequalities in education opportunities between White students and minority students (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Diem et al., 2015; Powers, 2007).

By 2016, school officials were limited in the types of diversity policies based on race that could be levied on the schools (Billingham & Hunt, 2016). Current policies allow parents to choose their student’s school for elementary school. As previously noted, White parents typically select schools with a high White student population in more affluent neighborhoods (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Frankenberg, 2017; McDermott et al., 2015). Billingham and Hunt’s (2016) study showed that parental-choice, as used in the WCPSS, leads to more segregation, or rather resegregation, with White families continuing to migrate away from minority population centers. As of 2018, the WCPSS had no plan to include diversity goals in its school assignment plan.
(McMillian et al., 2018). The 2018–2019 school year school assignment policy required families to register with their base (neighborhood) school for elementary school through high school. If the elementary school had reached maximum capacity, students were assigned to another school (WCPSS, 2018). Given the recent pandemic, the 2021–2022 school assignment policy was undetermined. The 2022–2023 school assignment policy was recently posted and addressed the rapid growth in the school district and overcrowding of some schools (WCPSS, 2021).

Race-based desegregation school assignment policy compared to the socioeconomic-based plan of the early 2000s yielded very little change in the demographics of the schools (McMillian et al., 2018). It was not until the neighborhood-based school assignment policies were enacted that there was a significant shift in the minority demographics in the schools. The neighborhood-based school assignment policies were only partially responsible for demographics shifts in the student population. The phenomenon of changing demographics is neither solely a school issue nor a residential issue, but rather an issue that is potentially caused by housing location preferences, socioeconomics, and race (Diem et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). Additionally, the population boom in Wake County since the mid-1980s has caused the school district to be in a reactionary mode every school year in anticipation of unexpected new student enrollment numbers. The negative effect of the population growth and neighborhood-based school assignment policies is the threat of yearly school reassignments for racial and ethnic minority students due to overcrowding (Mickelson et al., 2015).

**Summary**

The transitioning away from race-based plans under desegregation resulted in the WCPSS experiencing a shift away from a more diverse and balanced student population per school under desegregation (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). Once considered a
model of successful desegregation and racial balance, the WCPSS experienced a new phenomenon, a resegregation of White students and ethnic and racial minorities. If a resegregation phenomenon can be validated, the negative impact on racial and ethnic minorities is potentially significant. While the White and Black populations are declining in Wake County, the Asian and Hispanic populations are growing at sizable rates, further complicating the study of a potential resegregation trend. Initially, desegregation centered on the integration of White and Black students. However, a resegregation within the school district now includes all racial and ethnic minorities, along with a rapid projected population growth.

Local industry relies on a diverse school system with high academic outcomes to attract employees and new businesses. In recent years, the target employee and business populations have a high-tech background, and a large percentage are foreigners. A school district showing signs of segregating out White students from ethnic and racial minorities may negatively impact the county’s ability to attract high-tech businesses and highly skilled employees. Further complicating the potential resegregation phenomenon is the rapid growth of the Hispanic population. The Hispanic and Black populations in Wake County experience higher levels of poverty and lower education levels. A resegregation trend potentially harms these two populations the most.

Current research fails to validate a resegregation trend or a causal link for the phenomenon (Ayscue et al., 2016; Diem et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2015; Williams & Houck, 2013). While a few studies show a change in the school districts demographics, the cause is unclear. Removal of legal mandates to desegregate, white flight, population growth, systemic racism, and school assignment policies are all theorized as potential reasons for resegregation. It is also plausible that resegregation is not occurring and the shift in demographics is merely
typical of rapid growth and urban sprawl, potentially due to an increase in local employment opportunities. However, if resegregation is occurring, the impact on the most vulnerable populations—the poor and racial and ethnic minorities—may be profound and long-lasting. Continued research is needed to fully explore the reasons for a demographic shift in the student population and to either validate or invalidate current studies claiming resegregation is a valid phenomenon.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of resegregation in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). This chapter begins with describing the rationale for utilizing an exploratory case study design, followed by outlining one central research question and three sub-research questions. The setting, participant group, and sampling procedures for the case study are described. The researcher’s role in the study and my motivation for conducted the study are specified. Data collection types and analysis procedures commonly used in case study research designs are explained, ending with a description of the methodology used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings as well as ethical considerations affecting the study results.

Design

Qualitative studies emerged in anthropology and sociology fields more than 100 years ago originally as a method to study phenomena in a social setting (Given, 2008). Qualitative research is “concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced, or constituted” (Mason, 2002, p. 3). The focus on understanding how individuals interpret the world as part of a qualitative case study design allows flexibility to fully explore a social phenomenon through the lens of the participants. For the purpose of this study, I selected a case study design. Case studies have emerged as a more commonly used qualitative research design over the past 40 years (Harrison et al., 2017). The nature of the case study allows the researcher to look for themes or trends with a social construct that may be occurring and not clearly visible in quantitative studies (Yin, 2018). Case studies are bounded by location and time to look at a specific issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). The case study approach was an
appropriate design for exploring a resegregation trend because the study was limited to a single school district (bounded by location) and the current perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS (bounded by time).

When looking at a potential phenomenon based on human behavior and experiences, a more holistic approach was necessary to understand a phenomenon more fully through qualitative research. Current research on a potential resegregation trend in the WCPSS includes quantitative studies looking at the demographic changes in the county (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). However, demographic shifts in the student population are not enough to validate a resegregation trend. To evaluate the potential phenomenon of resegregation more fully, it was necessary to conduct a qualitative study, specifically an exploratory case study, to explore how a phenomenon occurred within the boundaries of the study (Yin, 2018).

I considered three types of case study designs for this study. The first was an explanatory case study to potentially determine why (Yin, 2014) resegregation is occurring in the WCPSS. However, current research has yet to validate a resegregation trend. A descriptive study was also considered but using this type of study also assumes that the phenomenon is valid, as well as limits my theory building ability with the descriptive study design (Yin, 2014). I ultimately selected an exploratory case study design because it allowed the most flexibility to examine a potential phenomenon of resegregation and to build upon the current research, allowing for future studies about the phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

As with any study, the purpose should be to add to the body of knowledge on a given topic (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Additionally, the end state of a qualitative case study is to answer the research question(s) and link the findings back to the purpose of the study (Yin, 2018) and potentially use the case study findings in concert with other quantitative research
findings to build a clear picture of the phenomenon (Harrison et al., 2017; Mason, 2002). The end goal was for the findings of this exploratory case study to add to both the qualitative and quantitative research bodies of knowledge on a potential resegregation trend in the WCPSS.

Previous segregation and desegregation policies were rooted in case law (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896; Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Currently, there are no federal or state rulings that would validate a legal requirement to resegregate students by race or ethnicity. Current quantitative research has asserted that resegregation is purposeful, but researchers are unable to validate the phenomenon using case law, relying instead on quantitative evidence of demographic changes to prove resegregation. Demographic changes, however, are not enough to validate a resegregation trend, especially when the research uses segregation and desegregation law as a point of comparison. Additional methods of research are needed to build a case supporting purposeful resegregation in the WCPSS.

To either support or refute current research findings asserting that there is a purposeful intent to resegregate students in the WCPSS by race and ethnicity, the use of an exploratory case study design allowed me to target a specific population—community stakeholders—with potential influence over changing demographics in the school system. In using an exploratory case study design, I was able to fully explore the individual perceptions of stakeholders, potentially identifying purposeful behaviors that might indicate intent to desegregate students by race or ethnicity. An exploratory case study allowed for flexibility to evaluate stakeholders’ perceptions and the ability to ask follow-on questions when appropriate.

**Research Questions**

The central research question was as follows:

What are the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS?
The sub-questions were as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the origins of resegregation in the WCPSS?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the importance of diversity in schools?
3. How do the perceptions of stakeholders about the relationship between race-neutral policies and resegregation reflect the phenomenon of interest convergence outlined in critical race theory?

**Setting**

The research for this study was conducted in Wake County, North Carolina, specifically interviewing stakeholders associated with the WCPSS. In school year 2020-2021, the Wake County Public School student population was 161,800, with 56% of the total student population identifying as a minority and 44% of the student population identifying as White (WCPSS, 2021). The WCPSS currently has 194 schools, with 62 of the schools designated as Title 1 schools (WCPSS, 2021). More than 43,000 of the 161,800 students were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program (WCPSS, 2021). The school system is administratively run by a local school board.

The WCPSS was selected based on its historical connection as a model for desegregation (Mickelson et al., 2015), its potential trend of resegregation (Ayscue et al., 2016; Mickelson et al., 2015), and its status as the largest school district in North Carolina (WCPSS, 2018) and one of the largest in the United States (McDermott et al., 2015). Stakeholders in the school district have shown a vested interest in maintaining the WCPSS as a diverse and high-quality education system. The main participants for the study were selected from community stakeholders, parents, and school administrators with either a past or present connection with the WCPSS.
Participants

This case study included community stakeholders. Stakeholders are defined as students, parents, school staff, school board members, district staff, taxpayers, business community members, and other community members vested in supporting the school system (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The participant pool for this study included parents, former and current school board members, and other community members associated with the WCPSS. Students and teachers were not included in the study.

Two sampling procedures were used in the study. The first was purposive sampling (Yin, 2014). While Yin (2014) discouraged the type of purposive sampling that specifically selects participants in a way that may ensure the findings are consistent with similar studies, Patton (2015) encourages purposive sampling in case studies to allow for the selection of participants in a way that supports the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling targets specific individuals or groups that can provide potentially meaningful input “based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study’s research questions” (Yin, 2011, p. 311). For the purpose of this exploratory case study, stakeholders with known ties and influence within the school system were part of the initial selection of participants for the study. For example, previous superintendents or past or current school board members were found using open-source searches on the Internet.

I used snowballing sampling as the second sampling procedure (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). Snowball sampling is a method in which I asked selected participants to recommend other stakeholders who were interested in participating in the study, specifically individuals who are either currently working in some capacity to support the WCPSS or have previously had a connection supporting the WCPSS. Potential participants initially included a former WCPSS
superintendent, current WCPSS superintendent, local community leaders, and parents with
students formerly enrolled in the WCPSS.

While this case study was focused on a specific phenomenon related to race and
ethnicity, the focus of the participant search was to select community stakeholders with potential
influence over the policies and programs that could affect or influence student demographics.
Race, ethnicity, and gender were secondary considerations for the selection of the participant
pool. The level of potential influence was directly related to interest-convergence and may not
have a correlating tie to race, ethnicity, or gender. Ultimately, the goal for the participant pool
was primarily focused on individuals who were able to provide meaningful input supporting the
research questions and the purpose of the study (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2011).

While case studies do not require a specific sample size (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014), the
sampling size should be determined when data collection has reached saturation and additional
data provide no new information to the study (Malterud et al., 2016; Mason, 2010). In qualitative
research, specifically case studies, the goal of establishing a sample size is not to achieve a set
number of participants but to obtain data that contribute to a better understanding of the
phenomenon being studied (Gentles et al., 2015). Depending on the richness of the data collected
during the study, as well as collecting enough data to support the research questions, the sample
size may be adjusted to explore the phenomenon more fully (Yin, 2011). For the purpose of this
exploratory case study, the initial target sample size was 10 to 15 stakeholders and ultimately
included 11 stakeholders. The rationale for the sample size was to get baseline perceptions of the
stakeholders about a resegregation phenomenon in their school district with the goal of having an
equal representation of parents, administrators, and other community stakeholders.
Procedures

The first step in conducting the case study was to apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Liberty University. After IRB approval (Appendix A), I contacted potential participants who had a current or past connection to the WCPSS. The potential participants included past and present superintendents and school board members, former school administrators, parents of formerly enrolled WCPSS students, and present and former mayors and community leaders, specifically those involved in the chamber of commerce who collaborate on school bond initiatives.

I then emailed recruitment letters to potential participants (Appendix B). For individuals who were interested in participating in the study, I asked them to complete a screening survey (Appendix C). After sending out the recruitment letter, I was able to recruit three individuals for the pilot study. During the pilot study I evaluated the data collection methods to determine if any adjustments were needed going forward. There were no adjustments made to the data collection methods. From the three individuals who participated in the pilot study, I utilized a snowball sampling procedure (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by asking each of them if they knew anyone who would be interested in being a participant the main dissertation study. The three pilot study individuals provided names, and I contacted these potential participants. I also researched other potential participants and organizations who had expressed an interest in resegregation, diversity, or school assignment policies in Wake County (e.g., WCPSS education advocates). I also researched social media sites and local media stories for WCPSS issues related to resegregation, diversity, or school assignment policies. The latter two recruiting methods yielded no additional participants.

After participants were secured, I scheduled individual interviews using Zoom.
Interviews were recorded on Zoom and transcribed using an independent transcription service. Individual interviews were followed by focus groups. The data collection concluded with some participants providing input through a reflective questionnaire. All interview and focus group materials and notes are kept locked in a keyed filing cabinet. Electronic records are secured in a password-protected computer and backed up to iCloud in a password-protected account.

The Researcher's Role

For this exploratory case study, I served as the instrument within the research process by the relationship building and data collection that occurred through participant interviews, focus groups, and a reflective questionnaire (Given, 2008; Pezalla et al., 2012). Relationship building in the interview process can be challenging and required a systemic approach to build trust between the interviewee and myself. Rapport building was necessary throughout the entire interview and focus groups. The following steps were used in each interview and focus group session to help build trust and rapport:

1. Explain to the participant his or her role in the case study, the reason for the study, and the value of the participant’s input to the greater scheme of education policies and practices (Ryan & Dundon, 2008).

2. Look for opportunities to empathize with the participant’s experiences or make connections through shared experiences (Bell et al., 2016; Ryan & Dundon, 2008).

3. Ensure that the participants understand that I will share findings and provide an opportunity for the participants to give feedback about how the participant’s contributions are characterized in the findings (Ryan & Dundon, 2008).

As a novice researcher, I understood that throughout this study I needed to be continually cognizant of any personal biases during data collection and the interpretation phase of the study.
I sought to record any biases in a reflective journal (Appendix I) throughout the study process that included my personal values, assumptions, or preconceived notions about the interviewee, and my feelings towards the interviewee during the interview (Ortlipp, 2008). Given the sensitive nature of the dissertation topic, I sought to record any relevant assumptions and biases related to systemic issues of culture, race, or ethnicity.

My experience working with issues in diversity and equity was extensive during my time in the military. In my second career as an educator, I have continued my interest in studying issues pertaining to diversity and equity. My informal research, conducted while I was a special education teacher, often overlapped with research pertaining to other vulnerable populations including minorities and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. During the course of my studies, I came across several studies pertaining to an emerging and ongoing re segregation trend in public schools. The culmination of my doctoral research led me to re segregation trends in public schools, but specifically a re segregation trend in a school district that was praised for being a model of desegregation, the WCPSS. I had no personal or professional connections within the WCPSS.

I have a very strong passion for public service, but especially serving and supporting the most vulnerable populations. I reflected on potential personal biases that may occur during the dissertation process that can skew my interpretation of the results. To ensure that I took an objective look at the findings, I secured assistance from two experts in the field of equity and diversity in education. Both have extensive experience working with teacher education, doctoral candidates, and consulting in the education community on issues involving diversity, equity, and inclusion in education.
Data Collection

Data collection included individual interviews, focus groups, and a reflective questionnaire. Individual interviews were conducted followed by focus groups. The interviews and focus groups were conducted using Zoom and transcribed by an independent agency. The reflective questionnaire was sent to the participants in an email after completion of the individual interviews and focus groups. Additionally, I kept a reflective journal throughout the data collection process to detail any relevant information about my interaction with the data collection process that may impact the collection process or findings.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) noted the importance of interviews as a key data collection method for case studies: “One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview . . . interviews can especially help by suggesting explanations (i.e., the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’) of key events, as well as the insights of reflecting participants’ relativist perspectives” (p. 176). A standard set of interview questions was used for all participants. However, the interview was semi-structured including open-ended questions that allowed the participants to provide more in-depth information about their perceptions. Participants signed consent forms prior to the interview. The interviews were recorded on Zoom, and I used a transcription agency to transcribe the interviews. The following questions were asked during the interview process, beginning with questions to build rapport with the participant and moving to open-ended questions that left room for expanded conversation.
Standardized open-ended Interview Questions (see Appendix F)

1. How long have you lived in Wake County, North Carolina?
2. What is your association with the WCPSS?
3. Who in your family attended the WCPSS?
4. Describe your understanding of past desegregation practices in the WCPSS.
5. Describe your understanding of the student demographics in the WCPSS prior to 2000.
6. Describe your understanding of the student demographics in the WCPSS since 2000 to present day.
7. Please describe past school assignment policies.
8. Please describe the current school assignment policy.
9. Are you aware of any WCPSS policies or practices that emphasize or foster diversity? If yes, can you describe them?
10. Do you know who is responsible for ensuring diverse schools? If yes, please describe how the person ensures diversity in the school system.
11. In what way(s) do those individuals influence policies affecting diversity?
12. In what way does the current school assignment policy address diversity within the school district?
13. In what way does the current school assignment policy ensure diversity within the school district?
14. Current research suggests there is a resegregation trend in the WCPSS. From your experience dealing with the school district, in what way is this assertion valid or invalid?
15. What additional information, if any, would you like to share about diversity and equity practices in the WCPSS?
Interview questions 1–3 provided an opportunity for the researcher to build a rapport with the participants (Patton, 2015) in order for the participants to describe their connection with the community and school system at-large. Questions 4–8 specifically addressed the participants’ understanding of past and current desegregation practices, student demographics with the school system, within the school district, and school assignment policies (Diem et al., 2015; Frankenberg, 2017). The open-ended nature of the questions allowed for participants to share their perceptions of the policies and practices within the school district and how those policies affect the level of importance of diversity in the school district (Marcotte & Dalane, 2019; Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018). Questions 9–13 addressed the societal norms discussed in critical race theory, particularly the aspects of critical race theory that pertain to race as a social construct, whereby race is a metaphor for how racial and ethnic minorities fit into society (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Questions 14–15 addressed the assertion by quantitative researchers that a resegregation phenomenon exists in the WCPSS, potentially due to school assignment policies (McMillian et al., 2018). Student demographic data related to resegregations trends were not provided to participants in order to evaluate how much participants knew about current trends. These questions also related to the assertion by critical race theorists that race-neutral policies directly contribute to perpetuating a system of racism (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Powers, 2007; Vue et al., 2017). The final question provided an opportunity for the participants to share personal experiences or perceptions about issues affecting diversity and equity in the school district that include other possible reasons for desegregation trends (Diem et al., 2015; Hilbert, 2018).
Focus Groups

Participants were asked to participate in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to further explore perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2014) about resegregation in the WCPSS. Focus groups provide an opportunity to explore similarities or differences in stakeholder perceptions within homogenous groups. A total of three focus groups were held, each one with a specific stakeholder population: parents of current or formerly enrolled students, former school administrators and current and former school board members, and other community stakeholders. The purpose of the three focus groups was to allow for as much homogeneity within each focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2014). The target number of participants for each focus group was four to six participants. The reason for the groups size was two-fold. The first was Yin’s (2018) recommendation to limit the total case study participants\ pool to 12 participants. The second was to allow for all participants to have the opportunity to share their perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2014). The focus group sizes were uneven with only 2 former school administrators and current or former school board members participating in the focus groups, 4 parents participating in the parent group, and 4 stakeholders participating in the community member group.

I scheduled the focus groups after the completion of individual interviews and on a date and time convenient for the participants. The focus groups were conducted using Zoom and recorded. I used an independent agency to transcribe the focus group recordings for use during the data analysis phase. The following questions were asked during the focus group:

Focus Group Questions (see Appendix G)

1. In what capacity are you associated with the WCPSS?
2. To what extent do you think Wake County values diversity and equity for the wider community?
3. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?
4. To what extent do you think Wake County leadership values diversity and equity for the wider community?
5. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?
6. To what extent does WCPSS leadership (administrators and school board members) value diversity and equity in the schools?
7. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?
8. There is a resegregation trend occurring in the student population in Wake County schools. To what extent were you aware of the trend?
9. How does knowing a resegregation trend is occurring make you feel about the importance placed on equity and diversity in the WCPSS?
10. What actions do you see being done in Wake County to address the resegregation trends in the WCPSS?
11. What additional information would you like to share about diversity practices in the WCPSS?

Question 1 provided an opportunity for each participant to identify his or her connection to the WCPSS; it also built rapport with the participants (Bell et al., 2016; Patton, 2015; Ryan & Dundon, 2008). Questions 2–7 were structured to get a deeper understanding of participants’ views on the value placed on diversity and equity as it pertains to the wider community, community leadership, and school leadership. These questions were tied directly to exploring interest-convergence outlined in CRT and the impact interest-convergence can have on policies
and programs affecting traditionally marginalized populations (Bell, 1995). Questions 8–11 addressed the current quantitative research asserting that a purposeful resegregation trend was occurring in Wake County and the participants’ awareness of the trend (Ayscue et al., 2016; Williams & Houck, 2013). The final question provided an opportunity for group participants to share their experiences about issues affecting diversity in the WCPSS (Diem et al., 2015; Hilbert, 2018).

**Reflective Questionnaire**

The data collection process included the participants answering four reflective questions related to the central research question. Yin (2018) offered survey interviews as a case study data collection method. Survey interviews were more structured than individual interviews but allowed the participants another opportunity to share their perspectives on the main focus of the case study. To allow for more flexibility in the participants’ responses than a typical survey with a set scale or response options, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire with four open-ended questions based on the central research question. The questions addressed the participants’ overall understanding of resegregation trends in the WCPSS. The questionnaire also provided an opportunity to reduce biases (Yin, 2018) that can often occur in interviews and focus groups when participants temper responses.

The reflective questionnaire included the following questions (Appendix H):

1. In what way do resegregation trends affect all students in the WCPSS?

2. In what way do resegregation trends affect racial and ethnic minority students in the WCPSS?

3. In what way do resegregation trends in the WCPSS affect the wider community in Wake County?
4. In what way do resegregation trends in the WCPSS affect racial and ethnic minorities in Wake County?

Questions 1 and 3 addressed how resegregation trends affect students of all races and ethnicities as well as the wider community in Wake County. Questions 2 and 4 addressed how resegregation trends specifically impact racial and ethnic minority students and the overall population in Wake County. Delineating the questions by all races and ethnicities, as well as addressing only racial and ethnic minority populations, offered the opportunity to evaluate if stakeholder perceptions differ depending on the demographics of the population. Differences in perceptions depending on the demographics can reveal possible biases and a propensity towards interest-convergence (Bell, 1995).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis included interpretive reading and explanation building from the interviews, focus groups, and reflective questionnaires. Case study data analysis often requires what Yin (2014) referred to as “working your data from the ground up” (p. 136). This exploratory case study yielded data not previously discussed in prior research. Interpretative reading allowed me to view the perceptions of stakeholders through their lived experiences and to build potential explanations for a resegregation phenomenon. Through the interpretive reading and explanation building, I found emerging patterns or themes that show potential relationships (Yin, 2014) between the participants, their perceptions and experiences, and the phenomenon of resegregation that can contribute to a theory as to why or how a resegregation in the WCPSS may be occurring.
Interpretive Reading

The purpose of interpretive reading of interview and focus groups responses was to discover the “interviewees’ interpretation and understandings, or their versions and accounts of how they make sense of social phenomena” (Mason, 2002, p. 149). Additionally, the reflective questionnaire responses were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the participants’ understanding of resegregation trends. The interview and focus group responses, as well as the reflective questionnaire responses, were analyzed to determine meaning beyond the literal interpretation of the responses. All responses were reviewed and annotated to identify any potential themes or similarities between the experiences or perceptions of the participants.

Explanation Building

Yin (2014) suggested, “To explain a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it or how or why something happened” (p. 147). From the interpretative reading of the interview and focus group transcripts, as well as the responses to the reflective questionnaire, I looked for potential relationships between the perceptions of stakeholders and a possible resegregation trend in the WCPSS. Exploring and identifying possible links to the phenomenon can provide insight into potential policy changes or awareness (Yin, 2014) needed among stakeholders and leaders in Wake County related to maintaining diverse schools.

Manual Coding

After the data collection was completed, I used manual coding to organize the data collected through the individual interviews, focus groups, reflective questionnaire, and field notes. During the interpretive reading and explanation building processes, I identified themes, key words, and ideas (Yin, 2014). From these key words or ideas, I developed individual codes,
categories, and subcategories. A spreadsheet was used to record and organize codes, categories, subcategories, and eventually subsequent themes from the data collection (Saldaña, 2016).

**Identification of Themes**

From the spreadsheet created during the manual coding process, I evaluated the information to identify emerging themes, key words, or ideas based on commonalities in the responses from the participants. I completed a second review and analysis of the transcripts from the individual interviews and focus groups, as well as the reflective questionnaire to identify additional emerging themes, key words, or ideas that were added to the spreadsheet. From this step in the data analysis phase, the main themes, key words, and ideas were compared to the research questions to identify the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation trends in the WCPSS as well as themes related to resegregation that may warrant future study.

**Trustworthiness**

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative studies is more challenging than in a quantitative or mixed methods studies due the absence of valid tools for measuring the data. The framework for this exploratory case study was modeled on the practices of naturalistic inquiry methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry methods took into consideration the challenge of establishing trustworthiness of study findings by incorporating several safeguards to ensure trustworthiness. Trustworthiness included evaluations of the data’s credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

**Credibility**

Credibility can be determined by triangulation and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness of the data in a qualitative study, I ensured triangulation of multiple data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mason, 2002; Yin, 2014).
Data sources included interviews, focus groups, and a reflective questionnaire. Findings based on triangulation of data lend credibility to the findings over using a single source (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mason, 2002; Yin, 2014). Participant member checks were conducted to ensure the accuracy of their transcripts.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and confirmability can be determined by peer reviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability and confirmability were addressed through the use of reliable case study protocols (Yin, 2014). The participant pool was selected to allow for a spectrum of perspectives (Yin, 2014). Any researcher bias was annotated in a reflective journal (Appendix I) and disclosed in the conclusion section of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lastly, a single peer review was conducted to provide feedback about potential errors in the data analysis. The peer reviewer looked at the research process to validate the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000) to “explore whether the results have resonance with the participants’ experience” (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1805).

**Transferability**

Transferability can be demonstrated by providing detailed findings that allow researchers to apply findings in subsequent studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was demonstrated through an audit trail (Appendix J). The audit trail demonstrated the reasons behind decisions made throughout the dissertation process, data collection methodology, as well as the thought process behind the coding and categorizing of the data and designation of themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2014). This study may potentially be replicated to explore the perceptions of stakeholders in any school district nationally. An exploratory case study design aims to determine how or why a phenomenon may be occurring (Yin, 2014). The study findings
can used in subsequent explanatory case studies on the same topic, as well as adding the body of literature for future quantitative studies examining the demographic shifts in public schools that appear to be a resegregation of students.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations were considered for this case study: informed consent of participants, equitable selection of participants, the protection of participants’ identities and associated data, and the IRB (Yin, 2014). I sought to ensure that the participants understood the full nature and intent of the study so that they could make an informed decision to participate in the study. As previously noted, participants were invited to review the original transcripts of their interviews, along with the findings of the study through participant member checks.

Equitable selection of participants is necessary to eliminate the possibility for overrepresentation or underrepresentation of any group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pseudonyms were used to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. A pseudonym was not used for the school district because district approval was not required to conduct the study and several sources used in the literature review specifically named the school district either in the title of the journal article or within the article content. Lastly, I carefully considered the implications of addressing a potential sensitive topic that could adversely affect the Wake County community at-large. I secured additional assistance from mentor professors, who are experts in diversity and equity issues in education, to review interview questions prior to the case study to avoid potentially offensive or sensitive topics pertaining to race.
Summary

This study utilized a qualitative exploratory case study design to explore the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS. Participants were selected from the three stakeholder categories: parents, administrators, and other community stakeholders. Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted using Zoom. Reflective questionnaires were conducted using email communication. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the data collection, participants were given the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and final analysis of their perceptions to make any corrections or clarifications. Data analysis was described and included procedures to ensure findings were credible, trustworthy, and took into consideration any issues related to ethics which could affect or influence the study’s findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of resegregation in Wake County Public School. This chapter begins with a brief background description for each participant as well as key ideas about resegregation trends in Wake County Public School System (WCPSS), followed by main themes that emerged from the data collection. Themes were developed after a thorough review of the individual interviews and focus group transcripts and a review of the reflective questionnaire responses. All 11 participants completed the individual interviews. For the focus groups, one participant was unavailable to participate. Only 5 of the 11 participants completed the reflective questionnaire. The chapter concludes with a summary of the themes from all data collection sources and the relevance of the themes to the research question and sub-questions.

Participants

Recruiting participants began by utilizing a social media and traditional media search on Wake County residents with either a present-day or past association with the WCPSS. The first participant to participate in the study was a long-standing member of the business community, a parent of former WCPSS students, and a current grandparent of a WCPSS student. He had a historical association with the school system and was the main conduit to my ability to use snowball sampling to find the remaining participants. In all, 11 community stakeholders participated in the study. The backgrounds of the participants varied in terms of their age and connection to the school system. The population was predominantly White with only one Black participant in the study population. Table 1 illustrates the demographic background of the participant pool.
Table 1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>46–55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabian</td>
<td>56–65</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>46–55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>26–35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>46–55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Community Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of resegregation in Wake County public schools. From the individual interviews, focus groups, and reflective questionnaires, there were overarching themes that emerged even before the formal data analysis and coding. Once I reviewed the transcripts and coded key words and ideas, the themes I noticed during the data collection were confirmed, along with subthemes and an unexpected theme unrelated to the research questions. The unexpected theme is potentially relevant to follow-up research on resegregation trends. The following section outlines the main themes and subthemes and responses to the research questions.
Table 2

*Themes and Subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent Understanding of Resegregation Trends</td>
<td>Low Level of Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate Level of Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Purposeful Resegregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Committal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent Understanding of Origins of Resegregation Trends</td>
<td>Mixed Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confident Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Focus in School District Centers on Personal Perceptions</td>
<td>Aligned with Personal Views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assumed High-Level of Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race</td>
<td>Inaction by Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Segregation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inconsistent Understanding of Resegregation Trends**

The first main theme that emerged from the data analysis was a general inconsistency in the understanding of the concept of resegregation trends. The participants’ understanding centered on their awareness level of resegregation trends in the school district. During the individual interview and focus group process, it was evident that participants had inconsistencies in their understanding of the words *resegregation* and *resegregation trends*, which appears to correlate directly to the participants’ awareness level. One of the current school board members, Gabriel, appeared well-versed in the terminology and highly aware of the trend, as he said,

*I think we were very aware of it. And we've seen it happening. It was promoted by one board frankly, that was in position for two years. And they did an inordinate amount of destruction to the concept of diversity.*
In contrast, Aaron, one of the parent participants, needed an explanation of the term *resegregation* and had a low awareness level, stating, “I have not witnessed or felt resegregation trends at the school we attend.”

The concept of *awareness level* was evident in the first theme related to resegregation trends, but it is also woven throughout subsequent themes and subthemes. In the first theme, most participants’ perspectives demonstrated inconsistency about their understanding of resegregation trends in the school district. At times, some participants seemed to understand there was a divide among races within the school district while also noting that the neighborhoods are diverse. Those same participants also demonstrated a low level of awareness of resegregation trends in the school district.

**Low Level of Awareness**

Most participants demonstrated a low level of awareness of resegregation trends in the school district. Jacob, a participant from the community stakeholder focus group, noted,

I don't have enough experience in the school system to comment on that. But after hearing it, I'm shocked. I thought it was the other way around, to be honest. I thought it was getting more and more diverse. And again, I think that is a good thing, is to make more diverse cultures, races, ethnicities, and then genders kind of work itself out.

Jacob’s perspective is significant as a person under the age of 35 and an attorney in the local community. The younger population was the farthest removed from the desegregation era and the most likely to show awareness of issues related to diversity.

**Moderate Level of Awareness**

A few members had a cursory understanding of resegregation trends in the school district. Community stakeholder, Laura, felt that diversity is important and necessary. However, she
struggled to give a clear answer about resegregation trends and what is currently happening in the school district, as demonstrated by her comment,

I mean, I feel like Jenny's school is very diverse. They do celebrations of different types, different holidays that different cultures celebrate, but I don't know of any policies or anything that the school does in general to make sure that discrimination is not happening.

In the case of Laura, the terminology around diversity and resegregation shifted throughout her interview and within the focus group. Evident in the above quotation, she spoke of diversity, different types, and discrimination and she appeared unsure about what terminology was related to resegregation.

**Not Purposeful Resegregation**

A subtheme aligned with resegregation trends in the school district is the perspective that resegregation by race is not purposeful in the school district. This means there was no deliberate effort by anyone in the community or within the school district to segregate students by race.

Hilary noted,

I think that there's been a natural migration that's taking place that I've seen in Southeast or Southwestern Wake, which is what I would call this area. And I'm sure it's in Raleigh and other areas where people just feel more comfortable living in those neighborhoods or enclaves as you would say.

Some of the participants alluded to resegregation trends associated with Southeast Asians and Chinese families moving to the county to work in the growing high-tech industry, petitioning for neighborhood schools, and segregating themselves from the broader community.
Non-Committal

The final subtheme related to the main theme, *Inconsistent Understanding of Resegregation Trends*, was identified by participants who are non-committal on issues related to race and resegregation trends. In general, the topics of segregation, desegregation, and resegregation can be somewhat controversial. Some participants were hesitant to say resegregation is occurring or not occurring. Aaron gave what I would consider a safe, non-committal answer:

In the event that resegregation trends are occurring, whether intentional or not, it would impact the student experience district wide in that it would damage the opportunity to create a diverse school environment for our kids which I believe is one of the crucial elements for a successful school system in Wake County.

Inconsistent Understanding of Origins of Resegregation Trends

During the interviews and focus groups, it was apparent that participants had varying levels of understanding about the origins of resegregation trends in the school district. For this study, purposeful resegregation was not assumed to be valid or presented to the participants as fact. Participants responded to interview and focus group questions that asked their perception of potential reasons for changing student demographic trends causing the schools to be less diverse. David’s understanding of the possible origins was similar to other participants showing inconsistencies regarding how or why the trend was occurring:

I would say it may be shifting some, but it's not a big community issue that it's shifting because it was my impression that African American leadership, as I referenced with the Southeast Raleigh school, and the leadership with ethnic groups in the wider leadership, generally are satisfied that there are opportunities than saying, "You got to go here, you
got to go here." So, I don't think there's any policy that's causing that, now. I think it's just a more natural evolution.

There were times throughout the interviews and focus groups where participants appeared uncomfortable with the questions, and their answers reflected that behavior by giving unclear or verbose answers resulting in inconsistencies or contradictions within their responses.

**Weak Understanding**

Most participants had a weak understanding of theories about why student demographics shifted over the past 20 years resulting in less diverse schools. Most participants had an awareness and tried to provide a theory about the origins. However, it was clear that the topic was one they rarely, if ever, considered. Catherine’s views about the origins of resegregation trends in the school district represented the general understanding of most participants with a weak understanding, and somewhat confusing, explanation about the origins of resegregation trends:

> And I know that we have a . . . I would guess. I don't know. I would guess that if we checked the charter school here, that it would be, I would think, at least 80% White kids, maybe more, up here at our charter school. Charters don't have to have a bus system.

**Confident Understanding**

Only one of the participants was confident in what he felt were the reasons for resegregation trends occurring in the school district. Gabriel, a current school board member, appeared to be the most knowledgeable about demographic changes in the school district noting,

> I think we were very aware of it. And we've seen it happening. It was promoted by one board frankly that was in position for two years. And they did an inordinate amount of destruction to the concept of diversity. And we've been seeing, they using social
economics as the indicator, a shift dramatically to where we were. Maybe we had a

couple of schools around 50% or 55% free reduced lunch. And now, we've got schools

that are 80 plus, and very little way to deal with it, to fix it.

Diversity Focus in School District Centers on Personal Perceptions

The participants’ perception of how much importance is placed on diversity either
aligned with their personal views on the importance of diversity or the assumption that the
school district places a high level of importance on diversity. Some of the inconsistencies in the
answers appear to come from when participants were more emotionally connected to their
responses, possibly speaking more to how much they do or do not view the importance of
diverse schools versus the importance the school district leadership places on maintaining
diverse schools.

Gabriel had a passionate view on the importance of diverse schools and his voice
inflection changed when discussing the topic:

After all, we're going to be working in a diverse environment. But for God's sake, don't
move my kid to that school, or don't move those kids to my school. So, there's an
intellectual understanding of the concept without understanding what the personal buy in
has to be to make it work.

Mary was equally disheartened by what she felt was a lack of focus on diversity by the creation
of new charter schools: “You see charter schools popping up here and there, and just based on
the little of knowledge of charter schools when I see them popping up, I think, there goes one
more hit for diversity.” Her statement was in reference to her perception that charters schools
were attended by mostly White students.
**Aligned with Personal Views**

For a majority of the participants, their view of the importance placed on fostering diversity in the school district aligned with their personal views on diversity. David was passionate about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and his perception was that diversity has always been a major focus for school leadership: “Even in the early days there was leadership support to move forward when the rest of the state wasn’t ready to move forward with desegregation.” In contrast, James’ experience in the school district led him to believe there was never support from school leadership to encourage or require diverse schools:

I would say that this was a decision made by the school boards after pressure was applied. That pressure being that your funds will be cut off. So the decision, I guess, had to be finally made by the boards, but I may not be correct about that because I really don’t know.

**Assumed High-Level of Focus**

A few of the participants assumed there was a higher level of support for diverse schools based on their observations in the community or at school events. Jacob correlated his experience at school events as evidence of community or school support for diverse schools:

And I don't go out often. But I was just out two weeks ago, and I thought it was very diverse. It wasn't shocking to see a group of people with everybody being a different race or multiple genders, et cetera. It just wasn't uncommon to see. So, I'm shocked to see that in the school system, where I think a lot of these progressive ideas are occurring, is not happening. I'm shocked to hear it, and I think it should be changed. And I think you just got to go to the source.

Similarly, Laura’s experience and perceptions aligned with Jacob’s:
I mean, I feel like Lisa's school is very diverse. They do celebrations of different types, different holidays that different cultures celebrate, but I don't know of any policies or anything that the school does in general to make sure that discrimination is not happening.

**Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race**

The final major theme of the data collection centered on potential reasons for the resegregation trends unrelated to race. This was of particular interest because current research suggests that resegregation trends in the school district are purposeful and directly correlated to race. Exploring other possible reasons for changes in the demographics is relevant to more fully understanding the resegregation trend and potential ramifications of the trend. David believed that if a resegregation trend was occurring, it was not related to a desire to segregate by race, and more due to a natural tendency for people of similar demographic groups to migrate to homogeneous neighborhoods and schools:

> And yeah, so I think it's a natural human desire to have role models that you can closely identify with. And I think that a lot of that is what's happening in the school system. It's a more natural, but it's not an effort to resegregate the schools is just my impression.

Similarly, Gregory assumed that changes in the demographics are due to factors other than race. His perception was that the increase in charter schools led to more White students petitioning to attend the charter school and racial and ethnic minority students have a lower enrollment because “charter schools don’t provide transportation.”

**Inaction by Community**

Three subthemes emerged from the main theme of *Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race*. The first subtheme was that resegregation trends are occurring due
to the inaction by the community to intervene to support and demand diverse schools. Fabian noted, “There is really no system-wide checks and balances to make sure that resources were being appropriately distributed.” He further expanded on his perception of the inaction by the community to maintain diverse schools:

So, there's a lot of people who have moved to the area because it's such a great place to live. And there are great schools, but aren't quite as committed to rolling up their sleeves to do the hard work that it takes to build and maintain that strong school system. And so, the community has not done as effective job, I think is it needs to, to educate the newcomers on the value of having a strong diverse system so that every school is strong on and thus the commitment. The commitment to a strong diverse system is not as county wide as it was a couple decades ago.

_Economic Segregation_

A second subtheme, _Economic Segregation_, emerged unrelated to race as a reason for resegregation trends. Participants noted in interviews and the focus groups that resegregation trends are potentially due to economic segregation. Participants suggested that racial and ethnic minorities typically live in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. Laura affirmed the idea of economic segregation:

Property at top of my neighborhood got bought for a school here in Wake County. And there's a neighborhood going in right behind my neighborhood, and all of those homes are over $400,000, starting. And yet, right down the street up here, we have probably three or four trailer parks areas. I mean, that's going to get bought up. It's just a matter of time. So you're pushing people out and putting in big homes. I think that in itself is causing a lot of this on its own, not necessarily intention by the school system to do that.
**Self-Interest**

The final subtheme of the main theme, *Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race*, was self-interest. Self-interest was apparent in some participants’ testimony when describing their own views on the potential causes of resegregation trends. Aaron admitted that he had not been concerned about diversity within the student population because it did not affect his family: “It’s a long way to say I don’t know that I have an answer other or a thought other than it hasn’t seemed to impact where my kids go to school, which are long-standing schools.”

**Outlier Data and Findings**

Two outlier findings emerged from the data analysis. The first outlier was language used by some of the White participants during the interviews and focus groups that indicated a separation by race between the White participants and racial and ethnic minorities. Participants used implicit language to describe or identify racial and ethnic minorities. The second outlier was participants who indicated that resegregation trends were due to a purposeful resegregation by Southeast Asians and Chinese immigrants in the community. Previous research studies on resegregation trends in the school district do not indicate these outliers as possible reasons for the change in the student demographics and they potentially warrant further research.

**Implicit Language When Speaking about Racial and Ethnic Minorities**

Throughout the data collection, I noticed that some of the White participants used language that either explicitly identified themselves from the rest of the community population. While Mary did not explicitly say that busing would include only racial and ethnic minorities, she used language that indicated there were two groups: her children and other children. Mary
noted, “I don't want my kids bused and that's selfish of me but I don't, and I wouldn't want other kids to be bused. I'm part of that. I think that kind of lends to the start of the resegregation.”

James, the only Black participant in the study, addressed the general use of implicit language by White people as a social norm:

They will use language that everybody understands, says this, “I don't want my kids going to school with Black kids. I want segregation because of neighborhood schools, or because the data indicates that the scores at this school are higher,” or something like that. These are just excuses and it’s set to implicit in those notions, is that you think as a White person, that you are entitled to certain resources, and implicit that Blacks do not deserve, implicit in those notions is that you think you are better and superior to Black people, therefore let's shut them over here, let's separate them because they are an inferior group of people, and we're better than they, and I don't want to be associated with them. That's what's implicit in these excuses as I see it.

**Purposeful Segregation by Southeast Asians and Chinese Immigrants**

Two of the participants highlighted the increase of Southeast Asians and Chinese immigrants in the community over the years. Hilary perceived that most Southeast Asian immigrants in Wake County lobby to have separate neighborhoods, schools, and community supports:

I think a lot of people even consider Morrisville more of an Indian residential community because Morrisville did not have a tax base that was heavily leaned towards residential. And I know that for a fact, from working with the Morrisville chamber, that their tax base was heavily corporate base. And when they started building residential and all these new residential neighborhoods, you saw the migration of different enclaves in the Brown
population, moving to those neighborhoods. It was easy for them. And then they could establish temples and so forth, surrounding their culture.

**Research Question Responses**

The central research question and three sub-questions centered on the perceptions of the participants about resegregation trends in the WCPSS. The interview questions were crafted to evaluate how much the participants knew about changing student demographics in the school district, when those demographics changes began, how much importance school leadership and the community placed on diverse schools, and how policies related to school assignments may have created a resegregation of students by race. Through the participant responses, I hoped to be able to answer the research questions. The answers to the research questions do not exist in current research and they are important to developing answers to the *why* and *how* behind the shifting student demographics in the WCPSS over the past 20 years.

**Central Research Question**

The central research question asked, *What are the perceptions of stakeholders about resegregation in the WCPSS?* The participants struggled to answer this question as most were unaware of the shifting student demographics in the school district. Two of the participants attended the schools in the district during the time of segregation and desegregation. Both are long-time residents of Wake County and both were very surprised that the topic of resegregation in their district was already part of published studies and the topic of my dissertation. James remarked,

*You're informing me that this is the case, that we are seeing a trend toward resegregation. That's very discouraging because it just defeats everything I think that we want to say that we are, and what we want to do, and who we want to be not only as a community, but as*
a nation from the very beginning. And so I find it very discouraging.

Catherine was likewise concerned about a potential resegregation trend in the school district, explaining that diversity is what she expected when she enrolled her children in the WCPSS:

Look, that's part of the reason why I wanted my kids to be in public school was to experience people that look different from them and people who come from different places, and it's disturbing that we would know it and let it happen again to me.

Sub-Question 1

The first sub-question asked, What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the origins of resegregation? This research question sought to understand what the participants understood about changing demographics in the schools that shows a shift towards less diverse schools. Most participants were unaware of any one factor causing a shift in the demographics. Aaron was unsure resegregation was occurring but speculated that if it was occurring, the net effects would cause continued strain on race relations. His stated, “If we are not providing racially and economically diverse school program for our kids, their generation will be yet another that grows up with negative perceptions about other groups.” Additionally, none of the participants from the parent group believed there was a shift in the student demographics in their child’s school.

Sub-Question 2

The second sub-question asked, What are the perceptions of stakeholders about the importance of diversity in schools? Interview and focus group questions that were related to the importance placed on diversity in the schools yielded the most discussion from all participants. All participants appeared very interested and passionate about the topic of diversity and the importance of diversity in the schools. Gabriel believes diversity is key to a strong social construct. He questioned whether the school district was doing a good job at maintaining diverse
schools: “Are we to prepare students for success in a diverse workplace and an ever-changing world? If so, creating diverse public schools is essential to developing well-prepared students of every social-economic, ethnic of racial group.”

The participants were sometimes hesitant to answer questions about topics for which they had no background knowledge. All participants offered their perspective, even if it was a dissenting or negative opinion about the importance the school district leadership or community places on diversity. While Hilary noted during her individual interview how she has been a long-time supporter of diversity, she was unsure about school leadership being prepared to address issues related to resegregation trends and diversity. She questioned the diversity of the school board itself and if their backgrounds made them qualified to address the complex nature of diversity conversations: “I don't know that our school board members is diverse enough to handle the conversation. So, I don't know. I might have to take a look.”

Sub-Question 3

The final sub-question asked, How do the perceptions of stakeholders about the relationship between race-neutral policies and resegregation reflect the phenomenon of interest convergence outlined in critical race theory? This sub-question was more difficult to answer. However, there was evidence that self-interest is a potential reason for resegregation trends in the school district. The participants’ answers did not point to a purposeful movement to segregate students by race but that resegregation trends may be an inadvertent consequence of school assignment policies. One participant was a current school board member and noted during his personal interview that the removal of race as a factor for school assignment policies negatively affected the demographics within the schools:
So that choice plan completely disrupted everything. When I and my colleagues retook the majority on the board of education, we were able to end that plan, but I would say that we have at best been able to put a finger in the dike to keep the resegregation from getting extremely worse, but the particularly economic resegregation, and the economic resegregation correlates with racial segregation, has still increased over the decade that I have been on the board of education, even though that’s a major commitment area of mine is to make sure we retain integrated schools.

Summary

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine stakeholder perceptions of resegregation in the WCPSS. Four main themes emerged from the data analysis: Inconsistent Understanding of Resegregation Trends, Inconsistent Understanding of Origins of Resegregation Trends, Diversity Focus in School District Centers on Personal Perceptions, and Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race. Two significant findings emerged from the theme and subtheme development. The first was the collective importance the participants place on maintaining diverse schools. All participants believed that diversity within the schools is important for overall student development, even if they disagreed on the importance school leadership placed on diversity. The second significant finding was the lack of awareness of nearly all of the participants about the changing student demographics resulting in more segregated schools within their school district. Overall, participants appeared to have a genuine concern about resegregation trends and what actions need to happen next to address the phenomenon.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to examine community stakeholders’ perceptions of resegregation in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings based on the themes and subthemes identified in Chapter Four. Interpretations of the findings are outlined followed by the implications of the findings for policy and practice and the implications on theoretical and methodological context. Limitations and delimitations of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with the recommendations for future research and a chapter summary.

Discussion

The study findings demonstrated a disconnect between stakeholders’ perceptions of resegregation trends in the WCPSS and the importance most participants placed on maintaining diverse schools. In some cases, the participants had or have direct influence over student school assignment policies. The interpretation of the findings indicated implications for policy and practices affecting student assignment policies, as well as theoretical and empirical implications associated with the theoretical framework, and unforeseen issues for the school district to accurately track student demographics because of the pandemic and social issues in the past 2 years. Lastly, recommendations for future research were discussed.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of the findings was based on the thematic findings identified during the data analysis and were important to understand from a policy and practice standpoint as less diverse schools are shown to directly correlate to lower academic achievement among racial and ethnic minority students.
Summary of Thematic Findings

Four main themes emerged from the data analysis: Inconsistent Understanding of Resegregation Trends, Inconsistent Understanding of Origins of Resegregation Trends, Diversity Focus in School District Centers on Personal Perceptions, and Resegregation Trends Are Due to Reasons Unrelated to Race. There were two findings that were apparent even in the early stages of interviewing participants and the focus groups. The first was that all participants believe diverse schools are necessary and important. The second finding was that all but two of the participants had an awareness of the changing demographics in the school system, and most were shocked to learn that schools were becoming more segregated by race.

Diversity Is a Must in an Education System. Participants overwhelmingly agree about the importance of diversity within the student population. The changing demographics in the WCPSS is concerning, and the school data for the past 20 years show a resegregation trend. When laws and policies were in place to require integrated schools, the schools maintained more diverse populations. Once student assignment policies were no longer focused on race as a basis for school assignment, the schools became increasingly less diverse. This phenomenon was occurring nationally possibly due to PICS (2007) which made it unconstitutional to use race as a sole determinant for student assignments. The participants in this study wanted more diverse schools. The question remains whether they will personally take action to ensure diverse schools in their community.

Awareness of Resegregation Trends Is Minimal. Personal awareness of any issue related to diversity in the United States today is minimal. Race-related social issues and events such as George Floyd’s death, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and a growing focus on critical race theory in the past 2 years have raised awareness slightly, and the participants
demonstrated during their personal interviews and focus groups a general awareness of diversity topics. There was a disconnect, however, between the participants’ general interest in diversity and their awareness of the declining diversity in the student demographics within the WCPSS. Collectively, participants had strong feelings about wanting diverse schools and a genuine concern about the resegregation trends. Except for two participants, none of the participants were aware of the changing student demographics. Their perception was that the schools were diverse and those perceptions were based on their personal experience with the school system or within the community. For example, if there are racial or ethnic minorities visible in the school or community, that phenomenon directly correlated to an adequately diverse community.

**Implications for Policy or Practice**

A shift in student demographics that creates less diverse schools is a warning for stakeholders to do a deeper dive into the cause for a demographic shift. All stakeholders are critical to the evaluation of a resegregation trend. Changes in student demographics must be addressed on a social as well as a policy level. School systems represent the local population, and as such, the entire community has a responsibility to address resegregation trends to ensure no further segregation of students by race and ethnicity occurs; the community must also ensure that a purposeful plan is put into place to promote more diverse schools.

**Implications for Policy**

The shift in WCPSS student demographics over the past 20 years can be attributed to factors outside of the suggested purposeful student segregation by race. The first factor is due to legislative changes, such as PICS (2007), which no longer allows race to be used as the single determining factor for student school assignment policies. There is a need to review federal legislation aimed at creating education equity that has inadvertently created less equitable and
diverse schools. The justification for the change in the law would be to ensure more diverse schools. At a state level, the North Carolina Department of Education needs to identify school districts where the demographics have shifted to a less diverse student population. At the local level, WCPSS’s Board of Education and community stakeholders need to hold any further changes to the student assignment policies until they identify the reasons for the resegregation trend to adjust student assignment policies that ensure more diverse schools.

The second reason intersects with the first reason. The increase in predominantly White neighborhoods as part of the county’s natural expansion due to population growth may be further exacerbating the shift in student demographics. Current student assignment policies place students in their neighborhood school whenever possible. The increase in predominately White neighborhoods results in predominantly White schools. During the individual interviews, one of the current board members noted that when students were bused to ensure more diverse schools, the growth of the county made it a logistical challenge to coordinate transportation, and student commute times often exceeded an hour each way.

The lack of legislation to ensure diverse schools, the increase in predominately White neighborhoods and their associated neighborhood schools, and the rapid growth over the past two decades in Wake County suggest that policymakers need to assess whether the school district is too large to manage as a single entity; dividing the school district into two or more school districts to create a more manageable system may be warranted. This option would need very careful planning and consideration to avoid dividing the school district in a way that clusters schools with a predominately White population in one district and the other schools in another. If not carefully planned to ensure diverse school districts, the WCPSS could return to its pre-Brown structure of a Raleigh city school system and a Wake County school system.
Implications for Practice

The implications of the findings of this study may be beyond the scope of what the school district is able to address without additional support at the state and federal level. National trends indicate changing demographics across the country leading to less diverse schools (McPherson, 2011; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Given the low level of awareness of most of this study’s participants about a 20-year trend of shifting student demographics, it is not realistic to believe that past school board members understood the implications of the frequent student assignment policy changes over the last 20 years. The rapid growth of the school district may have caused the school board members to react in a way to manage the growth without considering how student demographics may shift as a result. While all other community stakeholders have some influence over school policies and practices, the school board members likely have the most influence over practice. This study included only two school board members; a larger sample of past and present school board members may provide a better analysis of what factors were taken into consideration during the multiple student assignment policy changes post-PICS (2007).

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework for this study was critical race theory. While critical race theory originally targeted inequity and injustice towards Blacks (Bell, 1995), Delgado and Stefancic (2017) expanded on the original theory to include all racial and ethnic minority populations. Collectively, the study participants agreed that Wake County has a growing racial and ethnic population that includes Hispanics, Chinese, and Southeast Asian populations that may also be adversely affected by less diverse schools. The increase in the different racial and ethnic populations in Wake County over the past 20 years makes it appropriate to apply Delgado and Stefancic’s (2017) expanded critical race theory definition. Using the original critical race
theory’s focus on only the Black population limits that ability to more holistically examine changing demographic trends in the WCPSS and in future research aimed at school districts nationally which are experiencing the same phenomenon.

Previous research has suggested that the demographic shift was a purposeful act by stakeholders to resegregate students by race (Ayscue et al., 2016; McMillian et al., 2018). Critical race theory points to systemic and/or social influences as the reason for disparities among Blacks and Whites and not explicit acts to discriminate (Bell, 1995). For example, WCPSS race-neutral student assignment policies because of PICS (2007) are a potential cause for the changing demographics and not necessarily a willful act by the school board to divide students by race or ethnicity. Another tenet of critical race theory, interest-convergence, is a potential cause for changing demographics in the WCPSS where policymakers determined student assignment policies based on unconscious bias but not necessarily a willful act to segregate by race. The changing student demographics in the WCPSS is concerning and warrants a more thorough review of the issue through Delgado and Stefancie’s (2017) expanded critical race theory definition.

**Empirical Implications**

While the purpose of this study was not to show causation for a student demographic shift, several events occurred in parallel with the shifting demographics: (a) the Supreme Court passing PICS (2007), (b) frequent changes to the student assignment policies, (c) rapid population growth, (d) an increase in the number of predominantly White neighborhoods, and (e) a lack of awareness by stakeholders that a demographic change had occurred over the past 20 years. Current student demographics in the WCPSS show that more than half of students identify as racial or ethnic minorities and more than a quarter receive free and reduced lunch, a common
indicator of lower socioeconomic status (WCPSS, 2021). Given that the White student population is the minority population today compared to the total number of students identifying as racial or ethnic minorities should result in more diverse schools and not less. The shift away from diverse schools, the rise in nearly all-White schools, and the increase in higher socioeconomic, predominantly White neighborhoods is concerning and should be a priority issue to evaluate by community stakeholders.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has potentially complicated the empirical implications. Like most school districts around the nation, the WCPSS has experienced nearly 2 years of operating in crisis mode to best support students and their families. The school board halted all in-person research and data collection involving students, teachers, and parents in 2019, which was still in place at the time of this study in 2021 (WCPSS, n.d.). Published internal data on the WCPSS website are dated and appear to show the same data as in 2019 to include equity goals with a target goal date of 2020 and no update as of November 2021 (WCPSS, n.d.). Additionally, for the 2021–2022 school year, all WCPSS students can receive free breakfast and lunch regardless of income level as part of the school district’s COVID-19 response (WCPSS, n.d.). Due to the pandemic, there is at a minimum of a 2-year gap in data collection that will potentially affect the accuracy of changes in student demographics based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Limitations and Delimitations

The most profound limitation of this study was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to a larger and more diverse participant pool was impossible due to restrictions by the school district to interview current teachers and administrators. By using an exploratory case study, I had intended to do in-person interviews and focus groups. Due to COVID-19, the interviews and
focus groups were conducted using Zoom. The inability to make an in-person connection with participants and to evaluate their body language during the interviews and focus groups was potentially limiting. Another limitation of the study, which can only be inferred at this time and is difficult to validate, was the cultural challenges as a result of George Floyd’s death in May 2020. While discussing issues of race is often a sensitive topic, the events surrounding George Floyd’s death resulted in a heightened emotional state for the country. Individuals who initially indicated an interest in participating in my study were unwilling to participate. As a result, the demographics of the participants were predominantly White and this limited a more holistic evaluation about perceptions of stakeholders about potential resegregation trends. Between the pandemic and increased sensitivity about race issues in the country, I could have abandoned the study but I chose to move forward with a limited participant pool with the hope that I would be able to conduct research at a later date.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In consideration of the near absence of qualitative research on resegregation trends in the WCPSS or nationally as well as limited and potentially invalid quantitative research suggesting demographic changes are purposeful acts by stakeholders, future research should be focused on qualitative and mixed-methods research. Research on demographic changes should be focused in two areas: (a) an expanded definition of critical race theory that includes all racial and ethnic minorities and (b) potential causes for the demographic changes using both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate each potential cause.

**Expanded Critical Race Theory Focus**

Critical race theory was based on the idea that race is a social construct, and as such, laws and policies are implicitly racist and adversely affect the Black population (Bell, 1995; Delgado
The expanded critical race theory focus on all racial and ethnic minorities is critical to evaluating resegregation trends in the WCPSS. The demographic shift resulting in less diverse schools not only includes Black students but also Brown students. Future WCPSS research should begin by focusing on Black and Brown students. Based on the participants interviews for this study, the Chinese population and Southeast Asian student populations may need to be evaluated separately as those student populations are more likely to be located in the predominantly White schools and both population groups are lobbying for their own neighborhood schools. If this is valid, their push for a neighborhood school would be a different type of segregation where the minority group self-selects to separate from the rest of the population.

Using Mixed Methods to Evaluate Potential Causes for Resegregation Trends

Quantitative studies alone on resegregation trends are unlikely to validate a trend. The complexity of changing student demographics requires both a review of the quantitative data to identify school districts or schools with a negative trend line for diverse schools and qualitative data collection to understand the policies, practices, and stakeholder perspectives potentially affecting student demographics. In the case of the WCPSS, there are several potential factors causing a shift in the student demographics. The change in demographics is likely due to more than one factor and each should be evaluated separately before evaluating the factors together. For example, student assignment policies should be evaluated in aggregate and compared to the quantitative data during the effective dates of the assignment policy. Separately, the population growth and subsequent growth of new housing areas should be compared to a change in the student demographics for the students assigned to neighborhood schools.
Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, the WCPSS experienced a change in student demographics resulting in less diverse schools. Once considered a model for school desegregation practices, the WCPSS now faces what should be considered a critical issue in the diversity, equity, and inclusion of Black and Brown students in the school district. Two key implications emerged from this study. The first is the lack of awareness by stakeholders about two decades of shifting student demographics leading to less diverse schools. The second is a need for a purposeful plan by the entire community to address the disparities between the Black and Brown student populations and the rest of the student population. Most participants in the study were unaware of the shifting demographics in the student population and that schools were becoming increasingly segregated by race and ethnicity. While this study sought to understand the perspectives of stakeholders about resegregation trends, further research is needed to determine the reason(s) for the changing demographics.

The low-level awareness among the participants about the trends did not appear to correlate with a willingness level to address a resegregation trend. The study participants openly voiced a desire to maintain diverse schools, but none were able to identify potential strategies for reversing the resegregation trends. Previous research findings indicate that maintaining diverse schools directly correlates with higher academic outcomes for all students but in particular those from racial and ethnic minorities. Conversely, resegregation trends and less diverse schools will result in lower academic outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. While Brown v. Board of Education (1954) laid the ground work to provide equal access to education, maintaining equitable access to education has yet to occur in the United States. In the case of the WCPSS, the schools have the historical framework to ensure equitable access to education. Their challenge as
a community is to create a purposeful plan to ensure equitable access to education and to reverse resegregation trends in a complex and growing school system.
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January 18, 2021

Margaret Crowe
Gail Collins

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-274 AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF RESEGREGATION IN JAMES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM: PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Dear Margaret Crowe, Gail Collins:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.
If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear (Stakeholder’s Name):

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to explore the perceptions of community stakeholders in Wake County about a potential student resegregation trend in the public school system and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

In order to participate you must meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least 18 years old and;
2. Current or former resident of Wake County or;
3. Currently or formerly involved in activities or programs associated with Wake County Public School System or;
4. Formerly employed by Wake County Public School System; or
5. Currently or formerly a member of the Wake County Board of Education; or
6. A parent or guardian of a current or former student in Wake County Public Schools

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in an interview with me that should last approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted using Zoom. The interview will be recorded for later transcription of the interview.
2. Participate in a focus group with other community stakeholders that should last approximately one hour. The focus group will be conducted using Zoom and recorded for later transcription of the group responses.
3. Complete a reflexive questionnaire containing four questions related to the study through email. This should take no more than 30 minutes.
4. Review a copy of the interview and focus group transcripts. This should take no more than 15 minutes.

Your name and/or other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please complete the Participant Screening Survey to determine your eligibility. The survey will automatically be sent back to me for review. If you are selected to participate, you will be contacted by email to schedule your interview. Attached to the email will be a consent form. The consent form will contain more detailed information about my study. The consent form will need to be signed and returned to me by the start of the interview.
If you have any questions about this request to participate in my research study, please contact me at mcrowe4@liberty.edu or call me at 540-351-2347.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Margie Crowe
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
Appendix C: Screening Survey

This survey will be included in the participant recruitment letter using a hyperlink to the survey via Qualtrics Experience Management Platform: Participant Screening Survey. The participants must meet the criteria of being at least 18 years of age or older, a current or former resident of Wake County and at least one of the criteria listed in Questions 3 through 6. The survey includes a built-in skip logic to take the participants through the survey, adjusting the questions they see based on their answers to previous questions.

The survey includes the following information/questions:

1. Are you 18 years of age or over? (Yes/No)

2. Are you a current or former resident of Wake County? (Yes/No)

3. Are you currently or formerly involved in activities associated with Wake County Public School System? (Yes/No)

4. Are you formerly employed as an administrator by Wake County Public School System? (Yes/No)

5. Are you currently or formerly a member of the Wake County Board of Education? (Yes/No)

6. Are you a parent or guardian of a current or former student in Wake County Public Schools? (Yes/No)?

Demographic Information will automatically be asked in the survey if the participant first meets the participant criteria listed above.

Participant’s Name

Participant’s Email

Gender: Male, Female, Prefer Not to Answer

Race/Ethnicity: Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Two or More, Other/Unknown, White, or Prefer Not to Answer

Age: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 65+

Description of the participant’s involvement in or association with Wake County Public Schools
Appendix D: Participant Follow-Up Emails

Select Email

Date

Dear (Stakeholder’s Name):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

Attached to this email is a consent form. Please fill out the form and email the form back to me at mcrowe4@liberty.edu prior to the interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Margie Crowe
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Non-Select Email

Date

Dear (Stakeholder’s Name):

Thank you for your interest in my research study. Unfortunately, you did not meet the criteria to participate based on the following reason: (List reason; e.g. under the age of 18)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Margie Crowe
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: An Exploratory Case Study of Re-segregation in Wake County Public Schools System: Perceptions of Community Stakeholders
Principal Investigator: Margaret Crowe, Liberty University, School of Education

Invocation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate you must be at least 18 years of age or older and a current or former resident of Wake County. You must also be either currently or formerly involved in activities or programs associated with Wake County Public Schools System, formerly employed as an administrator by Wake County Public Schools System, currently or formerly a member of the Wake County Board of Education, or a parent or guardian of a current or former student in Wake County Public Schools System. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of the study is to examine stakeholder perceptions of about re-segregation in James County Public Schools System.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

5. Participate in an interview that should last approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted using Zoom and will be video-recorded.
6. Participate in a focus group that should last approximately one hour. The focus group will be conducted using Zoom and will be video-recorded.
7. Complete a questionnaire through email. The questionnaire will be emailed to participants for review upon completion of the interview and focus group and should be returned within a week of receipt through email to mcrowe4@liberty.edu. This should take no more than 30 minutes.
8. Review a copy of the interview and focus group transcripts. The transcripts will be emailed to participants for review within one day of completing the interview and focus group. The transcripts should be returned within a week of receipt through email to mcrowe4@liberty.edu. This should take no more than 15 minutes to review.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include adding to the body of research to establish a clear definition of re-segregation in schools.
### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, interviews and focus groups recorded by Zoom will be conducted using a Personal Meeting ID and recording encryption. A password will be required to access interviews and focus groups sessions.
- Demographic data will be collected from eligible participants after they have been screened but that data will remain confidential.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

### Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Margaret Crowe. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Gail Collins, at.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Consent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________
Printed Subject Name

____________________________________
Signature and Date
Appendix F: Interview Questions

16. How long have you lived in Wake County, North Carolina?

17. What is your association with the WCPSS?

18. Who in your family attended the WCPSS?

19. Describe your understanding of past desegregation practices in the WCPSS.

20. Describe your understanding of the student demographics in the WCPSS prior to 2000.

21. Describe your understanding of the student demographics in the WCPSS since 2000 to present day.

22. Please describe past school assignment policies.

23. Please describe the current school assignment policy.

24. Are you aware of any WCPSS policies or practices that emphasize or foster diversity? If yes, can you describe them?

25. Do you know who is responsible for ensuring diverse schools? If yes, please describe how the person ensures diversity in the school system.

26. In what way(s) do those individuals influence policies affecting diversity?

27. In what way does the current school assignment policy address diversity within the school district?

28. In what way does the current school assignment policy ensure diversity within the school district?

29. Current research suggests there is a resegregation trend in the WCPSS. From your experience dealing with the school district, in what way is this assertion valid or invalid?
30. What additional information, if any, would you like to share about diversity and equity practices in the WCPSS?
Appendix G: Focus Group Questions

1. In what capacity are you associated with the WCPSS?

2. To what extent do you think Wake County values diversity and equity for the wider community?

3. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?

4. To what extent do you think Wake County leadership values diversity and equity for the wider community?

5. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?

6. To what extent does WCPSS leadership (administrators and school board members) value diversity and equity in the schools?

7. What evidence or experience leads you to say so?

8. There is a resegregation trend occurring in the student population in Wake County schools. To what extent were you aware of the trend?

9. How does knowing a resegregation trend is occurring make you feel about the importance placed on equity and diversity in the WCPSS?

10. What actions do you see being done in Wake County to address the resegregation trends in the WCPSS?

11. What additional information would you like to share about diversity practices in the WCPSS?
Appendix H: Participant’s Reflective Questionnaire

1. In what way do resegregation trends affect all students in the WCPSS?

2. In what way do resegregation trends affect racial and ethnic minority students in the WCPSS?

3. In what way do resegregation trends in the WCPSS affect the wider community in Wake County?

4. In what way do resegregation trends in the WCPSS affect racial and ethnic minorities in Wake County?
## Appendix I: Researcher’s Reflective Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 6, 2020</td>
<td>This journey I started a few years ago seems suddenly relevant to so many people given recent events related to race. I unapologetically remind people who ask about my reason for pursuing my dissertation topic that, as Christians, we are expected to value the dignity and sanctity of every human being. Period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 30, 2020</td>
<td>I had no idea that COVID would so profoundly impact this process. Now changing my interview protocol due to the school district restricting who is allowed to participate in a study. At this time, I am restricted from interviewing parents, students, teachers, board members, and administrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5, 2020</td>
<td>Another roadblock from the school district IRB. Learning to be adaptable while trying to adhere to a strict study protocol is difficult. I wasn’t expecting to have my access to my intended participant pool restricted and an inconsistent application of requirements depending on the day I ask.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1, 2021</td>
<td>The school district changed their participant restrictions again, requiring me to pull back my IRB application from Liberty to make adjustments to my proposal again. My goal at this point is to ensure the integrity of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18, 2021</td>
<td>Note to self: Never underestimate how long each phase of the process takes. Whatever my preconceived notions were about timelines in this process, I should’ve doubled and tripled how long I thought it was going to take to finish each phase. Finally, IRB approval!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1, 2021</td>
<td>With the pilot study done, I can officially recruit participants. I’m finding it difficult to get a mix of racial and ethnic demographics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16, 2021</td>
<td>I’m in IRB purgatory with the school district asking me to submit a second IRB application only to rescind the requirement. Back to participant recruiting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 2021</td>
<td>With all of the focus groups, interviews, and some of the reflective questionnaires complete, I can now start the process of manually coding the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18, 2021</td>
<td>The coding of the data took much longer than expected. I ended up with a 59-page spreadsheet of codes. The process to narrow them down to themes was difficult and took multiple reviews of the data and reassigning codes to different categories in many cases, as well as deleting out data that wasn’t relevant to the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 2021</td>
<td>While a cumbersome task to manually code the data, I am glad that I chose to do it manually. I learned a lot about evaluating qualitative data by the evaluation and reevaluation of the same material spaced out over time and how new themes emerged and simultaneously new biases towards the data and content that I wasn’t aware of prior to this process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14, 2021</td>
<td>As I think back on this entire process, I contemplate how I would approach this study differently if I were to do it over again. My biggest regret is that I wasn’t able to do the interviews and focus groups in person given COVID. I believe there was much lost in not being 1:1/in-person to see the non-verbal cues and the ability to make a more personal connection with the participants.</td>
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## Appendix J: Audit Trail

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic Selection</strong></td>
<td>After speaking with several published authors who have extensive experience in DEI, I settled on a topic of resegregation trends using CRT as the theoretical framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis Methodology</strong></td>
<td>I reviewed my data analysis methodology with a peer experienced in qualitative data analysis methods. My original methodology target using NVivo. After reviewing my data analysis methodology with a peer, she recommended I change my methodology to manual coding using Johnny Saldana’s book as a guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Selection</strong></td>
<td>The initial goal was to select participants from an even pool of demographic backgrounds. Due to COVID, the school district changed policies on employees participating in the study. Participant selection was further complicated due to a series of events surrounding race and making my dissertation topic more sensitive in nature than when I initially started the study. In the end, the participant pool was not as diverse as I had wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manual Coding</strong></td>
<td>Manual coding was an extremely long process despite only having 11 participants. The participants’ collective input from the individual interviews resulted in a 59-page spreadsheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme Development</strong></td>
<td>Theme development was a three-part process. I completed an initial review of the codes and wrote down themes and subthemes. I reviewed the data a second time and refined the themes. The third part of the process occurred as I was writing Chapter 4 and further refining the themes and subthemes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td>Findings were developed to identify major theoretical, empirical, policy and practice implications. A review of WCPSS current data collection and policies was reviewed to determine any potential issues for future research, to include barriers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the way the school district conducted data collection over the past 2 years.</td>
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