A SINGLE-CASE STUDY ON THE CHANGING ECOLOGY OF A MULTI-RACIAL

SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL IN GEORGIA: THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEMOGRAPHIC

CHANGE

by

JOHN W. IVERSON JR.

(Under the Direction of ELIZABETH H. DEBRAY)

ABSTRACT

The racial composition of schools in America is rapidly changing especially in the suburban districts of America's largest metropolitan cities. Despite all the laws, policies, and court cases, educators and education advocates are still perplexed as to how to preserve diverse student enrollments in rapidly changing, multicultural school environments while sustaining high academic performance for all students.

Using a multi-racial suburban public middle school in metropolitan Atlanta, the purpose of this study was to examine: (1) the social and political geography of demographic change in the countywide school district, (2) how administrators, parents, teachers, and community members describe and make sense of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic change, and (3) how demographic differences between students and teachers affect academic performance. This qualitative case-study uses phenomenological questioning to ascertain whether changes in school and community demographics lead to racial isolation and declines in academic performance.

The results of this study found that the school is able to maintain its multi-racial status because of its geographic location in the center of the county. However, the confluence of an aging infrastructure and maturing residents has led to an increase in apartments, rental homes and senior living facilities. These new construction efforts allow for a more diverse population to move into the area including people of lower socioeconomic status and residents of color. Consequently, the school enrollment of nonwhite students in the district has increased, while the enrollment of White students has decreased.

Overall, results indicated participants appreciate a racially and socioeconomically diverse school and believe that a cosmopolitan environment will help students succeed in a global environment. However, when faced with the challenge of how to control classroom behavior and increase academic performance, there is a cultural divide threatening to disrupt the multicultural integrity of the school. Educators and education advocates are aware of the changing demographics but lack the skills and training necessary to aid in the success of students and families that are economically and socially marginalized. Finally, the size, stability, and success of the school district, as a whole, engenders a lack of urgency to protect a multi-racial student enrollment.

INDEX WORDS: Resegregation, Rapid Racial Change, Experience, Essence, Bracketing, Reduction, Ecology, Demography, Minority, Multi-racial

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DEDICATION

To HIM who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above, ALL that we ask or imagine

according to The POWER at work within US – Ephesians 3:20

To all those bound by the chains of ignorance whose only hope lies in the liberation of the mind

To all who value learning and what it has to offer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey began along pathways that led to u-turns and dead ends. Nevertheless, when guided by divine direction, the road to completion was made straight and the path made clear. Selecting a researchable topic of interest was difficult for me and served as an obstacle to the efficient completion of my Doctorate. However, I was aided by an understanding and accomplished Dissertation Committee. Thanks to: Dr. Elizabeth DeBray who kept me focused and challenged me to be better; Dr. John Dayton, my original Dissertation Chair, for flexibility and willingness to work within my challenging circumstances; Dr. Sheneka Williams and Dr. April Peters-Hawkins for their encouragement, patience, and belief in my abilities to write and to, above all, complete my doctoral studies.

Once I was able to select a researchable topic that was interesting and viable to the field of educational leadership, there were many people along the way who stopped to lend a hand. I want to personally thank my Mom for editing much, if not all of my work, and my Dad for teaching and showing us (his children) how to write, present, and facilitate lessons. I want to thank my wife and children for putting up with me during the times I was unavailable to them and unable to personally attend to their needs. Family is important!

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It has been said, "People support what they help to create." This document is a creation of all the love and support of those who supported my journey. There were many who were not named because they were at work behind the scenes, and I have no knowledge of your role. Please know that your labor was not in vain. You are appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, race and ethnicity have often determined one's societal stature. Our current social environment now includes socioeconomics as an indicator of success. The social environment is a reference to the physical and social setting in which people live. Schools are a part of this environment and are not immune to societal norms. They often reflect what is occurring in society. Over the years, plans have been made and remade to provide racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic equity and equality in schools. Laws have been crafted to balance moral and ethical consideration against the goals and ambitions of various factions. Policies have been mandated with the intent to satisfy a specific constituency. Cases have been argued and litigated with no real justifiable legal remedy or means to strictly enforce rulings. Further still, despite the 1954 ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, no coherent and consistent method has been developed to combat the negative impacts of racial, ethnic, and social changes in public schools. As a result, educators and educational advocates, alike, are still perplexed as to how to properly integrate student enrollments in a rapidly changing, multicultural environment.

In the 21st century, the racial composition of schools in America is rapidly changing especially in the suburban districts of the United States' largest metropolitan cities. Researchers define suburban school districts as those educational entities that serve jurisdictions within urban areas that are not the principal or central city (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). The National Center for Education Statistics highlights trends occurring in suburban public schools indicative of a major racial shift to a more diversified populace (Institute of Education Sciences,

2007). School enrollments mirror what is happening in the communities they serve. In this

current study, I argue, based on the evidence collected and analyzed that rapid demographic

change is impacting how suburban schools facilitate the learning of all students at the Western

Reserve Middle School (WRMS) despite it being a multi-racial suburban public school.

The Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS) opened in 1996 as a newly constructed

school on an extinct farm in Piedmont County. At that time, the Western Reserve city

population was approximately 20,000 residents comprised of Whites (78%), Black/African-

Americans (10%), Hispanic/Latinos (6%), and Asians (6%). Today, the Western Reserve city

population is around 29,000 residents (a 45% increase)−Whites (38%), Black/African-Americans

(28%), Hispanic/Latinos (22%), and Asians (12%). In the last twenty years, the city that WRMS

serves has seen a 51% decrease in the number of White residents.

During this same period, the Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino populations

have tripled. This is a recurring trend in suburban districts across the country especially in the

twenty-five largest metropolitan areas which includes Atlanta (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a;

2012b). This current study highlights the fact that teachers and administrators at WRMS are

struggling to find ways to implement instructional and communication strategies that take into

account the influences of the social and political environment, the racial, ethnic, and

socioeconomic environment, and how it all impacts academic achievement in a multi-racial

context.

According to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE; 1996), when WRMS

opened, the full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment count by ethnicity/race and gender was 2,303

students. In 1996, the demographic enrollment of students were Whites, (1963; 85%),

Blacks/African-Americans (144; 6%), Asians, 6% (132; 6%), Hispanics/Latinos, (64; 3%). In

the 2017-18 academic school year, the GaDOE FTE count by ethnicity/race and gender at WRMS was 2,085 students. Students enrolled by demographics were: Blacks/African-Americans (623; 29%), Hispanics/Latinos (611; 29%), Whites (476; 24%), Asian (271; 13%), Multi (104; 5%). Table 1 provides a description of WRMS FTE Count by Race and Ethnicity for 1996 and 2017. Interestingly, according to the WRMS 2016-17 Accountability Report, the Hispanic/Latino and Black/African-American enrollment numbers increased 2% and 1%, respectively. Conversely, the White and Asian enrollment numbers each decreased by 1%.

Table 1.

WRMS Full-time Equivalent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	Year			
Race/Ethnicity	**1996**		**2017**	
Asian	6%	132	13%	264
Black/African American	6%	144	29%	610
Hispanic/Latino	3%	64	30%	636
White	85%	1,963	23%	479
Multi	0%	0	5%	104
Total (s)	100%	**2,303**	100%	**2,093**

Source: Georgia Department of Education (1996; 2017).

These statistics raise an important dilemma because, traditionally, your highest performing students in a multi-racial school environment are White and Asian students (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007). This should serve as a notice underlining a demographic shift in suburban public schools such as WRMS. Interestingly, according to the WRMS 2016-7 Accountability Report (2018), the Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American student enrollment numbers increased 2% and 1%, respectively. Conversely, the White and Asian student enrollment numbers each decreased by 1%. Although the percentages of declining students are small, if this trend continues at WRMS without a response from school and community leaders, there could be a rapid increase in the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic

diversity of students. The increase in diversity cannot be considered negative, unless, one of the demographic entities (i.e., White students or Asian students) is eliminated from student enrollments causing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic isolation. This is one of the concerns identified by Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) that was once confined to urban schools. This has now become one of the trends impacting suburban public schools and potentially threatening to WRMS.

Therefore, it is important to understand what factors are causing this transition, how the instructional staff and community residents perceive these factors, and what is being done to enhance the quality of education while minimizing the deleterious effects of demographic change. The Wester Reserve Middle School was chosen as a sample study because it is a multi-racial suburban public school experiencing the impact of rapidly changing demographics Since there is limited research on multi-racial schools, this study aimed to make an important contribution to the knowledge of this phenomenon.

Statement of the Problem

While American suburbs differ, from county to county, and suburb to suburb regarding population, economy, and habitation, in almost all major suburban school districts, there is a distinct racial transition emerging that threatens the perceived stability of suburban school districts. Multi-racial schools are defined as schools where at least one-tenth (10%) of the students are from three different racial groups (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). This study investigateshow a multi-racial suburban public school located in Piedmont County in the state of Georgia is responding to the rapid social change.

The Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS) is unique because its Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, White, and Asian student populations are all over the 10% threshold

making it a multi-racial school (See Table 1 above). WRMS is located in the center of Piedmont county and serves a suburban city located 40 miles outside of the Atlanta's metropolitan statistical area. This is significant because the student enrollment at WRMS is somewhat protected from the impact experienced by schools on the geographic fringes. The fringes are the border cities of the county nearest to either urban cities in a state of decline and with higher rates of poverty and low socioeconomic status or cities nearer more affluent environments that attract mostly Whites trying to escape the shifting demographics.

More specifically, on the county's southern and eastern borders, the school district is attracting less affluent Blacks and Hispanics who are causing the schools on the southern and eastern sides of the county to become racially isolated whereas the northern and western sides of the county are already primarily White and pushing further out into more rural counties to the north and west of Piedmont County. Despite this phenomenon, the student enrollment at Western Reserve Middle School has remained racially balanced. However, the demographics have changed, and teachers and administrators have to adjust to meet the various needs of students who are racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse.

Although the housing structure in the Western Reserve community has changed to include more apartments and rental homes, the median home value exceeds $200,000, and the average price to rent is around $1,500. This type of pricing prevents some potential residents who are economically challenged from residing in the cluster. Nevertheless, those who earn enough to live in the area may be able to afford living in the WRMS's school cluster financially but sacrifice the social integration traditionally assigned to living the middle-class lifestyle. Analysis has suggested that in a multicultural community, non-whites are more susceptible to financial struggles and a lack of resources due in part to a lack of educational attainment, job

training, and poor lifestyle choices (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011). It is argued that, although WRMS is a multi-racial school, students who are financially destitute and lack material resources have difficulty meeting the high academic, social, and behavior standards expected in schools as middle-class institutions.

As the Black and Hispanic populations at WRMS are increasing, the teaching staff remains mostly White and female. Although the racial/ethnic backgrounds and gender of the teachers are not always significant factors when facilitating quality instruction, empathy and the ability to establish relationships with students are important. The WRMS teaching staff consists of over 130 teachers of which 80% are White, and another 85% of the teaching staff is female. Consistent with additional concern expressed by Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) is the inadequacy of the teaching staff to differentiate instruction to engage multicultural students. An examination of the teachers at WRMS attested to an inability for educators to balance high academic achievement and high expectations with the negative behaviors and classroom disruptions that are associated with racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse students.

The rapid racial and ethnic changes in the suburbs may be the inadvertent cause of this phenomenon (Frankenberg, 2012). This current study brings attention to how the suburban educational and community advocates conceptualize the context of these demographic changes in a multi-racial school. This research contributes to the literature by giving voice to educational advocates and their perspectives on the demographic changes occurring at a school that is racially balanced. Additional considerations include what community advocates think about the dynamic nature of race in a multi-racial suburban community's public schools and what responses they deem appropriate as potential solutions.

This study builds on and contributes work in examining the essence and the lived experiences of those who reside and work in suburban public-school districts and communities affected by the demographic change. Although studies related to racial, ethnic, and social change have been conducuted, there is a paucity of research that investigates how educational stakeholders and community advocates are conceptualizing the phenomena of demographic change especially in a multi-racial school. Additionally, there is an abundance of research examining segregated or racially isolated schools, desegregated schools, or resegregated schools but very little research on multi-racial schools experiencing demographic changes. Piedmont County Public Schools were never under federal orders to desegregate. Thus, the schools in this district cannot, technically, be desegregated or resegregated because legally they were never segregated. As such, this study provides insights into the reality of the lived experiences of local school administrators, teachers, and community advocates who support education in a multi-racial suburban public school. The analytical focus on the meaning, structure, and essence of how educational stakeholders think about the demographic change in a multi-racial school will contribute to the growing literature surrounding this phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

In the state of Georgia, there have only been a few studies on the demographic changes in Georgia's suburban public schools (DeBray & Grooms, 2012; Fallin, 2012; Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2005). Additionally, most of the current research has been relegated to descriptive studies about the ability of school districts to identify problems associated with segregation, desegregation, or resegregation. Other studies highlight the causes of these phenomena without identifying the perspective of those who are directly affected by changes in demography. Based

on a review of the literature, two problems arise regarding the demographic changes in a multi-racial suburban public school.

The first problem is the potential for racial and ethnic isolation of students and/or students who are socially challenged where the current school environment is a multiracial context. The second concern related to demographic change is the disparity in the academic performance of students that are racially and culturally diverse and what administrators and teachers are doing to facilitate these students' learning and protect the existing multicultural environment. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the social and political geography of the Western Reserve Middle School in the Piedmont County Public Schools (PCPS) district and to investigate how the impact of demographic change in a multi-racial suburban public school was conceptualized by administrators, parents, teachers, and community advocates.

This study focuses on investigating how teachers, school administrators, community members, and other school advocates conceptualize the dynamic nature of demographic change and its effect on a multi-racial suburban public school. To accomplish this, three specific research questions were posed:

1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators in Western Reserve Middle School describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

   a. What policies and strategies have been adopted to accommodate students from all backgrounds?

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel, community advocates, and policymakers describe and conceptualize the unique differences within the WRMS School Cluster that have led to academic achievement disparities?

Overview of the Methods Used

This research focused on qualitative data analysis using interview responses from local school administrators, teachers, parents, and community advocates. The goal was to allow participants to respond to questions that aided in the acknowledgement of demographic change in a multi-racial school as an integral issue of community concern. Additional questions were posed to assess the development (or lack thereof) of the processes to minimize the effects of demographic change in schools.

Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mathis (2007) describes interviewing as a highly purposeful and resourceful data-collection strategy. Therefore, the interview questions designed for this current study were semi-structured (Roulston, 2010). Because certain critical questions were asked of each participant and other topics explored as probing questions and transition statements later in the interview, a combination of an interview guide and standardized open-ended interview types were engaged as data gathering tools (Patton, 2015). The three research questions noted above anchored the interview guide accompanied by probing questions to help acquire more accurate, concrete data (Roulston, 2010). Participant responses were examined in an attempt to gain an understanding of the experiences of educational advocates undergoing demographic and rapid racial changes in the multicultural school and community environment.

All participants were contacted through email or phone and had the option to specify their meeting place. At the time of the interview, participants were provided with two copies of the consent form—one to keep and one to sign and return to the researcher. After the participants

read over the consent form, the researcher went over the documents with each participant to ensure that they understood the specifications and restrictions of the research project. Next the following three points were explained:

1. The interview will last no longer than one hour.

2. All questions are voluntary. They are not required to answer any questions they do not want to answer.

3. If at any time, they feel uncomfortable, we can stop the interview.

After obtaining the participants' signed consent forms, the audio-recorded interview session began. Once all questions were asked, the interview was concluded, and each participant was thanked for their time.

There were specific topics that were covered during the interview process to help guide the conversation.

- Position and residency in the community relative to the school district
- Racial background/Identity
- Changes in the community
- Society's impact on the school
- School performance

All information collected from participants was kept confidential. Only members of the research team had access to related documents. Documents containing information given by participants did not contain any personal identifying information at any time. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants for use in reports and presentations. After audio-recording the interview sessions, digital files were downloaded and saved on the researcher's password-protected computer.

Each participant was interviewed in a setting appropriate for maximum privacy and clear audio recording. For recording purposes, the Audacity cross-platform audio recording software was used. Interviews were transcribed using Rev.com Transcription Software. Interviews lasted

approximately one (1) hour. As mentioned above, the interview questions were prepared ahead of time. However, based on the demography of the research participant, the probing questions and transition statements were different. The participants for this project were shown reciprocity by being issued a copy of the transcript as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2011) and were given a Chick-fil-A gift card.

Significance and Implications

This study builds on other research by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA on suburban public schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a, 2012b). The setting of the study took place in Piedmont County. Piedmont County Public Schools (PCPS) is a countywide public-school system situated 40 miles outside of Atlanta. Student enrollment in PCPS is 173,000 making it the largest school district in Georgia and the 14th largest school district in the United States. In the 2014-15 school year, there were 134 schools in the PCPS including 77 elementary schools, 27 middle schools, 19 high schools, five charter schools, and six other special schools.[1] Piedmont County Public School District is one of the largest employers in Georgia with approximately 20,000 employees and an annual budget of $1.86 billion.

Demographically, the school district serves a student population that consist of 31% Black/African American, 28% White, 27% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 4% other. Relative to state enrollment numbers, White and Hispanic student enrollments in PCPS show the greatest disparities. Notably, the proportion of White students enrolled in Piedmont County Public Schools is lower than the overall state enrollment. Conversely, Hispanic student enrollment in PCPS is higher than the state averages. These racial disparities represent the diversity in

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[1] Alternative programs for middle and high school students; four schools providing special education services.

Piedmont County's public schools. It also provides a platform for discussion as to where these racial and ethnic disparities are most prominent and how factors such as language and a lack of resources impact students' overall achievement.

This current study is unique in that Piedmont County was never under a court ordered desegregation plan. However, just because there was no legal monitoring or racial diversity in select schools around the county does not mean that demographic changes in the county have not led to racial, economic, and social segregation in the county's public schools. Due to population growth, especially among Blacks and Hispanics, schools in this district have seen extreme changes in their demographic enrollment numbers. Thus, the question, does the school district recognize demographic change as a problem that requires attention? If the answer is in the affirmative, the question then becomes, what plans has the district put in place to account for these demographic changes? The demographic changes at WRMS have initiated potential problems that cannot be ignored and requires dedicated research for reliable and sustainable solutions.

According to Massey and Denton (1993), demographic changes in multi-racial suburban schools is the catalyst for creating an "oppositional culture that devalues work, schooling and marriage and that stresses attitudes and behaviors that are antithetical and often hostile to success in the larger economy" (p. 8). The issues involving demographic change, including racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic isolation, have been a prevailing issue impacting our country from the latter part of the 19th century thru the mid-1970s. Unfortunately, minimizing the negative impacts of such changes continues to be a divisive problem that remains unsolved. *Brown vs. Board of Educaton*, although it may have provided a legal, constitutional remedy for societal

segregation, was unable to offer an enduring antidote that would help heal and maintain the racial health that society needed and still needs today.

Because society, as well as the courts, has deemed the problem of racial equality to be "fixed," other concerns related to demographic change have been left relatively unmonitored for the past four decades. Orfield and Lee (2005) posit, "Clearly the basic assumption is that separate schools can be made equal and that we need not worry about the abandonment of the movement for integration" (p. 4). Demographic change leads to an array of problems especially in suburban public-school districts. Further, the problem of demographic change cannot be confined to urban school districts. The racial, ethnic, and social transition from urban centers to suburban communities has now affected the status and posterity of public schools in suburban areas.

Findings from the Western Reserve Middle School indicate that multi-racial schools have the potential to provide rigorous instruction and improve critical thinking while providing an environment that is conducive to opportunities to experience diverse interactions with students who are racially and culturally different (Linn & Welner, 2007). Because we live in an increasingly more diverse and global environment, educational experiences must be consistent with the ever-changing world in which we live and work. Orfield (2012a; 2012b) states, "We now face the dual challenges of massive demographic transition and intense world competition" (p. 217). According to Clotfelter (2004), when *Brown* was decided, in 1954, the racial population in the United States was almost 88 percent non-Hispanic European Americans or White. The 2010 U.S. Census counted a 24 percent decrease in the number of White, non-Hispanics. Whites now represent only 64% of the population in the United States. While

Black/African Americans, non-Hispanics and Hispanics now include over one-quarter of the

population representing 12 percent and 16 percent of the population, respectively (See Figure 1).

Distribution of U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010

Asian
5%

Some Other Race
0.2%

Native Hawaiian
and Other Pacific
Islander
0.2%

Two or More
Races:
2%

American Indian/
Alaska Native
1%

Black, Non-
Hispanic
12%

Hispanic
16%

White, Non-
Hispanic
64%

Total U.S. Population = 308.7 million
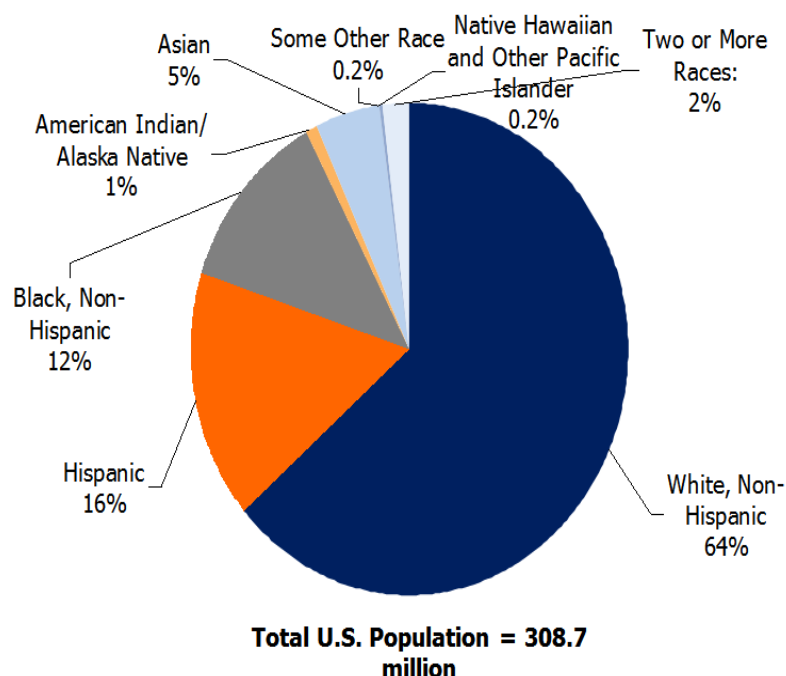
SOURCE: 2010 U.S. Census

Figure 1. Distribution of U.S. population by race/ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Summary

In many suburban schools, racial isolation and segregation have become a serious issue.

However, as this study's case shows, despite the demographic changes occurring in the

communities, some suburban schools have not become racially isolated. The Western Reserve

Middle School used in this research study is racially and ethnically balanced. Thus, I argue that

there are important lessons to be learned. These include: (1) What happens in the social

environment and the decisions made by policy makers, at all levels, impact the community and

by extension the school that serves the community; (2) Talking about race and ethnicity can be

passionate and emotional issues. In this research study, investigations found that issues related to race and ethnicity were difficult to discuss for fear of association with inherent individual and institutional biases; (3) District and local school objectives can be out of balance with the prevailing issues surrounding the demographic changes in the community (i.e., accelerated Math); and (4) Parents and teachers are the most influential factors in student success. When these factors are not aligned, students suffer academically (i.e. parental involvement, student behavior, communication between parents and teachers).

Schools are a function of the community in which they are located. Involvement in the school and access to resources are key factors of success in school. If families are struggling to maintain the status of the community, the school as an extension of the community will also be affected. The students of families who find themselves in this predicament are also overwhelmingly identified as Black/African American and Hispanic. Negotiating these demographic factors as they enter suburban public schools can go unnoticed and misdiagnosed as problematic and unwanted. This study's findings indicate that, although WRMS is racially and ethnically balanced, the effects of rapid demographic change are altering the academic landscape. Also, educators and educational advocates are struggling to find sustainable solutions while protecting the school's multi-racial setting.

Researchers and scholars should begin analyzing pervasive and sustainable solutions to fight against the negative impacts of demographic change. The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling allowed for a period of remission that was not inclusive of a remedy to the problem of eliminating segregation. Nevertheless, there must be a more viable solution to eradicate or control the effects of segregated schools completely. This current research focused on qualitative data analysis using interview responses from local school administrators and teachers,

as well as, parents and community activists. The goal was to gather rich data from participants'
responses that aid in the process of developing more holistic, multicultural designs for the
implementation of policies in a multi-racial suburban public school.

Definitions and Key Terms

For this study, the following definitions and key terms are provided for clarification.

- **Resegregation**—According to Orfield (2005), resegregation is a return to comprehensive
  systems of racial separation and subordination accompanied by resistance to racial
  change.

- **Rapid racial change**—Frankenberg (2012) defines rapid racial change as a "racial
  transition at least three times that of the entire enrollment (an annual decline of white
  students of at least 1.8 percentage points over a seven-year period)" (pp. 30-31).

- **Experience**—sensory perception, imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition and
  action; everything lived through or performed (Mastin, 2008).

- **Essence**—the core meanings mutually understood through an experience (Patton, 2015).

- **Reduction**—Finlay (2009) defines reduction as a process of reducing the influence of the
  researcher and making him/her as neutral as possible by *bracketing* previous
  understandings, past knowledge, and assumptions in order to focus on the research as it
  appear.

- **Bracketing**—According to Denzin (1989) bracketing is to *discover* key phrases and
  statements about the phenomenon inside a person's story or experience, *deconstruct* the
  meaning of these phrases and statements, *determine* the subject's interpretation of these
  phrases and statements, *delineate* the meanings for what they reveal about the essential,
  recurring features, *define* the phenomenon in terms of the essential, recurring features.

- **Ecology**—the spacing and interdependence of people and institutions.

- **Demography**—the statistical study of human populations including births, deaths, income, and incidence of disease, which illustrate the dynamic structure of the human population.

- **Minority**—The use of this term throughout the study is to identify Black/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asians students as a numerical minority because, statistically, White students are still the numerical majority. This term is not used as a value statement about non-White people and should not be implied in this research study (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003).

- **Multi-racial/multicultural**—Because this research is not about the debate between the terms race and culture, throughout this study, the terms multi-racial and multicultural will be used interchangeably refer to persons of Black/African American, White, Hispanic, and Hispanic/Latino heritage.

- **Suburban school districts**—Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) define suburban school districts as those educational entities that serve jurisdictions within urban areas that are not the principal city.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Geography

Geography was a fundamental theme running throughout this review of the literature because demographic change is inherently related to the location of people (Orfield, 1996; Richards & Stroub, 2015). This section begins with research literature based on ecology because human ecology consists of a compilation of characteristics observed in community life and the plotting of their distribution on maps (Hawley, 1944). For this current study, this type of research on demographic changes in Georgia's suburban public schools is consistant with and often related to geography.

The demographic change in schools, however, is about more than just the geographic positioning of people. Geography related to social and political factors also play a role in how school enrollments are determined. According to Orfield and Lee (2007), the imbalances of school enrollments caused by changes in the ethnic and cultural environment accompanied by variations in the socioeconomic index of a specific geographic locale are credited with the obstruction of integrative growth and development.

This review of literature is grounded in several bodies of research that have helped shape this study's analysis, including geography, rapid racial and demographic change, and the racial, ethnic, and social isolation of students. These factors have coalesced to influence school district and community policy. They also highlight the contextual atmosphere surrounding the

multicultural landscape that exists in schools and how policy-making decisions regarding these issues are shaped by district leaders and participants in the educational policy making process.

Ecology

This study uses ecology as a metaphor to represent how the success of schools in a multi-racial suburban setting relies on the establishment of shared relationships. The use of ecology is not new in education research. Weaver-Hightower (2008) in his analysis of educational policy uses the term ecology as a metaphor to explain how the development of policy exists with a complex system involving contributions from various international, national, regional, and local dynamics. Other studies that have used ecology to describe their educational research include topics and scholars such as: educational leadership (Goodlad, 1987); bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2004); teacher professional knowledge (Clandinin, Connelly, & Craig, 1995); parental involvement (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004); absenteeism (Sugrue, Zuel, & LaLiberte, 2016); and special education (Reszka, Odom, & Hume, 2012). All of these studies used an ecological perspective in some form to describe the context of the educational environment and its surroundings.

The scientific definition of ecology is a system of relationships among organisms and between organisms and their environment (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). From a sociological perspective, ecology is an interconnection and mutual need for interactions of actors and organizations. The sociological perspective was used for analysis in this study. Based on the responses from interview participants, it is argued that in a multi-racial school, the interconnectivity and mutual need of the administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community is vital to the social and academic success of the school.

The ecological view is comprehensive because it considers everything and everyone that interacts within the school environment. Research analysis revealed an emphasis placed on the importance of the administrative and instructional staff when in many cases the success of a school relies on support staff such as counselors, school nurses, office clerks, cafeteria employees, coaches, fine arts instructors, bus drivers, and custodians. In a multi-racial school where the teaching staff is not always reflective of the diverse student enrollment, students can be drawn to other school actors whom they may feel understand their needs better. As a result, mutual interactions and relationships with actors outside nonconventional school actors such as teachers become crucial to the survival of the school as an organization. Other key factors include the general location of how and where people choose to live and the nature and organization of the cities in which they live.

Human Geography

Geography is a science that describes the spatial distribution of all phenomena on earth in conjunction with their variation over time (Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia, 2014). It is a study of both physical and human environments (Kaplan, Wheeler, & Holloway, 2009). Studying geography from the perspective of human environments aided this current research in understanding human decision making and how people think about where they live in a multi-racial suburban environment.

Kaplan et al. (2009) point out that human geographers focus their study on the location of people and their related activities over geographic space. According to Gilstein (2013), the discipline of human geography takes into account a wide range of fundamental elements including government, economy, population, settlement, health, history, development, religion, language, music, and art all of which impact human decision making and aid in the formation of

an ecology. Chinese American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1976) further advanced the human

perspective of geography through his study of humanistic geography.

Tuan merged human geography with psychology, art, philosophy, and religion (Gilstein,

2013). People's interaction with nature and their geographical behavior accompanied by their

feelings and ideas relative to space and place are important to where and how they choose to live

(Tuan, 1976). This includes decisions made relative to school district boundaries. Richards and

Stroub's (2015) research reveals that school attendance zone boundaries are not "accidents of

geography" and play a vital role in determining educational opportunities (p. 1). This current

study contends that the creation of a multi-racial community is thus preferable, and residents

enjoy the multicultural/racial aspects provided by different cultures and races of people. No

overt action by the PCPS to control school boundaries was revealed.

Economic actions and behaviors, social and cultural relationships and interactions, and

the struggle for power and political recognition are all functional characteristics that play into the

development of human geographic location (Kaplan et al., 2009). Baldassare (1992) posits

"residents select among the multitudes of municipalities the one which offers them the best

service (p. 478). When a community's school reaches a minimal level of poverty, middle-class

families, no matter what their racial or ethnic background, choose to move to more affluent

communities (Orfield M., 2002). William Tate (2008) calls this *Geography of Opportunity.*

However, it is the diversity in culture and the means by which to create policies that redirect the

flow of people in and out of communities and schools that often leads to the challenges facing

schools today (Orfield G., 2012a; 2012b).

Urban Geography

The discipline of urban geography accentuates the internal locational arrangements of human activity and institutions *within* metropolitan areas. Pertinent to this study, however, was an addendum to urban geography that seeks to understand and analyze the multiple levels of interaction or linkages that can occur either among cities or places within cities (Kaplan et al., 2009). Kaplan, Wheeler, and Holloway (2009) highlight four traditions that aid in understanding the discipline of urban geography:

1. Physical—the earth's physical environment such as landforms and climate (i.e., elevation, temperature, precipitation).

2. Human—environmental – sites or places in which people and the environment have a symbiotic relationship, such as coastal areas near water, mountain areas, plain regions).

3. Regional—use of historical data (including field surveys and interviews) to analyze the evolution and growth of a city including the physical and human features.

4. Spatial tradition—the study of area distribution and patterns of movement and links that connect them across space (i.e., mapping, spatial analysis, boundaries, and densities).

Kaplan, Wheeler, and Holloway's (2009) "Urban Geography" book notes that the spatial tradition includes most of the components that exist in the other traditions. However, what makes a spatial analysis of urban geographical areas unique is its allowance for the development of theoretical perspectives and the construction of related hypothesis as to where cities are located. In contrast, the other traditions provide basic descriptions of the physical and environmental conditions that affect the development and growth of cities. Therefore, although each tradition has merit, this study, as it relates to the demographic changes in a multi-racial suburban public school, used the principles established by the tradition of spatial analysis.

Spatial analysis was highlighted in a study conducted by Reibel and Regelson (2011) in which they examined the racial and ethnic transition of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Their research found that neighborhoods experiencing rapid racial and ethnic transitions are strongly associated with the spatial expansion of previously existing minority communities. According to Frey (2015) "Neighborhoods are where Americans socialize, shop, and attend school and where civic matters have the most impact" (p. 167). Thus, the geographic spaces of surrounding neighborhoods or linked cities have the potential to influence or be influenced by the demography of the adjoining geographic space. Iceland and Scopolitti (2008) describe the theory of urban spatial assimilation in a way that suggests segregation patterns occur because of systematic socio-economic differences among groups.

In the state of Georgia, evidence of this can be seen through the increase in incorporated municipalites surrounding the central city of Atlanta. As of November 2015, Georgia had 535 incorporated towns and cities. Piedmont county has 13 municipalities but is adjacent to eight counties that are home to 48 incorporated municpalities. Although Piedmont County, except Peachtree Corners in 2012, has experienced relatively little unrest, the county that shares its southern and eastern boders have seen the addition of three new municipalities within the last decade.

These geographical additions have generated intense debates as to how and why new cities are created especially considering large suburban school districts are experiencing the most rapid racial and ethnic isolation for Black and Latino students (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002; Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield , 2003). Additional concerns include who is driving the so-called need for change. By controlling the spatial orientation, design, and implementation of city landscapes, those acquainted with political and economic power can create barriers that isolate

them from unwanted segments of the population. The analysis in this study shows that although the Western Reserve community has been able to maintain a relative racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic balance, movement patterns indicate that the White population in the county is slowly migrating to the northern and western parts of the county to escape the rapidly changing demogaphic structure in the Western Reserve area.

According to Farrell (2008), "urban scholars have long noted the tendency for racial and ethnic groups, especially immigrants, to cluster in certain neighborhoods within cities due to limited economic resources, bounded social networks and a lack of cultural knowledge" (p. 472). As a result, residents of color and residents of non-American descent begin to create ethnic enclaves that become what Farrell (2008) describes as "temporary way-stations on the path to spatial assimilation" (p. 29). Consequently, as the concentration of minorities and the presence of multiple minority groups increases, "White out-mobility" also increases (Crowder, 2000, p. 228). A corollary to White out-mobility is the rapidly changing racial and ethnic dynamics of residential communities and the school districts.

Thus, neighborhoods begin a rapid descent toward what Reibel and Regelson (2011) term "complete transitions" (p. 363), or resegregation as noted by Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a, 2012b, or what Schelling (1971) defined as "tipping." None of these terms impact schools positively. As a matter of fact, Sheldon Berman, superintendent of the Eugene School District 4J in Eugene, Oregon, found that since the height of the nation's desegregation efforts in 1988, schools have resegregated to levels that existed in 1970 (Berman, 2013). Segregation is a complex topic especially when trying to balance urban geography and the politics associated with the multicultural aspects of society (Fong & Shibuya, 2005; Holloway, Wright, & Ellis,

2012). Orfield (2012a; 2012b) found that all cities eventually experience residential change due to shifts in racial and ethnic mobility.

As a result, community leaders in the Western Reserve area will have to be proactive and innovative when it comes to developing political and economic strategies to help the community maintain its rich multicultural heritage. Even more important is the fact that the geographic location of the homes and the position or the location of the school impact students' academic achievement (Ayibatonye & Ikechukwu, 2014). The suburbs, for many of those seeking asylum from the effects of urbanization, have become more influential in the shaping of urban and suburban public-school enrollments and achievement status. Because WRMS is in an aging suburban community, this study argues that the suburban geography and the location of its residents are instrumental in the relative stability of its multi-racial student enrollment. Conversely, the increased diversity has caused a cultural shift in which administrators and teachers at WRMS struggle to adapt.

Suburban Geography

Although the United States Census Bureau "has never used the term 'suburb' in tabulating data and does not as of yet define suburban settlement types" (Hanlon, Vicino, & Short, 2006, p. 2130), researchers (and non-scholars) have been using the term extensively over the past several decades to describe geographical locations inside the metropolitan area but outside the central or principal city (Baldassare, 1992; Frankenberg, 2012; Hexter, Rog, Henderson, & Stevens, 2014). The rise of suburbs or "city outskirts" was due to the increased economic specialization and population growth and density associated with "technological advancements, limited urban space, and the increasing scale of economic activities" (Bowen & Kimble, 1997, p. 5).

According to Leinberger (2008) the 1939-1940 World's Fair in New York called "Highways and Horizons," better known as "Futurama," can arguably be considered the genesis of the suburban idea. In reality, however, the traditional example of the model suburb was made popular in 1947 with the development of the Levittown complex in Long Island, New York (Hanlon et al., 2006). This community development style catered to "White, native-born, non-industrial" residents who were socially and economically homogenous (Hanlon et al., 2006, p. 2140). Many of these changes can be attributed to transportation innovations such as affordable, more fuel-efficient automobiles and the availability of commuter rail (Baldassare, 1992). Other contributing factors in the 21st century include telecommunications innovation and access to digital technology such as cell phones and tablets.

Now over half of the U.S. population lives in the suburbs (Baldassare, 1992; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a, 2012b; Orfield, M., 2002). Nevertheless, suburban geography has changed over the last several decades from homogenous bastions for whites fleeing the integration of urban centers to a more heterogeneous multicultural landscape (Orfield, G., 2012; Hanlon et al., 2006). The largest American population growth and geographic migration have been experienced beyond the borders of urban or metropolitan cities. Over the past half-century, the population in American suburbs has grown exponentially (Beauregard, 2006; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a, 2012b; Hanlon, 2009).

Even within and across metropolitan areas, however, suburban venues are different (Frankenberg, 2012). These changes in suburban geography have led to new terminology describing the variety of metropolitan area suburbs. Researchers are using this new vocabulary to establish a more accurate contextual framework around the economic, social, and spatial

complexities that now characterize suburban populations and incorporate the ecological perspective with relation to education (Mikelbank, 2004).

For example, Garreau (1991), reporter for the Washington Post and author of books chronicling the geographic changes in society, describes the suburbs as a new frontier on the "edge." Kaplan, Wheeler, and Holloway (2009) also talk about the emergence of "edge cities." Baldassare (1992) uses the term "disurbs" to describe "dense, industrialized suburban" areas that have office complex building, industrial plants, and housing and retail services all located in one condensed area (p. 489). A different critique of suburban geography identifies the suburbs as "edgeless cities" (Lang, 2003). Decentralized suburban cities including shopping malls, industrial parks, campus-like office complexes, hospitals, schools and a full range of housing types have created new peripheral geographic zones called "technoburbs" (Fishman, 1987).

The term "exurbia" which when phonetically broken-down means "extra-urban" was coined by Spectorsky (1955) in his best-selling book *The Exurbanites.* Current research, however, provides a more detailed definition of exurbs as a transition zone between urban and rural areas that are close in proximity and within the commuting zone of an urbanized area (Clark, McChesney, Munroe, & Irwin, 2009; Theobald, 2001). Another term, "boomburbs", is used by Lang and Simmons (2001) to describe "places with more than 100,000 residents that are *not* the largest city in their metropolitan areas and have maintained double-digit rates of population growth" (p. 1). Thus, with new terminologies come new typologies.

Typologies (See Table 2) help disaggregate and clarify the variable characteristics describing suburban communities and the challenges they face (Hexter et al., 2014). Table 2 provides a summary of studies on suburban typologies. Myron Orfield (2002), in his study of the top 25 metropolitan areas in the United States, created a cluster analysis of suburbs including

4,606 incorporated municipalities and 135 unincorporated areas. In his study, Mikelbank (2004)

analyzed 3,567 non-central, incorporated, and metropolitan places in the United States. Based

on the data collected from this quantitative study, Mikelbank identifies ten distinctive categories

to describe suburban areas.

Table 2.

Summary of Studies on Suburban Typologies

Author (s) and Year	Census Geography	Suburban Focus	Methodology	Findings
Mikelbank (2004)	2000; census tract aggregated to suburban incorporated places.	Non-central city, incorporated metropolitan places having 2,500 or more.	Used cluster analysis to create a typology of suburban places.	▪ Ten types of suburbs, five that fit a stereotypical view of suburban prosperity and five exhibiting a range of signs of distress. ▪ 68% of the suburban population lives in the five types exhibiting some level of distress. ▪ The distressed suburbs are categorized as either "Working diversity" or "Manufacturing" suburbs.
Hanlon, Vicino, & Short (2006)	2000; census-designated places (CDP), consolidated cities, and incorporated places.	Suburban census places in 13 different metro areas (n=1,639).	Analysis of the following variables across metro areas, within metro areas, and over time: • Income • Employment • Race • Immigration	• They identified four types of suburbs separate from the traditional image of suburbia. • The non-traditional suburbs include Poor, Manufacturing, Black, and Immigrant suburbs. • Nearly 40% of suburbs do not fit the traditional image of suburbia.
Hanlon (2009)	2000; census designated places (CDP) and municipalities.	Inner-ring suburbs (places adjacent to central cities) within the 100 largest metropolitan areas.	Two-step process of principal component analysis and cluster analysis to create a typology of inner-ring suburbs.	• Four types of inner-ring suburbs (Elite, Middle Class, Vulnerable, and Ethnic). • 47% considered Vulnerable; median household income 22% below the suburban median for their metropolitan area; characterized by loss of manufacturing jobs. • Ethnic Suburbs (7%) were typically poorer, with a median income at 75% of the neighboring suburbs (suburbs in the same metropolitan area).

Author (s) and Year	Census Geography	Suburban Focus	Methodology	Findings
Orfield (2002)	2000; census-designated places (CDP), incorporated municipalities, and unincorporated areas.	30 large cities within the 25 largest U.S. metropolitan regions; Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Maps	Grouped suburban areas using cluster analysis. Grouping based on several measures of their fiscal characteristics and sociopolitical environments.	• Six types of suburban communities (At-Risk, Segregated; At-Risk, Older; At-Risk, Low-Density; Bedroom-Developing; Affluent Job Center; Very Affluent Job Center. • 28% Central Cities. • 40% At-Risk suburbs with growing social needs; fragile and lack amenities and infrastructure; economically sensitive. • 26% Bedroom-Developing suburbs; high growth, low resources; young families with long distant commutes for work; high birth rate/number of children; unable to support infrastructure. • 7% Affluent job centers; most attractive communities with few social needs and extensive resources; high tax base to support quality infrastructure.

For "a finer spatial mesh" and to "detect suburbs with specific political, commercial or community identities," Hanlon, Vicino, and Short (2006) create more pragmatic typologies of contemporary suburban places (p. 2131). Their research examined 1,639 suburbs from 13 metropolitan areas including areas located in the Rustbelt (Baltimore, Philadelphia), the Midwest (Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis), the Sunbelt (Atlanta, Phoenix), the West Coast (San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose), and highly specialized, interdependent service areas (Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C.).

Hanlon (2009), in a study investigating inner-ring suburbs, provides a more prescriptive perspective of the suburbs by separating them into inner and outer ring. In an analysis of the U.S. Hispanic population across the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas Singer and Suro (2002) found that 54% of all Latinos in the U.S. lived in the suburbs and that the Latino population grew by 71% from 1990-2000. According to Clark (2006), the ethnic and social geography of central suburban cities is changing rapidly. Fischer (2008) found that although Black Americans are far less suburbanized than all other major ethnic and racial groups, they appear to have a faster overall suburban growth rate and tend to experience lower levels of segregation in the suburbs (Fischer, 2008). On the other hand, even in Piedmont County, Whites are far more suburbanized and are the most segregated (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003).

Suburban places are experiencing greater incidences of poverty, economic and social segregation, declines in household incomes, overcrowded schools, decreased population, less homeownership, and more short-term housing options just like their urban counterparts (Bier, 2001; Hanlon, 2009; Hanlon & Vicino, 2007; Ohlemacher, 2006). This societal shift is now beginning to impact schools in both urban and suburban settings leading to what Orfield (2002) calls "rapid social change" (p. 28). The investigation in this current study asserts that the

Western Reserve community is experiencing all the incidences mentioned above. Consequently, administrators and teachers at the Western Reserve Middle School are being challenged with how to neutralize the negative experiences of students who are racially, ethnically, and socially diverse.

School District Geography

Introduction

Manzer (1994) posits that schools are "a fundamental concern for any democratic community and therefore require broad participation by citizens in its formulation" (p. 19). Orfield (2002) identifies schools as a "powerful indicator of a community's current health and of its future well-being." (p. 9). Education is generally accepted as "the primary mode of mobility" (Fine, 1987, p. 157). This theme is constantly preached in the pulpits of society as the great equalizer. Schools and the purpose for which they exist, however, are not without controversy.

The United States Constitution of the United States does not explicitly state the role of the Federal Government. Nevertheless, the national government has played an increasingly important role in the function of schools. Because of school's political and constitutional ambiguity, they are often exposed to societal trends (Goodlad, 1984). Also, parents and other educational stakeholders have different goals and aspirations as to the purpose of schools. Now issues such as school zone attendance lines, local school curriculum, educational quality and rigor, and support services have become points of contention (Wiley, Shircliffe, & Morley, 2012). As a result, every education policy decision is a political decision because it involves questions of public choice and concern (Levin, 2008). These decisions are often the result of urban or suburban geographical indicators.

Urban School District Setting

Urban school districts are tied to several indicators that set them apart from their suburban and rural counterparts (Johnson, Musial, Hall, Gollnick, & Dupuis, 2005). For example, there are higher rates of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity in urban schools. Consequently, issues surrounding cultural diversity can become impediments to quality instruction, high academic achievement and adequate resources. Clarke et al. (2006) found that students in urban schools do not earn their high school diplomas on time, perform at a standard below their nonurban peers, and have parents that are unable or unwilling to be involved in school functions and activities.

Although these issues vary from district to district depending on the continuity and development of urban educational governance structures, they are instrumental in determining how society and researchers, alike, view urban school districts (Kincheloe, 2004). These same issues are now prevalent in suburban schools around the fringes where urban district meets suburban district. Although the Western Reserve Middle School is a multi-racial school in a suburban environment, this study proves that PCPS and WRMS, in particular, are not exempt from the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic transition occurring in suburban school districts across the country.

Suburban School District Setting

Suburban school districts are defined as "those serving areas within a metropolitan area that are not the principal or central city" (Frankenberg, 2012, p. 28). The suburbs now include population characteristics, economic foundations, and housing inventory that is multicultural (Frankenberg, 2012). Data compiled in a multiyear study by Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) revealed "deep and persisting inequality" in suburban school districts and communities

(p. 1). Liability for this inequity has been placed on geographic circumstances including changes in the housing market, transformations of inner-ring suburbs and satellite cities, inclinations toward political ineptitude, and geographic migrations leading to declining and overpopulated infrastructures (Hanlon, 2009; Orfield, 2005; Wilson, 2005). However, in the debate over changes in suburban school districts, one issue being overlooked is what Frankenberg (2012) calls "fragmentation" (p. 29).

Geographic Impact of Fragmentation in Suburban School District Settings

Bischoff (2008) refers to fragmentation as the "proliferation of autonomous jurisdictions" (p. 1). Baldassare (1992) defines political fragmentation as the separation of local government and agency into many different political units with the goal of developing fiscal, service, and land use policies to benefit a select constituency. Bischcoff's (2008) quantitative study of 305 different metropolitan statistical areas finds that the costs and benefits related to the size of a jurisdiction affect the land-use control, tax policies, economies of scale in public resources and services, and the diversity of human interaction. These factors and their effectiveness are contingent on the spatial context of the area being served. The analysis in this current research found that the Western Reserve community is being inundated with apartment homes and other transient housing structures that allow entrance into the community for more people of lower socioeconomic status who are not familiar with suburban and middle-class values.

Suburban communities are different from urban communities in that cities in the suburbs have land-use policies that create sprawl and space— low-density population and construction areas (Baldassare, 1992). Many suburban places often operate without a central, downtown district which can lead to local government structures that are politically fragmented (Baldassare,

1992). The size of an area frequently dictates how efficiently and effectively services can be

provided. Larger and more spatially extensive areas are more difficult to service.

Thus, it is often more productive to break large suburban areas into smaller, more

manageable areas of control. This is the basic premise behind what researchers call

fragmentation. When elements such as land-use, taxes, and public resources are spatially

restricted, they are otherwise known as race-neutral exclusionary processes (Bischoff, 2008).

These processes are not overt but are founded on invisible boundaries that indirectly trigger or

facilitate the amalgamation of specific demographic preferences (Baldassare, 1992).

As a consequence of political fragmentation, suburban communities have been plagued

by problems including economic short falls, traffic congestion, minimal affordable housing,

absence of public transportation and inefficient local service delivery (Gumus-Dawes, Orfield, &

Luce, 2012). According to research completed by Orfield (2002), the fragmentation of

metropolitan areas has been one of the principal causes of "social separation, sprawl, and fiscal

disparity" (p. 130).

Bischoff (2008) refers to fragmentation as a "highly significant" variable when

considering increases in residential racial segregation (p. 11). Farrell (2008) created a

framework assessing the changes in the racial and geographical structures of segregation in

metropolitan areas. Using this framework, he developed a fragmentation perspective that found

there were different racial and ethnic groups that chose to remain segregated. Consequently, a

"patchwork" of segregated "spatial niches" within suburban places was created (p. 472). High

levels of fragmentation in suburban districts lead to a rapid transition as well as high racial and

economic segregation. As a result, opportunities for racial integration are limited and access to a

racially diverse student population is restricted. The creation of this evolving racial and ethnic homogeneity leads to another dynamic called succession (Farrell, 2008).

Geographic Impact of Succession in Suburban School District Settings

The idea of succession is an ecological term used to describe the growth and development of plants. Together with competition, invasion, and segregation the concept of succession was introduced by Parks, Burgess, and Mckenzie (1925). They related the idea of succession to the organization of human community development. Succession was adapted from its biological roots to describe population growth and development. Later, Parks (1936) continued to explain the concept of succession by making it analogous to social change. He goes on to further suggest that, in theory, succession is a cycle of what he calls "an irreversible series" (p. 173) in which each succeeding event is a product of the preceding event and continues in "an inexorable historical process" (p. 174). Farley and Frey (1994) note that these features are then consolidated with racial and socioeconomic patterns.

Orfield (2002) notes "poverty and its consequences underlie social separation, but it is difficult to separate poverty from race and ethnicity" (p. 10). Consistent with Orfield's statement, Margaret Weir (2011) relates this concept of "disconnectivity" to what she calls "extrusion" (p. 251). She argues that justice and equality in American suburbs can be found in the equal distribution of "organizational and political endowments" (p. 244). She continues by adding that public education is only a starting point. Public and nonprofit organizations, according to Weir, play a vital role in providing services that aid in the acquisition of equality in education. In the WRMS community, these services are lacking. Thus, leaving students whose financial circumstances are destitute without the social and by extension educational resources

necessary to perform according to the high expectations and standards in suburban school districts such as the PCPS.

This is especially true in suburban communities where there is a persistent "spatial mismatch" created by the lack of nonprofit networks and social organizations to help residents with social and economic challenges (Raphael & Stoll, 2005). These support systems are often essential for the sustenance and maintenance of many families despite living near prosperous suburban communities (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). According to Vey and Forman (2005) these challenges include providing "jobs, housing, schools, services, and amenities that are appropriate and attractive to families and individuals of varying race and ethnicity" (p. 24).

Former Professor of Economics and Afro-American Studies at Harvard University, John Kain, in a seminal work highlighting "spatial mismatch" suggested that because people of color are often less educated than whites, "unequal spatial distribution of skill requirements" lead to job opportunities that are societally less favorable and farther away from where they live (Kain, 1968, p. 183). Additional challenges occur when there is a substantial gap between affordable housing and available jobs for those who rely on inexpensive, short-term accommodations (Orfield M. , 2002, p. 66).

In urban and central city areas, there are many organizations, such as the United Way, set up to bridge the gap and provide social support for those in need. Conversely, there is a paucity of these types of support organizations located in suburban areas. What is more, even if these organizations do exist in the suburbs, many suburban places lack the "philanthropic infrastructure" to assist charitable organizations in providing services to the suburban poor (Weir, 2011, p. 249). This change in the geography of suburban demographics may force suburban communities, schools, and other child-related services and charitable organizations to

become more accommodating to a multiracial/ethnic population. This directly impacts WRMS because the school and the community supporting the school have not developed a proactive strategy that includes these types of services. Hence, students who have moved into the Western Reserve community who need these services are left at a distinct disadvantage and suffer academically.

Historically, this issue has been contained in urban places. However, because of the rapid racial growth in U.S. suburban places, Orfield (2005) found that the racial separation and social inequity formerly experienced in urban areas has spread to suburban communities. As a result, communities in suburban areas are experiencing what has been termed by many scholars as resegregation (Berman, 2013; Boger & Orfield, 2005; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b; Orfield, 2001; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Orfield M. , 2002; Reibel & Regelson, 2011). The WRMS is a multi-racial school and continues to experience the advantages of being a multicultural school environment. However, because of the apathy and lack of institutional support discovered in this research, the demographic changes that are emerging in the Western Reserve community could lead to racial isolation and the negative effects associated with schools that have become casualties of resegregated school environments.

The Landscape of Demographic Change in Suburban Schools

John Dayton (2012), using the views of the Swedish Economist Gunner Myrdal, describe segregation as "antithetical to the American Creed" because its practices involve denying liberty, justice, and equality based on race. The elimination of segregation has always been challenging. Conversely, Boger (2000) considers racially and ethnically diverse public schools as "the most effective means for knitting together our increasingly heterogeneous society" (p. 1728). Parameswaran (2007) portrays schools and the educational classroom as "microcosm[s] of

society" where instruction is traditionally based on "power differentials present in the larger social world" (pp. 51-52).

Schools are distinctly affected by racially segregated, residential patterns because most school attendance policies allow students to attend schools closest to their homes (Portz, Stein, & Jones, 1999). Other school districts preserve separate schools by creatively drawing school attendance boundaries to maintain a racially segregated enrollment (Clark, 1987). According to Richards and Stroub (2015) these are effective tools used to forestall the impact of demographic changes in suburban school districts.

In many ways, this lack of foresight and intentional apathy has accelerated the racial changes happening in suburban communities and schools across the United States. Powell (2005) suggests, "Race has no scientific reality, but it does have a powerful social reality" (p. 288). Due to the social and economic changes in suburban communities, school enrollments have become increasingly diverse and, in many instances, segregated, especially elementary schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b).

The delicate balance to overcome racially isolated school environments was and still is precarious. Historically, political tactics such as the state of Georgia's use of the Doctrine of Interposition (H. R. 185, March 1956) and similar political schemes to thwart integration efforts (Orfield, 2005) were used to topple any forward progress made toward less segregated environments. Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) argue, "One of the major limitations to the spread of school desegregation into suburban areas…was the belief that private actions, not governmental policies, resulted in the segregated residential patterns and thus racially isolated schools" (p. 5). They point out that after some time and the inevitability of integration, more people of color are moving to the suburbs.

The surge in the suburban Black population is due mainly to the economic progress Black Americans have made since the 1960s and 1970s (Frey, 2015). Since the 1980s, more Latinos and people of Hispanic/Latino descent have also been moving into the suburbs especially inner-ring suburbs closer to central cities (Singer & Suro, 2002). Asians, considered the "model minority," are behind Hispanics numerically. However, the Asian populations including Chinese, Japanese, South Vietnamese, and Filipino are often better educated and more skilled than any of the previously mentioned minority groups (Frey, 2015).

Despite the growth in diversity and the cultural changes happening in the suburbs, when the Black and Hispanic populations in a community reach what Orfield (2002) calls "critical mass" (p. 11), White residents perceive the community to be in a stage of decline. As a result, White residents began to move, and the schools began to shift demographically. Fortunately, in the WRMS cluster this demographic shift has occurred more slowly than in other parts of the PCPS. Due to a relatively stable housing market and its geographic location in the center of the Piedmont County and proximity to more affluent PCPS school clusters, WRMS has maintained a multi-racial enrollment.

Although the school in this research study is what is known as a "multi-racial school," there has been a rapid integration of multicultural students.   The multi-racial balance is what may not persist, and if unabated without some form of institutional resistance, schools like it may tend to segregate rapidly. Resegregation of schools has not been confined to one particular region of the United States. All sections of the country are being impacted by the effects of racial, ethnic, and cultural isolation especially suburban areas (Orfield & Lee, 2007). Many of the most rapidly resegregating schools are in the suburbs (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield , 2003). Orfield (2005) blames resegregation on three factors: (1) limits of the courts and their inability to

enforce rulings, (2) residential choices by private citizens which intentionally cause segregation, and (3) a growing minority population and the shrinking White population.

Similarly, Frankenberg et al. (2003) identify three causes of resegregation: (1) racial change in communities and students, (2) abandonment of plans for desegregation, and (3) increased private school enrollment. Each of these factors, whether they act independently or collectively, play an integral role in how suburban communities and schools are impacted by the effects of segregation and contribute to resegregation. Most large school districts of over 25,000 students are exhibiting decreased inter-racial exposure which suggests a trend toward resegregation (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002).

The Landscape of the Demographic Changes in a Multicultural/racial Society

Frankenberg (2012) defines rapid racial change in schools as "racial transition at least three times that of the entire enrollment" (p. 30). Racial analysis by Orfield (2002) suggests that racial transition occurs at the threshold level of 10-20 percent. This means that when minorities (Blacks and Hispanics) reach the threshold level, racial transition in schools continues to accelerate until schools are saturated with enrollment levels of over 80 percent minorities (Frankenberg, 2012). Frankenberg et al. (2003) cite the rapid transformation of the racial composition of public schools in America as "significant in pace and magnitude" (p. 23).

Reibel and Regelson (2011) states, "When a minority group's population is expanding rapidly enough, it exceeds the opportunities for absorption by stable integrating neighborhoods and leads to the formation or expansion of relatively segregated ethnic enclaves in the same cities" (p. 379). Over the next two decades, immigration patterns combined with an increase in the birth rate of children of color will significantly increase the racial/ethnic diversity of the nation's population (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, & Sum, 2007). This means that not only will

public school enrollments change demographically, but schools will also be forced to amend the way in which it conducts education to accommodate for a more diverse student population (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The United States is becoming a "multiracial society with no racial majority" (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield , 2003, pp. 6, 23). During the Civil Rights era, the issue of race was typically a concern between Whites and Blacks (Orfield, 2005; Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). Today's suburban demographic population is more cosmopolitan. Thus, public school enrollments experience greater levels of diversity (Farrell, 2008; Frankenberg & Lee, 2002). According to Frankenberg et al. (2003), in six states, White students are a minority. Culturally diverse students represent almost half of the students enrolled in America's public schools (Ford & Gilman, 2007; Orfield & Frankeberg, 2008). This research makes apparent the multiple factors that impact a suburban public school in a multicultural/racial environment where there is unintended institutional inequality (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002).

In the largest suburban areas, Black students account for about 14% of the students enrolled in suburban public schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). At 20.5%, Hispanic/Latino[2] students are the largest minority population enrolled in suburban public schools (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield , 2003; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Orfield & Frankeberg, 2008;). Native-born and immigrant Hispanics represent approximately one-half of our nation's suburban population growth (Frey, 2015). The Asian student population is growing as well albeit not as fast. Additionally, Asian students are the least segregated minority group in America (Orfield & Frankeberg, 2008). Frey (2015) considers this change in demographics as a

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[2] The United States Census Bureau defines Hispanic or Latino as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2011).

"diversity explosion" whereby America is beginning the process of remaking itself. The changes in the demography of suburban schools present an opportunity to find ways to improve instructional pedagogy, enhance the social environment of multi-racial schools like WRMS, and provide research-based strategies to guide effective policy implementation (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Lee, 2002).

Multi-racial schools that are experiencing success have developed practices and procedures that help diverse students from different backgrounds achieve academic success (Banks et al., 2001). Moreover, there are research findings that suggest some suburban schools are effective in the formulation of policies and practices suitable to a diverse school environment (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). Given the complexities of racially and ethnically diverse school enrollments, policy implementation should consider a broad range of factors and their productive impact from multiple data sources (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002).

For example, every region in America has become "less white" (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003, p. 24). Since race concentration is different regionally, successful responses to demographic changes in one region may be less (or more) effective in another region based on the racial demographic being served (Frankenberg, 2012). As such the success of academic programs at WRMS will be predicated on the school district's ability to align educational standards with multicultural ideology and practices (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2010). This current study critically argues that the academic objective and goals of the Western Reserve Middle School may be aligned with PCPS objectives but not with the changing demographic structure of the school.

Educational Responses to Demographic Change in Suburban Public Schools

Educational researchers and theorist have identified a range of educational responses to the crisis involving the racial and cultural demography of suburban public schools (Boger & Orfield, 2005; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). School leaders, teachers, policy makers, and community members all have a vested interest in the construction of effective responses to rapid demographic change (Orfield, 2012). According to Orfield (2005), racial isolation caused by the demographic changes in schools and their surrounding communities have, "created new obstacles to equal educational opportunity and attainment" (p. 8). Professional researchers and educators tend to agree that the demographic changes of suburban public schools have had a profound impact on educational equity and should be accounted for in the process of developing corrective implementation strategies and policies (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002; Powell, 2005; Wiley, Shircliffe, & Morley, 2012).

Nevertheless, to develop effective responses to racial and cultural changes in suburban schools challenges such as race neutral or "color-blind" reforms, have always been a popular tool used as a means of suppressing racist ideology and exalting the standards movement (Wells, 2014). As a result, there are many who support the color-blind theory that race does not matter anymore (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). Powell (2005) describes the doctrine of color blindness as an insurance policy that the dominant culture obtains to indemnify its social, political, and economic advantages.

In schools, however, Grant (1989) suggests academic programming consist of environments which are *not* colorblind and in which instruction is tailored to learning style differences that sustain educational programs based on culture. Pewewardy (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995) proposes inserting education into the students' culture. Schools and the culture

of students are interdependent (Portes, 2005). Therefore, the ecology of schools can be damaged through symbolically organic systems that support educational tracking programs, low academic expectations, student identification policies based on cultural characteristic, and several non-academic factors indirectly related to racial and ethnic factors.

Secada (1989) posits that educational equity can only be established in a classroom environment that is *not* "colorblind" and where instruction is conducted in a way that "accepts and affirms learning style differences" based on cultural and ethnic socialization (p. 91). Boger (2000) refers to the colorblind theory as a tragedy that leads to racial and ethnic isolation in our public schools. Consistent with this same line of research, Wells (2014) advocates sight over blindness because "seeing is believing" (p. 20). These policies have been accompanied by other debilitating policies initiated by the government in their quest to make education equitable and hold educators accountable (Portes, 2005). Ironically, what has been lost in the mire to formulate a process of educational accountability is the failure of the government to intervene in a way that protects equity and equality in schools (Orfield, 2012).

The Landscape of Equity and Equality Relative to Demographic Change

Equity

President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10925 in 1961 established Affirmative Action and paved the way for President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. The creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 initiated a federal process to enforce, at least in principle, the ideas of equity. Nevertheless, the ideas espoused by ESEA have not led to more equity. Wells and Holme (2005) note that the focus on equity has been abandoned and the drive for excellence has taken its place. The mandates associated with ESEA have diminished equity and the resources associated with it such that, in many suburban schools, all

students no matter what their race, ethnicity, or social status are presumed to be equal. A consequence of this presumption is that resources are misappropriated causing an imbalance in the distribution of equitable resources.

James A. Banks, Professor and Director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, describes academic equity as having an equal opportunity to achieve academic and social success in school (Banks, 1993). This success, however, is often a function of equitable resources related to the geographic location of the school where students attend. Within suburban public-school districts, geography is instrumental in the determination of student enrollment and the diversity that exist (Clark, 1987; Diem, Frankenberg, & Cleary, 2015; Richards & Stroub, 2015; Tate, 2008).

Because students typically attend schools in the neighborhood in which they reside, schools in areas where rapid racial change has occurred are experiencing high levels of racial isolation (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). According to Frasure-Yokley (2012) "increased districtwide diversity does not necessarily translate to greater levels of integration in suburban school districts" (p. 76). Based on the location of some suburban school clusters, students are experiencing racial and ethnic isolation causing a homogenous grouping of students (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011).

Where this isolation occurs in suburban areas is important. The highest rate of racial isolation appears to occur in suburban places closest to central cities (Holme, Welton, & Diem, 2012). Racial isolation is also prevalent within suburban districts that are victimized by wide ranging income disparities, disproportionate home values, and decreased home ownership opportunities (Frasure-Yokley, 2012). Inevitably, spatial separation is created due to more affluent residents having the ability to create their own protected space (Orfield, 2012). When

this "protected space" is violated, more affluent residents react by sending their children to private schools or moving to a more prosperous area where the schools are less racially and ethnically diverse (Clotfelter, 2004). This causes an increase in demographic isolation and redirects potential resources to entities other than the public school within the existing community (Orfield, 2012). The Western Reserve Middle School has seen a dramatic decrease in resources. The evidence in the study show how the WRMS is not receiving the financial support from the parents and community business partners. This lack of funding is a direct correlation to the number of academic resources available to WRMS and its ability to support students who are struggling financially which indirectly affects students' motivation and preparedness.

Equality

Many researchers treat the terms of equity and equality as "interchangeable" because they both support egalitarian ideas of liberty, democracy, and freedom (Grant, 1989, p. 89; Secada, 1989, p. 69). A prevailing difference, however, is found in the fact that while equality in education satisfies quantitative variances between groups, equity in education seeks to address qualitative issues against which equality is assessed (Secada, 1989). Quantitative indicators that impact equality include educational inputs and outputs that reflect academic qualities derived from students' environments (Coleman, 1975).

Inputs include access to the number of people involved academically with a student, the educational tools or raw material available to a student, and the financial resources on hand to use for educational purposes (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Secada, 1989). Thus the ecological process of education is effective when educational inputs are dynamic and flexible enough to adapt when threatened by the influence of the surrounding environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Educational

outputs are referred to as the products and services including employee satisfaction and other institutional by-products manufactured by the inputs (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). For example, Secada (1989) identifies outputs as academic achievement results of the educational process including standardized testing, drop-out rates, and graduation rates.

Rumberger and Palardy (2005) conclude, "true equality of educational opportunity can be achieved only by directly addressing the pronounced disparities in the backgrounds and circumstances of students and their families" (p. 145). In an article that attempts to unravel the meaning of educational opportunity, Coleman (1975) concluded that equality was unatainable solely "within educational institutions" (p. 28). He goes on to suggest that for educational equality to be properly understood "the initial state in which schools find children and the continuing environments outside school that compete for a child's time" must be considered in defining equality in education (p. 29).

Secada (1989) comments, "If we fail to ask whether or not the curriculum is just in what it legitimates as knowledge, we may well achieve equality of education, but it seems highly unlikely that the equality will represent a just distribution of knowledge" (p. 75). In effect, the equality of education can potentially be contingent on the administration and distribution of equitable resources within and around the school district. Rothstein (2010) concurs by explaining that school improvement policies can only be effective when combined with "reforms that narrow the vast socioeconomic inequalities" (p. 68).

Despite these challenges, there have been educational responses being implemented to stem the tide of demographic change in suburban public schools. Many schools, including WRMS, are designing and implementing more family-oriented policies that include the learning needs of all family members; teacher training regarding student diversity based on student's

needs and how to effectively respond to those needs; schools as full-service facilities that provide multiple, year-round needs including physical, mental, and sociological needs; collaborative partnership between the community at large and the school to provide necessary technological and instructional tools for advanced learning; implementation of performance standards that measure the *true* learning abilities of students (Rist, 1970).

The Landscape of Student Achievement Relative to Race and Class

American education has made strides toward improving racial disparities in academics and creating ways to detect and chart academic disparities (Viadero, 2006). Nevertheless, disparities still exist. Brown (2006) suggests that a comparison of White middle-class students with students of color, students of low socioeconomic status, students who speak languages other than English, and students with disabilities continues to reveal drastic differences in achievement and expectations. Not only are the test scores lower for non-White and disadvantaged students but the expectations from teachers and the allocations of resources are lower, too (Ford & Gilman, 2007).

Additional research cites low-performing elementary and secondary schools, lower academic expectations from adults and peers, limited access to proper resources because of financial barriers, and negative peer influence that celebrates academic apathy (Owens, Lacey, Rawls, & Holbert-Quince, 2010). Researchers have narrowed the student achievement discrepancies down to two factors: race and class (Gorski, 2008; Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2006;).

Ray Rist (1970) in his research of segregated schools found that race and class together presented a "powerful interaction" that influenced achievement. Kucsera et al. (2015) call the isolation of students by race and class "double segregation" that restricts educational

opportunities for minority students (p. 553). Owens et al. (2010) identify race and class as a "powerful intersection" that must be understood as a "frame of reference" to appreciate student achievement discrepancies (p. 297). Clark (2007) states, "Class will always create separation…the difficult issue is to remove race from this matrix of causation" (p. 310). As a multi-racial suburban public school, the enrollment at WRMS is diverse and leveled based on the factors of race and class. According to the interviews conducted in this current study, the racial diversity at WRMS is evenly distributed among Black/AfricanAmericans, Whites, Hispanics, and surprisingly Asian students. It is argued that the diversity among the student population is welcomed and considered benefical to the collective ecology of the school. Class, on the other hand, is shown to have a distinct impact on available resources and academic preparedness and by extension on academic achievement.

Race

There are many in the U.S. who believe that the issues involving race are no longer a problem (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). According to Powell (2005) the first step in understanding equity and its relationship to academic achievement is to recognize race as a social construct. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the social composition of a school affects student achievement (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Thus, race is still an important issue that deserves analysis in relation to equity and student achievement (Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). Although race is not based on a biological or scientific construct, historically and educationally it has been influential in political decision-making and the creation of socially accepted stereotypes (Frey, 2015; Powell, 2005).

Dreeben and Gamoran (1986) state, "the relation between race and learning results from differences in how school systems allocate resources that are ultimately employed in classrooms

and in how teachers combine and use those resources to organize their classes and carry out instruction" (p. 660). When compared to White students of similar backgrounds, students of color "experience significantly lower achievement test scores, teacher expectations, and allocation of resources" (Brown, 2006, p. 701). West (2001) posits race matters! Therefore, any framework for educational improvement must include integration policies as a compelling social interest (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield , 2003).

This current study is focused on the school district's and the community's response to rapid racial change. Also examined was the history, geography, and socioeconomic indicators linking the enrollment status of students based on race and class within a multi-racial suburban public school. Although rapid racial change and its impact on suburban public schools are occurring across the U.S., this study investigated the changes in a multi-racial suburban public school in Georgia.

The racial and ethnic geography of Georgia's public schools. Georgia's statewide enrollment by race/ethnicity in K-12 is consistent with other states that have large suburban districts. As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of Georgia's students are either White (39.5%) or Black (37%).

Table 3.

Georgia PK-12 Enrollment by Enrollment Ethnicity/Race.

Ethnicity/Race	Enrollment	%
Hispanic	275,696	15.6%
American Indian	3,363	.2%
Asian	72,752	4%
Black	646,628	37%
Pacific Islander	1,791	.1%
White	695,649	39.5%
Multiracial (two or more races)	64,593	3.6%

Source: Georgia Department of Education (2018).

The Hispanic student population (15.6%) is considerably smaller than the two major ethnic

groups and tends to be more concentrated in specific parts of Georgia. As shown in Table 4,

there are 15 school districts across the state where more than one-quarter (25%) of the student

population is Hispanic.

Table 4.

Hispanic Enrollments in Georgia>20%.

County	Female	Male	Total	Total Enrolled	Percentage
Atkinson	284	333	617	1,678	37%
Clarke	1,490	1,566	3,056	13,066	23%
Clayton	5,216	5,422	10,638	53,150	20%
Colquitt	1,226	1,264	2,490	9,574	26%
Echols	170	173	343	812	42%
Evans	214	211	425	1,843	23%
Gilmer	524	524	1,048	4,218	25%
Piedmont	23,497	24,920	48,417	173,050	28%
Habersham	933	955	1,888	6,825	28%
Hall	5,357	5,641	10,998	27,043	41%
Murray	856	877	1,733	7,643	23%
Toombs	378	419	797	3,057	26%
Whitfield	2,611	2,804	5,415	13,289	41%
Buford City	559	601	1,160	4,178	28%
Calhoun City	640	720	1,360	4,012	34%
Dalton City	2,622	2,779	5,401	7,812	69%
Gainesville City	2,269	2,446	4,715	7,899	60%
Marietta City	1,438	1,582	3,020	8,649	35%
Rome City	910	1,023	1,933	6,199	31%

Source: Georgia Department of Education (2015).

Two of these districts have Hispanic student enrollments of over fifty percent (Dalton

City and Gainesville City). Conversely, Black students have a greater presence across the state.

There are seventy-eight (78) county and city school districts in the state of Georgia (also includes

state public charter schools, State schools for the Deaf and the Blind, and the Juvenile Justice

Department School) which Black/African-American students represent over 40% of the student

enrollment (See Appendix F). In fourteen of those school districts, seventy-five percent (75%) of the student population is Black/AfricanAmerican.

The racial and ethnic geography of Piedmont County. Piedmont County is over 400 square miles and will soon celebrate its bicentennial. It is located thirty miles northeast of Atlanta and is considered to be the "gateway" to metro Atlanta from the north. There are eight surrounding counties. Including the county seat, Piedmont County is host to sixteen (16) municipalities. In 2013, the U.S. Census estimated Piedmont County's population to be almost one million residents.[3] The racial demography of Piedmont County is representative of a diverse racial and ethnic population. However, White residents in Piedmont County represent 37.4% of the county's total population. Blacks and Hispanics make up 28.7% and 21.2%, respectively while the Asian, American Indian, Pacific Islanders, and other racial groups make up less than 15% of Piedmont's total population.

Table 5.

Racial demography of Piedmont County.

Race and Hispanic Origin	%
White alone, percent	55.4%
Black or African American alone, percent	28.7%
American Indian Alaska Native alone, percent	0.8%
Asian alone, percent	12.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent	2.8%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	21.2%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	37.4%

Secada (1989) posits that to achieve pedagogical equity, cultural background must be acknowledged. English Language Learners represent 16% of the students in PCPS. Considering

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[3] United States Census Bureau (2014), *State & County QuickFacts*.

the enrollment in PCPS, this would be over 27,000 students who require supplemental services to improve their English. This number of students would be larger than the enrollments of 165 of the 181 (91%) school districts in Georgia. From this perspective, culture becomes an important issue for consideration. Thus, questions arise as to how PCPS and more specifically how the Western Reserve Middle School community and stakeholders are addressing the social and academic needs of these students.

In a report on the desegregation of public school districts in Georgia, the Georgia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2007) found that of the 180 (now 181) school districts in Georgia, one-hundred-and-nine (109) have been sued in federal court for not eliminating racial segregation. The remaining 71 districts escaped school desegregation litigation and most of these districts completed voluntary compliance agreements (441-b) with the United States Department of Education. Piedmont County was never under a court ordered integration policy structure. However, the surrounding counties have varying desegregation statuses including Under Court Jurisdiction (CO), Unitary Status (US), non-Litigant and never subject to court jurisdiction (N-L)

Based on reported racial demographics, PCPS as a whole is integrated. Nevertheless, because of the size of its student population and relative geographic location, PCPS has school clusters that are becoming racially isolated. As a result, there are school clusters in the district experiencing symptoms akin to segregation. For example, according to the 2014-15 student data charts in the PCPS Accountability Reports for high schools, there are two high schools (Southern Border and South Piedmont) that host Black and Hispanic student enrollments that exceed 80%. In both cases, White students make up less than 15% of the student enrollments.

An extreme case of student isolation exists in one high school in particular (Center High School). The student enrollment consists of a Hispanic/Latino population of 62%. Black students constitute 25% and White students represent 3% of the student enrollment at this high school. Conversely, there are two high schools that have White and Asian student populations of over 65% and Black student populations of less than 20%. The schools in Piedmont with the homogenous student enrollments are located on the geographic fringes near counties that have student enrollments that are already majority Black/African American (south) or White (north). Most schools, however, in the PCPS maintain student populations that are racially balanced.

This current study, I analyzed a multi- racial school in Piedmont County Public Schools (PCPS) as a suburban school district using the clusters model presented by research conducted by Erica Frankenberg (2012). The PCPS served as a potential sample for study because of its relative geographic location to the city of Atlanta and because of the county's historical and present significance relative to rapid racial change. Conversations with research participants reveal the complications that race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics have on social status and the connection between social status and class have on academic performance.

Class

Class is frequently a function of human capital (Clark, 2007). The knowledge and skills portion, however, recognizes "only the most superficial" aspects of human capital without addressing "underlying components" (Brooks, 2005). This void has been most detrimental to students who are culturally and socially diverse. In many ways, these students are often ill-equipped to endure the rigors of an organizational environment that does not recognize or even try to remediate moral, cognitive, and/or aspirational deficiencies (Brooks, 2005).

The impact of class on school enrollments. Schools are viewed as middle-class institutions that cater to the characteristics of the dominant culture (Orfield, 1996). Ironically, Kahlenberg's (2006) research has found that students perform better in multi-racial, middle-class schools. Nevertheless, socially disadvantaged students are still unfairly victimized by an educational system unfit (or unwilling) to address their academic needs (Rist, 1970; Stone et al., 2001). Consequently, as Rumberger and Palardy (2005) posit there is a strong correlation between racial and socioeconomic segregation and school enrollments.

In a research report conducted by Linn and Welner (2007), the authors found that when students are placed in segregated academic environments, the causes of racial isolation, although variable, could be narrowed down to factors including socioeconomic status (i.e., parent educational attainment level, job status and housing) and school resources such as advanced placement availability and teacher quality). Integration would appear to be an appropriate solution to the problem. However, any effort to integrate lower social classes with middle and upper-income students will face political and social barriers. Not only that, parents with higher incomes and more extensive educational backgrounds have the means and the ability to move to a better school zone or to place their children in private schools Without the proper strategies to remediate these types of circumstances in the Western Reserve community, this current study argues that the school enrollment, although currently multi-racial, has the potential of becoming more homogenous.

Environmental factors can be linked to student performance. Social capital plays a vital role in the education of a child (Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, 2015; Portes, 2005). Middle class parents seem to have already embraced the idea that their involvement in the school improves their child's potential for success. This is due in part to their availability. Most middle and

upper-class parents are not hourly or non-exempt employees. They are employed as administrators, executives, or other institutional professional as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act[4] (Hanlon, 2009). Because they are remunerated at a much higher rate and are not tied to a clock, they have more flexibility in their schedule to be active in civic and community affairs including local school activities and governance.

Many parents of students with lower socioeconomic standing are unable to provide enough support to teach and train their children how to conduct themselves and communicate in the culture of power (Delpit, 1995). These parents, who suffer from the inability to provide for their families adequately, have also been impacted by the failure to effectively communicate in a society governed by polices favored to protect a certain class of people (Wilson, 1987). Unfortunately, many of these policies appear to be suitable only for those who are capable of understanding and navigating the complex nature of our society. In other words, those with access to wealth and cultural capital.

Parents who find themselves with limited cultural capital expect the school to provide their children with the tools to succeed in society. Noted scholar and educator Lisa Delpit (1995) argues that these parents want to "ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in larger society" (p. 29).

Thus, when students who are "culturally deprived" enter mainstream public school, they are often unprepared for the realities of interacting in an unfamiliar environment, and parents expect that the school will "fix" their child (Portes, 2005). As a result, frustration sets in with both students and parents because of their inability to communicate in the language of power. At

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[4] Pub.L. 75–718, ch. 676, 52 Stat. 1060, June 25, 1938, 29 U.S.C. ch. 8

that point, the ability to advocate for the children is suppressed and mobility to change the prevailing status quo is stifled. Another noted scholar and professor at Harvard University, William Julius Wilson, directs the blame on what he describes as *social isolation* (Wilson, 1987).

Further analysis by Wilson (1987) suggests that *underclass* parents live in communities where there is a high unemployment rate, which is normally accompanied by a high crime rate. Due to these factors, school-age children, who are economically and socially disadvantaged, find themselves "socially isolated from mainstream patterns of behavior" (Wilson, 1987, p. 58). Because these students find themselves on the outside looking in, they lack the human capital in which to interact in highly structured environments (Kirsch et al., 2007). This ineptitude by students is made manifest via behavioral problems in the classroom. Consequently, academic difficulties result, and students are often mishandled or mislabeled by educators who are unable to empathize with the environments that serve as the cause of these inadequacies.

Social class in Piedmont County. Fifty-five percent of the students attending school in PCPS are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This is lower than the Georgia state average of 62%. Nevertheless, the fact that over half of the students enrolled in Piedmont County's public school are receiving aid for lunches would indicate that social disparities do exist. Scholars acknowledge that even though students from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds may attend the same school and live in the same neighborhood, racial separation and inequality are still prevalent (Diamond, 2006). Thus, students enrolled in PCPS may be attending schools with large disparities in class status. These disparites are rooted in and aligned with demographic indicators based on race and ethnicity.

Because of its size and relative location to Atlanta, Piedmont County is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse suburban counties in the state of Georgia. This diversity also

extends to relevant dimensions in suburban differentiation such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and family structure (Hanlon, 2009). Each of these dimensions influence social class. Further, as a form of social hierarchy, Diamond (2006) contends that social class is a fundamental tool in shaping the educational experiences and opportunities of students. This means that social class impacts academic achievement. These considerations, however, in conjuction with family dynamics such income, education, and employment would suggest that social class cannot be evaluated in isolation apart from other influential factors such as race and ethnicity all of which culminate to create a ecological class structure (Diamond, 2006).

Summary

Tate (2008) suggests that educational scholarship recognize geography as an important component of the research process. Geography can be studied from many different perspectives. The location of people relative to geographic space provides for a platform to begin understanding how and why people decide to live in a particular community. The locational arrangements of these communities within or outside America's largest metropolitan areas have added to the geographic discourse. Ultimately, the geographic location of people impacts school enrollments.

School district geography is contingent on the demography of students in attendance. Suburban school enrollments have been affected by segregative policies such as fragmentation that has led to racially, ethnically, and socially isolated environments. The rapid pace at which communities are changing and the location of these changes in suburban districts have lured the attention of scholars and researchers who are concerned about the impact of these transformations. These developments have led to a variety of responses by suburban school districts aimed at protecting educational equity and equality.

Included in this research was an attempt to understand better the factors influencing the demographic changes at a multi-racial suburban public school situated in a countywide school district. Also explored were how these factors coalesced to create uniquely integrated school environments that are racially, ethnically, and socially diverse. Although current and ongoing policy implementations were critiqued and discussed during analysis, this research is not meant to disparage or impute blame. The research goal of this study is meant to inform and raise awareness to the impact of demographic changes in suburban public schools. Also included were provisions for compelling rationales that provide for a broader vision of the role of suburban public schools in an ever-changing multicultural educational landscape.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods used to generate the data in this study. A significant part of the chapter is devoted to an overview of the procedures and outcomes of the pilot study. This is followed by details about the procedures for the data collection phase of the actual dissertation. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research design and data analysis.

Overview

Frankenberg and Orfield (2012a; 2012b) found that there were not many established analytical frameworks capable of understanding the "complex social, political, and institutional context of suburban demographic change and factors predicting response to that change by suburban school systems" (pp. 2-3). Nevertheless, this current study followed a case study format with questions framed from a phenomenological perspective.

The focus was to analyze the concrete descriptions of the first-person, lived experience. van Manen (1990) states, "lived experience cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions" (p. 79). Therefore, qualitative inquiry was structured to chronicle each participant's recollection of how they reflect on the demographic change in a multi-racial suburban public school. Phenomenological research is a retrospection of "recollective" experiences (van Manen, 1990). Each participant's account was recorded in their everyday language to avoid abstract intellectual generalizations (Finlay, 2009).

This study includes a pilot phase that was conducted in June 2016. The pilot test was done to determine reliability and validity of the qualitative instruments being considered for the larger research study and to strengthen interview execution and data collection procedures. The present chapter outlines the objectives, data collection instruments, participants, and procedures for the pilot study, as well as, the complete methodology for the larger, more comprehensive research study.

THE PILOT PHASE

Part I: Introduction

Research Purpose

The purpose of this interview research project was to examine the social and political arrangements of middle school communities and how these arrangements affect the school. The research focused on investigating how teachers, school administrators, community members, and other school advocates and actors conceptualize the dynamic nature of race and its effect on suburban public middle schools. To accomplish this research, three questions were posed for study in a suburban middle school:

1. What are the underlying social and political forces shaping the demographic structure of schools?

2. What are the unique differences within and across (suburban school district) that lead to academic disparity?

3. What are the social and political interactions/networks influencing/driving the resegregation of suburban public schools?

Interview Methodology

This interview project was an attempt to gain an understanding of the experiences of educational advocates undergoing demographic and rapid racial change in the middle school environment. Therefore, the interview questions were semi-structured (Roulston, 2010). Because certain critical questions were asked of each participant and other topical items were explored as probing questions and transition statements later in the interview, a combination of an interview guide and standardized open-ended interview types were used as data gathering tools (Patton, 2015). Three main questions anchor the interview guide accompanied by probing questions to help acquire more accurate, concrete data (Roulston, 2010).

Each participant was interviewed in an office setting. For recording purposes, the Voice Memos application on an iPhone 5s was used. The interview was transcribed using the Express Scribe Transcription Software. Both interviews lasted approximately one hour. The interview questions were prepared ahead of time. However, because the context of the schools was vastly different, the probing questions and transition statements were not the same. The participants for this project were shown reciprocity by being issued a copy of the transcript and a restaurant gift card (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Access

According to Suzuki et al. (2007), "data collections often happens through relationships" (p. 297). Both participants were educational administrators in the middle school setting. Mr. Basil is currently serving as the Principal of MY Middle School. We grew up together. My father was the minister where his family attended church. Mrs. Sage is currently an Assistant Principal at Southeast Middle School. We worked together at Western Reserve Middle School when she was a Special Education Teacher. I asked each of them if they would consider

allowing me to interview them regarding the demographic status of their respective schools. They readily obliged. This was fortuitous for me because both of their schools have experienced community and educational demographic change.

Researcher's Role

Although both of the participants were local school administrators and I am a teacher, my role as the researcher was collegial. I have worked with both participants in multiple milieus, professional and personal. We all have an unyielding love for children and have dedicated our lives to helping students acquire educational and personal success. I was also confident that these participants would be able to provide me with an interview that was rich in data that was critical to the research study.

I was anxious to discuss the issues regarding their experience as educators in communities where their schools have been plagued by rapidly changing racial, ethnic, and social demographic populations. Due to the changing demographics, their schools are experiencing a total resegregation of their school enrollments. My main role, as a researcher, was stimulating responses that revealed participant's experiences and recollections of how the changes in their school environment occurred and how they conceptualized these changes.

<div align="center">

Part II: Reflective Essay

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Self-Analysis: Insider/Outsider Status

Qualitative research "includes having personal contact with and getting close to the people and situations under study" (Patton, 2015, p. 57). *Emic* and *etic* were terms invented by Kenneth Pike (1954) to describe the *insider's view* and an *outsider's perspective*, respectively. This research project allowed me to participate from both positions. From an educator's viewpoint, I would be considered an insider. Additionally, both participants and I shared the

mutual characteristic of being persons of color or more politically correct, African American. This distinctive feature gave me the ability to share in the life and activities of the setting under study from a more empathetic perspective. Patton (2015) refers to this notion as *emic*.

As a researcher, however, I would be considered an outsider or *etic*. This was my first opportunity to interview subjects to acquire and analyze data acquiring and analyzing data. Fortunately, being an outsider can be considered an advantage. Wax (1971) argues that the *outsider's perspective* allows the researcher to remain objective and focused enough to describe relationships, systems, and patterns that emerge as a result of the data collected from interviews (as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 339). This combination gave me the unique opportunity to understand the setting of the research project as an insider while giving a description to and for the benefit of outsiders (Patton, 2015).

Overall Data Quality

I have been evaluating demographic change and the impact of rapid racial change for over a year now. The Protocol (Appendix A), using an interview guide and semi-structured interview questions, was adequate in obtaining the data necessary for research analysis. There were no dichotomous questions. Questions were intentionally open-ended so that the participant would have to provide a detailed explanation in response to the interview questions. Each interview question had probes. However, probes were amended based on the answers given by the participants.

This research study is related to demographic and rapid racial change in suburban school districts. However, in Interview #1, the participant was a middle school principal in a small, city school district. Although the data collected provided a wealth of information relative to segregation, it may not be contextually relevant to this study. Many of the analytical concepts

(i.e., environment, response to racial change, attendance zones) that emerged in Interview #1 can generally be applied to all schools experiencing rapid racial change. However, the challenge was to examine whether the analytical concepts emerging from Interview #1 could be specifically applied to schools in large, suburban school districts as in Interview #2.

In Interview #2, the participant and I reviewed the school's Accountability Report to look at the last three year's student enrollment data and other data, including state and national testing scores. This is a valuable tool that can be retrieved digitally through the district's website for any school being studied. Future research will include data from the school's Accountability Report and other artifacts pertinent to the study.

Pilot Study Implications

The pilot study was instrumental in helping me develop as a researcher. First, it allowed me to practice the skill of interviewing participants. In this "pre-study," I gained valuable experience in creating rapport and understanding what it was like to interview participants. According to Patton (2015), building rapport is a matter of constructing questions and conversations in a way that is nonjudgmental and that conveys empathy. Thus, questions in the larger study were amended to place the participant at ease and provoke honest, authentic data for analysis.

More importantly, however, the questions were more explicit in acknowledging which participants should be interviewed and what information was to be researched. For instance, rather than framing questions that can be generalized to a wide range of formal and informal actors, the inquiry was more detailed in describing from whom the data were collected. Stated in the research questions were the actual title or role of the participant and what their experience

has been related to demographic change. The questions for the dissertation have been amended as follows:

1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators in Western Reserve Middle School describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

    a. What policies and strategies have been adopted to accommodate students from all backgrounds?

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel, community advocates, and policymakers describe and conceptualize the unique differences within the WRMS school cluster that have led to academic achievement disparities?

Second, the pilot study contributed to the research process and development of data analysis and evaluation skills. Using a smaller sample, I was able to practice the extraction of verbatim excerpts and the assemblage of associated negative cases (Appendix B) that emerged as a result of repetitive response patterns. Patton (2015) warns that without some semblance of classification, "there is chaos and confusion" (p. 553). Therefore, the content of the interviews conducted in the pilot study provided opportunities for identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling primary patterns in the data (Patton, 2015).

Third, the verbatim excerpts provided content for potential patterns and themes that could emerge in the dissertation study. In the Pilot Study, both participants expressed concerns about the expectations of the students, parents, and educational stakeholders. There seemed to be

inconsistent views from each of these groups as to the purpose of education and how to respond to issues of academic achievement. Another concern that developed from the pilot study interviews was the influence on behavior and academic performance.

Both participants expressed the importance of who and what programs and policies were instrumental in encouraging students to perform at their greatest potential. Lastly, amid the demographic change in their respective districts, participants were most concerned about the manipulation of enrollment boundaries. Both schools were predominantly of color and had experienced a consistent decline in the number of White students and an increase in students who were racially, ethnically, and socially challenged. Many of these same themes and patterns could emerge in future interviews.

Finally, I feel confident that the intended research with regards to the demographic changes in a multi-racial suburban public school was a worthwhile and productive engagement of resources and time. This study attempts to add to the current literature regarding the demographic changes in schools by conducting a qualitative single-case study that examines: (1) suburban geography and its relationship to school district enrollment; (2) racial and ethnic change in suburban school districts; and (3) the perception of educational stakeholders relative to the effect of demographic change on the educational environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the interconnectivity between student enrollment, shifting geography, cultural awareness, and the demographic changes in a multi-racial suburban public school located in a countywide school district.

THE DISSERTATION DESIGN PHASE

Research Design

Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods

In her outline of *Qualitative Design*, LeCompte and Preissle (2000) define qualitative research as a category of research designs or models to provoke and obtain verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory data. She goes on to suggest that this data is collected in the form of narrative including field notes, recordings or audio and video transcriptions, and other written records, pictures or films. Qualitative inquiry allowed me the opportunity to capture subjective accounts of how professional educators and administrators, community advocates and politicians understand and perceive demographic and rapid racial change using the suggested method of in-depth interviews (Patton, 2015).

Morrow (2007) considers qualitative inquiry an effective approach to understanding the meanings people make of their experience. Quantitative inquiry and data methods are too rigid and controlling. On the other hand, qualitative inquiry moves beyond the superficial and engages the depths of the human experience (Patton, 2015). The qualitative method gave the researcher the best opportunity to analyze and evaluate the interview statements of participants who work and live in a multi-racial suburban environment.

Also, a qualitative research design permits freedom to capture the unknown variables and theory base necessary to collect informative data (Creswell, 2009). To gain "rich and thick" (Patton, 2015) responses from research participants, this research study was conducted using a phenomenological approach to questioning. The questioning focused on the concrete

descriptions of the first-person, lived experience. Qualitative inquiry was structured to chronicle each participant's recollection of how they reflect on demographic and rapid racial change. Phenomenological questioning was applied to explore how community and school advocates experience racial change and to investigate each participants' perceptions on how racial and demographic changes in their community influence the school that serves the community.

This strategy allowed for a "comprehensive and complete understanding of the phenomena" occurring in suburban educational communities (Roberts, 2010, p. 143). Essentially, interview questions were formulated to "borrow" participant's experience and reflections on their experience to gain a holistic understanding as to the deeper meanings and significance of how their experience fits within the greater context of the human experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). When discussing the lived experience of others, phenomenology, the study of phenomena, "elucidates both that which appears and the manner in which it appears" (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2011, p. 332).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is recognized as the father of the modern phenomenological philosophy (Macann, 1993). Husserl, a mathematician, used his mathematical and logical background to facilitate his understanding of phenomenology (Moran, 2000). Other notable phenomenologist includes Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). Phenomenology produces thought that reflect on how the world is viewed through another's eyes. According to Hammond, Howarth, and Keat (1991), phenomenology "involves the description of things as one experiences them, or of one's experiences of things" (p. 1). Although the journey may be the same, what one sees along the journey may be different than what was seen or sensed by another. Thus, the sense of the

experience (seeing, hearing, and touching) plays a role in one's description of the phenomena. Phenomenologists term this "intentionality."

As a novice researcher working in the field of education and closely aligned to the research participants in this study, I am connected to this research investigation in a way which is described in phenomenology as "intentionality" (Moran, 2000). Intentionality reveals my connection to the world at large and provides me with the desire to make meaning of how demographic and racial change is experienced by others (van Manen, 1990).

According to Kafle (2013), there are typically three major traditions used to classify phenomenological research. These research traditions can be categorized as:

- Transcendental Phenomenology (Edmund H. Husserl 1859-1938)
- Hermeneutic Phenomenology (Martin Heidegger 1889-1976)
- Existential Phenomenology (Jean Paul Sartre 1905-1980; Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961)

The questions in this study were formulated based on the foundations of Transcendental Phenomenology. The research focused on the principle that each participant's first-hand experience(s) related to demographic and racial change serves as an expert evaluation or is considered transcended to better understand the reality of this phenomenon (Kafle, 2013). As the principal researcher, I suspended my personal feelings and understandings.

This phenomenological concept, reduction, was used as a tool to obtain the core essence of each participant's conscious thoughts as to what they are experiencing. To this end, the objective was to describe "what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience" (Patton, 2015, p. 117). To maintain focus on the contribution to generalizable knowledge, multiple participants, including educational advocates and professionals, as well as, community advocates and professionals, were interviewed.

The lived experience, however, is limited. Allen-Collison and Hockey (2011) point out "we can never fully 'capture' and portray the lived experience, but only try to convey some of its essential elements and meanings" (p. 337). Thus, the researcher encapsulates the context that is foundational to his/her research. van Manen (2014) further argues that phenomenology is a method of inquiry that has to be constantly reinvented. Therefore, phenomenological research is often boundless and cannot be restricted by formulaic research strategies and techniques (van Manen, 2014). Despite these limitation, quality data can still be gathered when data from research participant's interview/conversation are structurally sound and when phenomenological tools such as bracketing, reduction, and bridling are used reflectively for what van Manen (2014) calls "doing phenomenology" (p. 372).

Case Study

Although this study was argued with the use of questioning derived from a phenomenological perspective, qualitative investigation proceeded as a case study design. A case study is a qualitative methodology or comprehensive research design strategy that can be considered an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2003). Case studies allow for a focus on "contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). The research intent was to examine a single-case of a multi-racial suburban public school based on the representative or typical case study. According to Yin (2003), representative or typical single case studies provide information about the experiences of the average person or institution under study. The school selected for this study was chosen based on characteristics consistent with the onset of enrollment changes based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and social changes that have developed in a suburban neighborhood.

Sampling Strategy

This study highlighted the use and meaning of a particular concept within a particular setting (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the research participants were selected based on the sampling strategy outlined by Patton's (2015) *Sensitizing Concept Exemplars Sampling* (p. 291). This selection procedure uses sensitizing concepts such as racial, ethnic, and social changes in the community, teacher/student relationships, or material/academic resources to help guide the researcher to inquiries that highlight how a specific concept or circumstance is given meaning. Phenomenology was the theoretical sampling framework. Conceptual sampling engaged participants from various backgrounds who were working and/or living in a multi-racial suburban community experiencing demographic change.

A broad array of educational and community advocates in a single school were selected to respond to an interview template asking open-ended questions. Respondents were representative of three categories similar to the study completed by Stone et al. (2001). *Leading citizens* are the first category of respondents to be interviewed. These are powerful and influential individuals, by position or reputation, who were important in local decision making that is not just limited to education but are important to local agencies surrounding the school. The second category of respondents to be interviewed were labeled as *Civic agents.* These interviewees were involved with non-profit organizations such as children's advocacy groups, minority organizations, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), religious groups, and neighborhood organizations. *Education Professionals* were the last category of respondents. This group represented local school education professionals.

All participants were 18 or older. No active students were used as participants. However, several of the participants in the study were former students who are now teaching at

WRMS. To gain multiple perspective and to contribute to generalizable knowledge, data was collected using participants from various backgrounds (Giorgi, 2008). For example, local school administrators, teachers, and parents who have experienced demographic change will have done so from different points of view. Additionally, these variegated viewpoints also tangentially contributed to credibility.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

Site Selection

Because this research is focused on suburban school districts, participants were selected from a school district outside of the central or principal city of Atlanta but not so far beyond its city limits to be described as a rural school district. Western Reserve Middle School was purposefully selected because of the demographic population shift that has occurred in the last five to ten years and the ability for the school to maintain a racial/ethnic enrollment balance.

Methods

The process of data collection was structured to set boundaries for the study, collect information from semi-structured interviews, and establish a protocol for the recording and analysis of all the data that was collected (Creswell, 2009). To collect data, this study used participant observations and a combination of interview formats. Patton (2015) posits "interview strategies are by no means mutually exclusive" (p. 441). Thus, the Informal Conversational Interview method was used to allow for the flexibility to redirect the participant based on the participant's responses. Kaczynski, Salmona, and Smith (2014) recognized that flexibility "allows the researcher to build on insights and explore increasingly deeper understanding" (p. 130).

To guarantee certain topics and issues were covered, the Informal Conversation Interview method was combined with the Interview Guide method. The Interview Guide provided a foundation for questioning and potential probes for the redirect. Because of the limited time available, the Interview Guide allowed for maximum data collection in minimal time. The ultimate goal of the observations and the interviews, however, were to gather authentic data that entails the essence and the understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday lived experience of participants who have encountered a demographic change in a multi-racial school and community (van Manen, 1990).

deMarrais (2004), using the phenomenological methodology, outlines a way in which to structure an interview that is "contextual, holistic, and thematic" (p. 55). This is done by designing a detailed plan and by following strategic guidelines that are established before the interview. The challenge, however, is to construct an interview that is open and free of restrictive and counterproductive questions (pp. 61-62). Time is critical and there must be a consideration for the value of a research participant's time. Furthermore, Dr. deMarrais (2004) alludes to the potential benefits that can be derive from a meaningful conversation (p. 64-65). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to engage and evoke understandings of how community advocates and school personnel conceptualize demographic change, the implications of the changes, and the ecology that is created.

Each interview began with an ice breaker question followed by four or five sub questions that provided the context for the respondent's knowledge and understanding of demographic change and how they conceptualize the impact of these changes in their school and their community. Relevant data collected also included the setting of the school district. Thus, I met with interviewees in the environments where they 'live.'

This provides for the opportunity to observe, feel, and get a sense of the issues surrounding the demographic shifts in the community. By actually interviewing in the field, I was able to acquire a complete picture of the problems associated with the demographic changes at Western Reserve Middle School. Multiple perspectives were outlined, and many factors were generated for analysis. Consequently, a more holistic account of the issue under study was made available allowing for greater clarity between what was perceived to be occurring and the actual changes that were happening.

Data Analysis

Patton (2015) states "Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings" (p. 521). For this study, the within-case analysis of a single middle school was conducted with information constructed from the literature on school demographic change. Fifteen (15) interviews were conducted including parents, community members, as well as, selected school-level interviews with teachers and administrators. Each interview was used to gather data for research analysis.

Initial conversations began with the local school principal. Although permission may have been granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), access was based on the mutual consent of the principal. Also, this permission set the stage for a positive working relationship that led to informative data. The former President of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was also interviewed. Her information was integral to the study because it served as a bridge between the school and the community. Based on these conversation, I gained insight as to what other local school (assistant principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors) and community members (vendors, parents, real estate agents) were in position to provide their experience related to the demographic changes occurring in the community and consequently, at the school.

Policy and position statements from the school and the interviewees were also analyzed. Although interviews were the main source of data collection, documents obtained from district websites and other resources were used to confirm statements made during conversations with participants. All interviews were collected using the Audacity cross-platform audio recording software and transcribed using the services of Rev.com.

Each interview transcript was coded to identify ways in which Western Reserve Middle School conceptualizes and responds to demographic change. Categories for coding, however, were not determined beforehand. Appropriate categories emerged by focusing on recurring patterns and insights related to the research purpose and questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). From these categories, themes were developed and prioritized based on "utility, salience, credibility, uniqueness, heuristic value, and feasibility of the classification schemes" (Patton, 2015, p. 555). Validity was ensured by searching for confirming and disconfirming evidence of all themes (Frankenberg, Ayscue, & Tyler, 2016).

Data Management

Any stored documents and recording was always in possession of the researcher with a lock code for access. Transcriptions were transferred to a Microsoft Word file or placed in a Portable Document Format (PDF) by Adobe Acrobat. Files were then saved and stored on a password-protected computer and handled only by the researcher. Signed consent forms were placed in the researcher's secured office and locked for protection.

Assessing Data Quality

Qualitative researchers have identified a four-pronged approach to assessing data quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Miyata & Kai, 2009). For credibility, triangulation or cross-checking was activated using different sources and methods. As mentioned earlier, to check the

consistency of findings, data was gathered separately from multiple participants from different backgrounds and professional positions.

Patton (2015) states, "Good description takes the reader into the setting being described…in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon studied and draw our own interpretations about meanings and significance" (pp. 533-534). Therefore, thick descriptive data was used for transferability. In their *Paradigm of Criteria and Underlying Epistemology*, Miyata and Kai (2009) suggest establishing confirmability by making reflexive journals, using rich data, and developing rapport. These recommendations were implemented throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

<div align="center">**Subjectivity Statement**</div>

Experiences Relevant to Research

For the past nine years, I have been the only Black, male content area teacher at one of the largest middle schools in Piedmont county. As a result, many students of color gravitate toward me. This is not because my pedagogy and instructional abilities are exemplary. There are many teachers in the building who are more experienced and capable of quality instruction. Nevertheless, I possess a quality that is unique, influential, and valuable.

For many, I am the academic embodiment of what many parents of color want to see in their children. I possess power that is equal or greater to many administrators in the building. Many parents and students feel that they can connect with me because of my Blackness and my willingness to embrace the ideas that the color of my skin does not limit my ability to achieve and succeed in an academic environment.

Although my background experiences may be vastly different from most of the students that I teach, my Blackness, the color of my skin, gives me instantaneous credibility. This is

especially poignant in an environment where there is only one. Because I extend myself beyond the remnants of the curriculum into the community and the intimate lives of my students, I can communicate with my students in ways that help them understand that teaching and learning occur everywhere and in every situation. Further, because of my ethnicity, I am a person who understands the journey of students of color. Being a person of color does not define me. It does, however, thrust me into a position of importance in the minds of students (and parents) who are struggling to identify their place in the culture of power.

During this research, I was open to the responses of the participants. This experience led me to want to gain a pre-reflective understanding of the essence of how educational stakeholders and the community surrounding the school conceptualized the impact of demographic change. However, my reflexivity or as I reflect on my current standing within the education environment, I was careful not to allow what I know interfere with what I want to know. Patton (2015) encourages the researcher to be ever vigilant, attentive, and conscious of "the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of one's own perspective and voice" (p. 70).

Because I am a Black male teaching in a predominantly White, female-dominated profession, this research has specific relevance to my everyday working environment. The school where I serve instructs over 2,200 students and employs almost 100 instructional staff members. On the entire instructional staff where I teach, there are six regular education teachers, two resource teachers, four paraprofessionals, and one physical education teacher who would fall in the category of Black or African American.

Of these 13 Black/African American staff members, there is only one male regular education teacher and one male paraprofessional. Black American students make up at least 25% of the student body. Hispanics make up over 20% of the student body and there is not one

teacher in our building who is of Hispanic origin. This in no way exemplifies an organizational structure that is reflective of the constituents in which are being served. However, this is a prevailing issue in public schools all over the country. More important to this study is the fact that problems associated with race, class, and ethnicity are not relegated to urban or rural educational environments but are also becoming more pervasive in suburban public-school districts.

This research allows me the opportunity to raise awareness to the plight of those students of color who cannot embrace the worthiness of education because of an educational system that has lost it soul to quantitative measurements. Martin Luther King Jr. espoused that the true goal of education is intelligence plus character. I want educators and educational constituents to understand that the color of a student's skin, the circumstances of a student's living conditions, or ethnic origin does not mean that the capacity to learn is diminished.

Educational leaders should consider policies that are relational as well as rigorous. Teaching a hungry student or a student that has a language deficiency is not productive unless their individual needs are met. Stone et al. (2001) share my view that education is of great importance in the attainment of high social status and well-being. Horace Mann called education "the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of social machinery." Education can change the trajectory of one's life. My goal is to be an agent of change on the path to success.

Nevertheless, my earnest and sincere desires must be tempered by my quest for good scholarship. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) posit "reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including values and interests that locations confer upon them" (p.15). Although I have a strong desire to be heard, I

have an even more profound desire to be understood and respected. Thus, I monitored my

subjectivity by using suggested prescriptions such as taking precocious notes or other useful

distractions that did not taint the experiences revealed by research participants.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The results presented in this chapter were based on interviews from a suburban county. Educators, community stakeholders, and parents associated with a single school, Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), located in Piedmont County, Georgia were selected as participants to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators in Western Reserve Middle School describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

   a. What policies and strategies have been adopted to accommodate students from all backgrounds?

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel, community advocates, and policymakers describe and conceptualize the unique differences within the WRMS School Cluster that have led to academic achievement disparities?

The focus of this study was to gain insight as to the essence of how educators and educational advocates in a suburban school district conceptualize demographic change. For this study, the questions used for analysis focused on provoking responses that emphasized how

racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic change was affecting the community and the school representing the community.

Review of Data

Geographically, the school is in the center of the county and is also located in the county seat. When WRMS was constructed in 1996, the principal was instrumental in the entire construction process. The school cluster included a high school, a middle school (WRMS), and four elementary schools. WRMS has an enrollment of over 2,000 students and is one of 29 middle schools in the county. To measure a school's effectiveness, the State of Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) uses an index called the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). In general, CCRPI measures progress in student attendance, content mastery, and preparation for the next grade level. Western Reserve's Accountability Report ranks it in the 51st percentile of all middle schools in Piedmont County (See Figure 2).
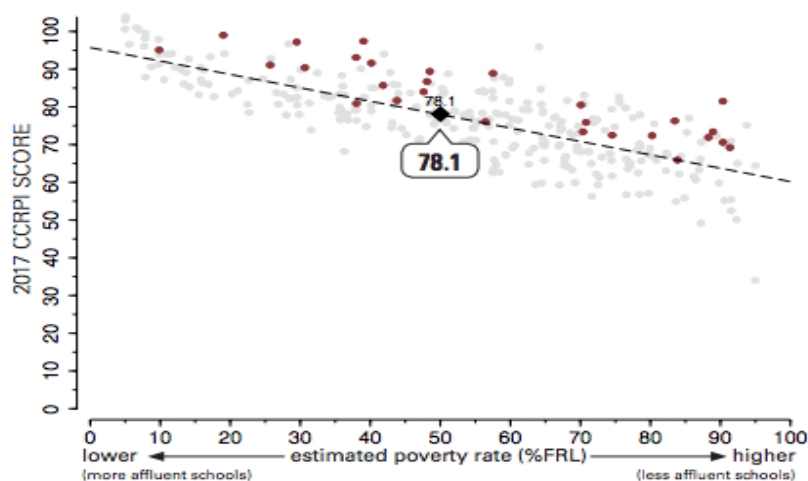

Figure 2. 2017 College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). Source: WRMS Accountability Report (2018).

Demographically, WRMS is one of the most racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse middle school in the Piedmont County School District (PSCS). Dr. Everett, Principal of WRMS, described it this way, "We're geographically kind of in the middle, and SES we're in the middle; what that results in is we're truly diverse. We have that balance. We're kind of, like I say, the dividing line so to speak, of that balance" (Everett, Interview, 02/22/2018). There is a distinct racial and ethnic balance between African American (Blacks) 29%, Whites 24%, and Hispanics (Latino) 29%.

The Asian population in comparison to other schools that are demographically similar was relatively high at 13%. Amy, one of the few Black American female teachers at WRMS, noticed the there was "a lot more diversity in the classroom and it's not just one major ethnicity, even though one may be slightly larger than the other; but it's still not just one major ethnicity group here any longer" (Amy, Interview, 02/12/2018). According to the WRMS Accountability Reports, since 2014 the WRMS student population that is served Free/Reduced Lunch averages at least 50% (See Table 6).

Table 6.

Western Reserve Middle School Student Data (2014-15 to 2016-17).

	Academic School Year		
	2014-15	**2015-16**	**2016-17**
Enrollment	2,157	2,200	2,176
Asian	14%	13%	13%
Black/African American	28%	29%	29%
Hispanic or Latino	25%	28%	29%
White	30%	26%	24%
Free/Reduced Lunch	50%	51%	50%

Source: WRMS Accountability Report (2018).

This is an important statistic because the U.S. Department of Education has set aside funds under Title I for schools that have students from low-income families that exceeds 40 percent of enrollment. Low-income eligibility has commonly been determined by using the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or free/reduced-price lunch. Using these percentages, WRMS qualifies as a Title I school. Nevertheless, school administration has chosen not to use Title I funds for schoolwide enrichment programs that serve all children.

Review of Methods

Fifteen interviews were conducted over a period of twelve weeks. All interviews were conducted in confidentiality in various venues selected by the participants. By agreement, the names of each participant are withheld, and pseudonyms are used for each participant, the school, and the school district. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and questions were tapered based on the position of the respondent and the content and context of the conversation.

Each interview was digitally transcribed, and transcriptions were reviewed for errors. Transcriptions were analyzed using a qualitative research software program called NVIVO 12. The analyzed data were then organized into research nodes/containers according to research questions. Themes, sub-themes, the frequency of similar responses, and key quotes emerged and constructed the basis for the final themes. Outlined under each theme were specific quotes used by the participants to be used to present the results and finding.

The participants in the study were from various backgrounds and of multiple genders. Of the 15 participants, there were eleven females and four males. Most of the participants were White (nine), five were Black Americans, and there was one Asian participant. Each participant had a profound interest in demographic change and was anxious to participate in the study.

Results/Outcome of the Study

The results of this research study are presented in Table 7 below. The emerging themes are aligned and correlate with the final themes. The data sources supporting each final theme are also included. After transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data, nine final themes specifically aligned with the guiding questions of the research emerged. Themes aligned with the guiding questions regarding the underlying social and political forces shaping the school included: Themes for social forces were (a) the residential placement and social standing of people have power, and (b) demographic change does not happen by accident. For political forces, themes were (a) The economy is no respect of persons, and (b) needed...more resources and less politics.

Additional themes emerged throughout the data and aligned with the next guiding question in which the participants described their experience with demographic change. Themes for racial, ethnic, and social changes included: (a) race and ethnicity are factors that cannot be ignored, and (b) diverse environments provide the basis for a more open community and a more well-rounded individual. The final themes were related to the last guiding research question which focused on the unique differences within the WRMS cluster that impact academic achievement. Themes for academic achievement included: (a) parents and teachers are the most influential factors in the learning process, (b) student behaviors and other environmental factors interfere with instruction, (c) school policies are aligned with district objectives but not with the demographic changes.

Table 7:

Research Themes

Research Questions	Nodes	Final Themes	Source Data
1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?	**Social Forces** • Aging Community • Infrastructure • Multiracial Community • National Events • Social Economic • Standards and Values • Technology **Political Forces** • State Government • Federal Policies • County/District Leadership • Board of Education • Voting	**Social Forces** 1. The residential placement and social standing of people have power. 2. Demographic change does not happen by accident. **Political Forces** 1. The economy affects people differently. 2. Needed...more resources and less politics!	**Social Forces** Interviews from: • Parents • Teachers • Administrator • Community Advocates **Political Forces** Interviews from: • Principal • Community Advocate • College Professor • Teachers

Research Questions	Nodes	Final Themes	Source Data
2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators at Western Reserve Middle School, describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?	**Racial, Ethnic, Socioeconomic Changes** • Positive/Negative/None • Geography • Sign of the times • Survival • Opportunity	**Racial, Ethnic, Socioeconomic Changes** 1. Race and ethnicity are factors that cannot be ignored. 2. Diverse environments provide the basis for a more open community and a more well-rounded individual.	**Racial, Ethnic, Socioeconomic Changes** Interviews from: • Principal • Teachers • Parents

Research Questions	Nodes	Final Themes	Source Data

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel and community advocates, describe the unique differences within the Community School Cluster that have led to academic disparity?	**Causes of Academic Disparity**
	• **Parents**
	  o Involvement
	  o Support
	  o Reinforcement
	  o Time
	  o Values (Background)
	• **Educators**
	  o Colorblind
	  o Demographic Structure of the Staff
	  o Equity
	  o Relationships
	• **Students**
	  o Behavior
	  o Motivation
	  o Demographic structure of the students
	• **School Policies**
		Causes of Academic Disparity
		1. Parents and Teachers are influential in the learning process.
		2. Student behavior and other environmental factors interferes with instruction.
		3. School policies are aligned with District goals and objectives but not with demographic changes.
			Causes of Academic Disparity
			Interviews from:
			• Principal
			• Teachers
			• Community Advocates

Findings and Conclusions

Research Question 1: What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

Social Forces

Theme 1: The residential placement and social standing of people are important.

The first major theme that emerged was related to where and at what level people choose to live. According to participants, the types of living structures are related to the status and social standing of the residents. Piedmont County is racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse. That diversity is due to the influx of new residents seeking the suburban way of life. There are thirteen cities in Piedmont County each distinctive and unique in its own way. Lane, a teacher at WRMS, describes Piedmont as "an area outside of a major metro area that has good schools, nice neighborhoods. It also has a lot of diversity, a lot of immigrants, racially diverse" (Lane, 02/22/2018). Because the Western Reserve school cluster is in the middle, it attracts residents from all the surrounding cities.

As discussed in the literature review, the suburbs are an attractive option for those who are trying to escape the plight of urban environments and the mundane existence of rural life. It is also a social sign of "moving up." Gabe, a long-time resident of Piedmont and former parent of students who attended WRMS, suggested, "there's more, maybe, upward economic mobility among minorities that are causing them to drift towards suburban life and middle income" (Gabe, 03/12/2018). This upward mobility, however, has geographic and social implications.

Infrastructure plays an enormous role in the suburban way of life. Although public transportation has not been extended to Piedmont County, the access to the interstate, expanded highways and express lanes has made living in the suburbs a real possibility given reliable

transportation. Dr. Everett (03/22/2018) calls it following the interstate. The county even offers a commuter express bus service to "enhance quality of life by facilitating the mobility of people and goods safely and efficiently." The bus service, however, is limited with only five regional routes using I-85 and I-985 and six local routes connecting a few of the major neighborhoods and venues around the county. Considering transportation is the key to mobility, when that issue is individually resolved, where one lives and the type of residence one aspires to live in also becomes important. However, for the upward bound, managing all the different nuisances of suburban life can be an arduous climb.

Fortunately, in America, transitioning from one social class to another can be a matter of choice. No, we cannot ignore factors, such as race, family background, and educational attainment which have historically restricted upward mobility (this will be discussed more thoroughly in a later theme). Nevertheless, the rise to a higher social standing comes with cultural baggage (Campbell, 1976). Cathy, a teacher and former parent of WRMS students told me, "those people coming in, still had cultural and socioeconomic problems" (Cathy, 03/06/2018). Those problems do not vanish and require time and the influence of those already indoctrinated in the middle-class lifestyle to help them in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for success.

Although change is inevitable, transitioning to a new lifestyle is often accompanied by unfamiliar challenges. Renting and leasing allow time to become accustomed to new lifestyle challenges. However, renting apartments or leasing homes and townhomes are also associated with transient residents and changes the geographic landscape and infrastructure. Dr. Everett was asked if geography plays a role in where we are as a school. He remarked, "Geography plays into what your demographics might end up looking like, just based upon movement. You

can look around the county and just see where different groups tend to migrate toward, and where the lines of poverty have stretched" (Everett, 03/22/2018).

Therefore, those who are not quite financially stable enough to purchase a home see an opportunity to afford the suburban lifestyle without the long-term commitment but only in specific areas that have been susceptible to demographic changes in the county. On the other hand, entrepreneurs, such as construction contractors and real-estate brokers and agents, see an opportunity to expand their fortunes while government officials envision a greater tax base. Meanwhile, residents and educational advocates see it very differently.

Lane, a gifted certified Language Arts teacher at WRMS and long-time resident of the school community remarked, "There were still kids of all different kinds of races in the classroom, but we didn't have all these apartments that were feeding into the school and these other areas that almost everyone in the neighborhood rents a house" (Lane, 02/22/2018). The principal of WRMS adds, "with this cluster there's a lot of leasing now...there's so much leasing, and rentals and so it brings a different population with it" (Everett, 03/22/2018); essentially, a population that many see as transient and not invested in the growth and development of the community.

When asked what contributed to the transient enrollments being seen at WRMS, Lilly, a Mathematics teacher at WRMS, answered: "We have a large cluster of apartments and townhomes within our cluster, so to me, that brings more transient [students]" (Lilly, 02/14/2018). Janet, a parent of two former students at WRMS and resident, said, "If you live in an apartment you haven't bought into the neighborhood. You haven't bought into the community. By not buying into the community, you don't have any intention to just stay"

(Janet, 03/21/2018). She added, "again, we have more apartments...we [the school] have higher transition because of the construction from the apartments" (Janet, 03/21/2018).

Cathy agreed, "People aren't going to live in an apartment for eight years!" (Cathy, 03/06/2018). As a result of these circumstances, the residential status of people can cause the school to have stagnated enrollments. Although the incoming residents may not be financially able to secure a house, the new residents are racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse. Nevertheless, their cultural views can be inconsistent with the values and beliefs associated with suburban standards.

Because he often has a more in-depth view of what parents of students at WRMS are experiencing, Dr. Everett noticed, "though they may be able to afford the middle-class life that we see... if it's new to them, or if it's a struggle to sort of keep up with that status, and they're not truly established in it...it changes" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Demographic changes become problematic to the community and the school because there is an existing learning curve that acts a barrier between those arriving and those who are used to living the suburban lifestyle. A parent and former president of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) reflected, "kids that are moving in are a lower socioeconomic, but not necessarily lower socioeconomic, they just have different values." Thus, the status of those who are new to the middle class becomes less about their financial condition and more about their beliefs.

The suburban lifestyle, however, can be deceptive. Apartment living, Dr. Everett states, "can be deceiving, because what looks like nice townhomes, a lot of them can be Section 8...where they're government subsidized" (Everett, 03/22/2018). No matter what geographic locale one chooses to live in there will always be a societal hierarchy consisting of the haves and the have nots. Piedmont County is no exception. The unintended consequences are that those

with the financial capital are more inclined to relocate to newer growth. Says the principal of

WRMS: "More affluent families, those that have the means are looking to move where the newer

neighborhoods are and what they perceive to be better schools or better resources" (Everett,

03/22/2018).

This transition to what the principal terms "the fringes" slowly begins to change the

demographic structure of the community. Rury and Mirel (1997), in their article on the political

economy of urban education, reported that when wealthier households recognized that the school

district was developing policies that redistributed the cost to educate their student publicly, they

began to leave the district. This in part is due because the cost to educate poor students will

increase. As these resident leave for more developed school districts, the community begins to

change; and so too does the demographic enrollment of the school.

Theme 2: Demographic change does not happen by accident.

Piedmont County was once and still is, in many cases, one of the premier places in the

state of Georgia to live. Janet shared, "We moved here because this was called the Golden

Triangle and it was the fastest growing section in the county" (Janet, 03/21/2018). Cathy

confirms this belief by also stating, "Back then, this was called like the Golden Triangle or

something in this area" (Cathy, 03/06/2018). Additionally, because of its relative proximity to

states such as Tennessee and South Carolina, even other residents outside of the state still see

Piedmont as an opportunity to live in an area with good public schools, affordable housing, and

low taxes. Even better is the fact that it is outside of the city of Atlanta but close enough to enjoy

some of the leisure activities that can only be experienced in a metropolitan city.

Considering it is centrally located in Piedmont County, the Western Reserve community

has been the beneficiary of many of Piedmont's new residents. However, as the Western

Reserve school community has aged and matured from its former novelty as the county's most affluent northern suburb, the demographic population is beginning to change rapidly. When asked how her community has changed over the past several years Lane recalls:

> When I moved into the neighborhood, we were among many, many families with little kids. People were still having kids. And then, we watched all those kids grow up, graduate, go to college, move on out. And then, a lot of people have moved, and then new families are coming in who were before … I mean, it's rare because there's not many of us left. We call ourselves the original settlers. We were there when the neighborhood was only a third of the way built. Now the people moving in are the age of our children and they're having children (Lane, 02/22/2018).

Homes are getting older, students are graduating, and other areas beyond Piedmont's borders, especially to the north and west, are beginning to become more established. Sarah agrees,

> My neighborhood, I've noticed is getting older. A lot of the kids that were three years old when we moved in, are now in college or, actually, out of college, a lot of them. So, I'm starting to see the neighborhood, definitely, kind of grow up. It used to be, you know, there were, like for example, on Halloween, zillions of kids all over the neighborhood. Definitely, there's less so now. So, I don't see as many kids. There's still a lot of kids in our neighborhood, but I don't see maybe quite as many as I used to. So, I think the neighborhood, in general, might be getting a little bit older (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

Dr. Everett remembers, "One-time Western Reserve was the new growth. So that's where people were moving to but now it's saturated" (Everett, 03/22/2018). He added that people tend to move, "where you have the new growth." There were other participants, however, who believed that there were people moving not only because of saturation and overcrowding but also

because of the changing demographics. This movement is typical of what happens to communities that are changing.

As communities get older, they begin to experience different levels of decline. Mikelbank (2004) discusses this phenomenon in his article describing the different typologies of U.S. suburban places. He defines the characteristics of a mature suburban community as "Aging Suburbs." These are older, well established suburban areas with an older population and housing that is densely populated. Older houses, consequently, are more affordable and cost-effective for low- or moderate-income families with children (Orfield, 2002). This occurrence draws a different class of people, as well as, a more racially and ethnically diverse group of residents which changes the demographic structure of the community and the local school.

Similar to declining metropolitan areas, it seems likely that declining suburban areas, absent redevelopment, would fall prey to the abandonment of vital economic activities and by default home to poor residents who cannot, or are not allowed to follow upper-income residents (Burchell, 1997). To this point, the local school principal states:

> I think it's sort of a natural trend that you see in a lot of locales, or places and cities, and so what you see is, and there are different words for it, you know, where people move to the suburbs to get away from the city, so to speak, and sometimes what that leaves is those that are poor, that can't afford to leave.

Because the decline in suburban areas can be compared to what happens in declining urban areas, the consequences are also similar. This exodus of people moving to what is perceived as "better" is traditionally called "white flight." Lane, a parent of former Western Reserve students, shared:

Because what we've always seen in the south is "white flight," and so when our schools

are getting a little bit too diverse and a little bit too, hmm, what's going on here? People

put their house on the market and they move a little bit further up where there's lower free

and reduced lunch. Statistics show the people that are on the free and reduced lunch are

going to be in the non-white category. So, they're moving up or they're moving over.

They're going over [more] north. They're going up that way...where even the most

diverse school is no more diverse than our least diverse school (02/22/2018).

Nevertheless, municipalities across the nation that have strong governments have a sense

of awareness of what is happening. As a result, they establish agencies or groups to work with

the local government to conserve and protect degenerative suburban communities within its

jurisdictional boundaries (Hanlon, 2009). Similarly, Myron Orfield (2002) suggests declining

suburban areas could benefit from well thought out incentives for those who engage in

competitive fiscal zoning and tax-based development.

Political Forces

Theme 3: The economy effects people differently.

The economy is based on individual consumers who are by and large educated in public

institutions. These individuals come from all walks of life and various cultural backgrounds.

With thoughtful consideration for those who are physically, psychologically, and socially

challenged, each makes a choice as to the lifestyle he/she chooses to live. The economy is alive

but does not discriminate. It makes no discrepancy on who is successful and who is a failure.

The terms poverty and poor, as it relates to income level, was mentioned over thirty times

by participants. Poverty is an important issue especially in the way that it affects schools.

Rothstein (2010) believes that if schools do no seek proactive solutions there will be greater

geographic disruptions, more hunger and malnutrition, increased stress factors, and poorer health. Social status in America is based on income level. However, the health of the economy impacts the level at which Americans spend money which stimulates the economy. Public schools are affected by what happens in the economy. Dr. Everett says that the economy is, "an umbrella effect. It reaches everything because as we become less affluent in our PTA...whereas, it used to do a $30,000 fundraiser, now, this year, they struggled to get $5,000" (Everett, 03/22/2018). He continues by stating:

> They used to be able to buy us iPad carts and those kind of things, and now they can help us with a guest speaker here or there, and some teacher appreciation. That's about the scope of what they can do. So, it doesn't just impact the students, but the whole school, what their resources are and what's available to them. So, it kind of has a domino effect. So, you've heard the saying, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer." It's that kind of compounding effect (Everett, 03/22/2018).

Public schools do not operate in a vacuum in which they are isolated from the effects of what is happening in society. If the economy is weak, individuals suffer and in consequence schools suffer too. As the Western Reserve Middle School community ages and matures, there are relative economic changes consistent with communities in decline. Cathy states, "We used to have more money within the school system. The school had more help. We had more support staff here. We had happier teachers. We had more parental involvement. Those things really are important" (Cathy, 03/06/2018). The economy is important because we need funds to efficiently and effectively operate a school. Yes, the state government is responsible for funding public education and the federal government provides large subsidies to help maintain the efficacy of public schools. Nevertheless, the real funding to provide educational resources and

additional academic tools comes from individual parents and community educational advocates such as business partners and charitable organizations.

Theme 4: Needed...more resources and less politics

Resources were another one of the terms frequently used by participants. The greatest source of operating income comes from the government. However, it never seems to be enough even when the administration is fiscally responsible. With a budget of over $8 billion dollars, The Georgia Department of Education tries to provide a Quality Basic Education (QBE) for all of Georgia's K-12 students. It is still not enough.

There are no laws or policies that can financially compensate for the needs of 1.6 million students. There has to be a way to equitably support each of Georgia's 181 school districts without straining the financial resources of the citizens of Georgia. Mark, a new teacher and former student at Western Reserve Middle School, advised:

> I honestly think that, at a national level, federally, there needs to be a sweeping education reform, especially just in terms of the amount of resources that are allotted to educators and schools, because the more resources that we have, the more we can have after-school programs that allow these kids that are at risk to stay at school and to be involved in clubs and things that maybe might help them turn a corner. Where they would go one direction, they might go another direction (Mark, 03/15/2018).

Policies like IE Squared (IE2), a state initiative that allowed districts flexibility to waive certain state educational laws, rules and guidelines if certain academic targets were achieved, is one example of how state policy makers influence public schools.

House Bill 1209 was passed in 2008 by the Georgia General Assembly and was named Investing in Educational Excellence or IE2. However, the name was changed in 2015 to

Strategic School Waiver Systems (SWSS). This flexibility came with a cost. With this "flexibility," school districts could increase the number of students in a classroom, they could adjust the number of school days, and other cost-saving measures that may have aided financial operations but were not conducive to teaching and learning. A gifted teacher at WRMS complained,

> The biggest disservice is IE Squared. IE Squared is the number one snafu the state has thrown in, because when I started teaching, my class size was 24 max. When I started teaching gifted, my class size was 18 max. I have a friend that teaches. She was talking about her class size being 38 kids, without another teacher in there.

Put simply, the bill authorized larger classroom sizes, higher student-to-teacher ratios, and fewer resources. That seems to be the formula that politicians think give public schools the greatest chance for academic success. When you change the structural dynamics of the classroom to make it more difficult to teach while the demographics are changing, it would seem the district would be working from a deficit position.

Nevertheless, not all resources needed are financial. Many students and their parents face mental or psychological challenges and are unable to acquire the necessary support for everyday function. Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, and Sibley (2016) found that material resources available to a child are just as important because they are related to health and developmental risk that ultimately impact academic performance. Some parents lack the language and cultural skills to communicate in an environment that is socially different. Gabe passionately appeals to what seems to be common sense:

> All of these social issues, when you're talking about poverty, or people that are struggling with financial resources, it all goes hand in hand with low academic achievement, it goes

hand in hand with even mental illness, addiction. Poverty just really does a number on a

person. It creates several issues that, from a distance, you can assume there's some

pathology there. But when you get underneath the hood and see that this is really driven

by a lack of resources, and survival, just trying to survive (Gabe, 03/12/2018).

Cathy a former social worker adds,

We have to do so many things to so many people with less money, with less resources...

If we're going to have this many children in our society that have emotional problems,

we're going to [have to] be responsible for their emotional health as well (Cathy,

03/06/2018).

Holistic is what schools will have to become. Politics can be the tool that provides the resources.

However, without the proper resources used wisely, schools will continue to struggle to meet the

demands for accountability. The interview participants were confident, however, in the school

district to proactively respond to demographic change.

They were encouraged by the district's stability and its capacity to progressively combat

the consequences of demographic change. Mark commented, "I think Piedmont County as a

whole has done a lot to sort of embrace that changing demographic" (Mark, 03/15/2018).

Similarly, Brenda felt like no matter where one lives in the county, "We are blessed in Piedmont

County and have a good school. It doesn't matter if you live (in South Piedmont) we have

access. The kids have access to whatever academics they want to have" (Brenda, 02/09/2018).

Nevertheless, it will be the responsibility of those at the local level to adapt to these changes.

Research Question 2: How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators at Western Reserve Middle School, describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

Theme 5: Race and ethnicity are factors that cannot be ignored.

Although the participants were from many different backgrounds, when the research question regarding race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics was asked, respondents were cautious. Because of America's history and track record regarding race, the topic of race, especially, is approached with trepidation. Suburban communities are differentiated by class, race, and ethnic compositions (Hanlon, 2009). As a result, public schools have to be aware of how equity and race relations affect the school climate in racially changing suburban communities (Kucsera et al., 2015). When discussing race relations and its impact on WRMS, Dr. Everett concurs, "I think the only thing you have to do, though, is be mindful and make sure that there's equity, and that we're not overlooking certain groups" (Everett, 03/22/2018).

A Black parent of students in the Western Reserve cluster cautioned his children that they would have "some different experiences that unfortunately are primarily attributable to your race, not your capability, ability" (David, 03/20/2018). Teaching the content is important. However, there are other unrelated factors including the race and ethnicity of students and teachers that affect academic performance.

Because the Western Reserve Middle School is changing demographically, the classrooms are more multicultural. This seemed to be a major concern for participants particularly in the classroom. Kucsera et al. (2015) advise, "When concentrations of minority students are closely overlaid with profound pockets of poverty the racial composition of the classroom begins to matter very much" (p. 553). Teachers have to be cognizant of how this dynamic affects the classroom atmosphere. Amy warns that now teachers "are dealing with all

types of ethnicities in your class and you have to be mindful of that, as well as, teach the curriculum" (Amy, 02/12/2018). This concept becomes challenging when you have teachers who are racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically different than the students that they instruct.

Hughes, Stenhjem, and Newkirk (2007) in a paper describing the impact of poverty and race on education experiences of youth found, "teachers expectations of students' performance may also be informed by students' poverty and race; they are often unaware of their own racial biases and prejudices and unconsciously hold lower expectations of racial minority students" (p. 25). The principal at WRMS was of the belief that students, "will perform at the level we believe in them so if we have lowered expectations, they'll meet those expectations" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Sarah, a White female teacher at WRMS, shared:

> *White Female Teacher*: I think probably. I think people have their Southern prejudices
>
> and things. I mean, I do. I think it's sad, but look, don't we see that in the world?
>
> *Interviewer*: So, would you ... Yeah, we do, but, so-
>
> *White Female Teacher*: I hope not, but you would think teachers would be different, but
>
> I have a feeling, maybe, there's, you know...
>
> *Interviewer*: ...certain biases that are subconscious.
>
> *White Female Teacher*: Mm-hmm (affirmative) (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

This may be due in part to a lack of empathy. Teachers come from many different backgrounds. Additionally, the degree status of certified teachers automatically places them in a higher economic status than many of the students that they teach. Emily, who grew up in the district and attended WRMS, acknowledged:

> I think that I have to earn their...a lot of kids trust first. But I think that once they realize
>
> that I recognize that I'm White, or recognize that I have a certain privilege, and I don't

always know what they've been through, it'll mean that they trust me a bit more, that I'm

willing to listen and try to see it from their point of view. I think it helps (Emily,

02/28/2018).

Conversely, Amy felt that because she was a Black American teacher that she had a particular

advantage. In her interview, she shared:

There's sometimes I can relate to some of the students that may be some other of my

colleagues may not be able to relate to. Maybe able to identify a little bit better because

of my background...because we are of the same background. I feel like as an educator,

you have to reach across all lines, all barriers, all types of lines to teach and help all of

your students (Amy, 02/12/2018).

Being able to relate to the students may be instrumental in understanding their motivation. The

participants in this study were fully aware of the racial and ethnic discrepancy in the instructional

staff relative to the student population at WRMS. In the opinion of a teacher at WRMS, there

needs to be more teachers of color:

I think the first thing we have to do is acknowledge the diversity. I think WRMS is finally

starting to do that, and I think that we also have to acknowledge that a majority of our

teaching staff does not reflect that diversity. And that can create a little bit of conflict

between our expectation, and maybe student expectations or family expectations.

 One parent remarked, "A lot of the kids' teachers are White women. I think a lot of our kids

that come from a different type of background, whether they're Black, whatever, they feel like

they can't relate to their teacher at all." Another parent mentioned, "Kids need to see these really

good role models out there that maybe they're not seeing in their teachers." Gary Orfield (2012)

puts it this way, "It is difficult to have successfully integrated schools without well-integrated staff and leadership" (p. 224).

To summarize, the findings indicate that the theme of race and ethnicity, especially related to the instructional staff, have not been adequately addressed. Findings also indicate ineptitude among established faculty to relate to the needs of students who are culturally diverse. It appears that teachers are aware of the changing demographics but need additional training and professional development to improve their knowledge and instructional practice to aid in differentiation and relationship-building skills in a multicultural environment.

Theme 6: Diverse environments provide the basis for a more open community and a more well-rounded individual.

Better educational, social, and economic futures for families and communities are produced by stable integration efforts (Orfield, 2012). Racial diversity, however, does not equal integration (Frankenberg, 2012). According to Orfield (2012), integration exists when there is a balance of power and resources across lines of race and ethnicity, and when people have a belief that all men and women are created equal. The WRMS community is diverse but it was not always as multicultural as it is now. As stated earlier, as the community around WRMS has changed, so has the school enrollment. Despite these changes many of the parents and educators relish in the fact that the school and the community are racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse.

The community and its residents are the beneficiaries of a diverse population. Pam, a longtime resident of Piedmont County and current parent was thankful that, "Whenever we have community things, it's very diverse. That's beneficial to me to be able to be in contact with different types of people, different ages, different cultures, different foods" (Pam, 02/14/2018).

Many parents who were participants in the study indicated that one of the reasons that they moved to the area was because of the diversity and multicultural environment existing in the WRMS community. Dr. David moved from South Georgia because,

> The level of diversity from a cultural ethnic standpoint and socio-economic status standpoint was appealing to us. Some would see that as a negative, but we saw it as a positive because we wanted our children to be exposed to a range of individuals and experiences and we didn't think that they would get that in some of the other clusters (David, 03/20/2018).

Even those parents who already lived in the cluster were thankful to be exposed to different cultural experiences and relationships. Sarah stated,

> I love that my kids go to a school where there is a lot of diversity. I know that sounds kind of cliché and all, but I think that has been extremely valuable to them. I think they are more accepting and tolerant and empathetic, because of the people they're around every day. I mean, they have friends of all different races, colors, and creeds. It has been a really good experience for them (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

Similarly, a White parent who has lived in Piedmont County most of his life, and pastors a local church commented:

> I've always felt like a diverse experience in every possible way is good for the human soul. That, we cross pollinate, there's an intersectionality between human beings that we grow from one another, and when we get outside of our own bubble. That's the only way we grow. So, it's important to disrupt our bubbles, especially, in my opinion, White people who have just intrinsically stay in their bubble a lot. You have to work hard to break down that. So, I appreciate the diversity that I've seen in Piedmont the last 19 years

that I've lived back here. It's a different Piedmont [County] and something that's so much better (Gabe, 03/12/2018).

Teachers at WRMS express these same sentiments. All the participants in the study who were educators understood the multicultural dynamics that exist in the school and acknowledged how important it was to the future of students living in an increasingly global context. Kucsera et al. (2015) support the ideology that:

Ultimately, the way forward should be directed by an effort to prepare students to work and live in a region of almost unparalleled diversity. Indeed, all racial or ethnic groups should have access to schools and faculties that are organized to promote the many academic and social benefits of diversity. Developing these conditions for students is a basic necessity—for their future success and for the success of the region (p. 566).

The teacher participants in this current study were all committed to providing the conditions for students to be successful in diverse environments. Mark described his classroom as having,

a very strong Hispanic contingent, very strong African American contingent, and then we're down from 65, 70% White to about 25 to 30% now. It's different, but I don't think it's bad. I think that having that level of diversity is something that prepares kids for going off to college, being out in the real world, experiencing other cultures (Mark, 03/15/2018).

By allowing the students to express their cultural identity, teachers at WRMS are protecting the richness that exists in the unique texture of a multicultural society. At risk in a multicultural society are the many different religions, languages, foods, and cultural practices. Preservation is essential and fundamental to the function of tolerant and integrated society. Emily, a Language

Arts teacher at WRMS provides a scenario that allows her the flexibility to include foreign language in her content. She shared:

> I want to make sure that what I'm teaching is going to meet the needs of all the kids in the room, and that the text I choose represents all my kids. We just read a poem in Spanish, and I have my fluent Spanish speakers read it, and then we translate it to English. I try to really bring in my kids' backgrounds into the classroom as much as I can (Emily, 02/28/2018).

This not only improves the comprehension and understanding of Spanish-speaking students, but also exposes students who speak English, or a language other than Spanish, to the different cultures of their peers. Another Language Arts teacher interviewed advocates that diversity is addressed by teaching kindness and empathy.

The findings suggest demographic change is important and factors in to the development of how students will compete in an ever-changing global market. It is the responsibility of teachers, parents, students, community institutions, and churches to facilitate discussions about the values of creating and sustaining a diverse educational environment and help raise community awareness about its benefits (Kucsera et al., 2015). Preparation will be key to their success. The participants who were interviewed view the changes in the community as positive and are capitalizing on this phenomenon as a way to teach and give students the opportunity to express their own identities while learning about the cultural idiosyncrasies of other students. Demographic change is happening. Teachers and administrators at WRMS have to be proactive and develop solutions that work for their population of students. To do nothing could potentially lead to a racially isolated school unprepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Research Question 3: How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel, community advocates and policymakers, describe and conceptualize the unique differences within the Community School Cluster that have led to academic disparity?

Theme 7: Parents and teachers are influential in the learning process.

Parents:

Parents are the initial teachers of children. The development of cognitive function derives from the parent and the environmental factors present at early ages (Hackman et al., 2014). Family background is one of many factors that influence educational performance, and one of the explanations for this is social class differences in parental involvement in their child's education (Frankenberg, Ayscue, & Tyler, 2016). Teachers, in research conducted by Tollefson (2000), judged the parent's inability to help students to be more responsible for student performance than student factors, external factors, or teacher factors. From a historical perspective, one of the parents stated,

> The cognitive problem is a result of generations of environmental problems. I don't think it's necessarily the individual's fault. There's a lot of things that have happened in our country, and our world, and our society that has a residue of the past. So, we're still dealing with the residue of things that have happened for generations and we're still trying to catch up (Gabe, 03/12/2018).

When discussing academic disparity at WRMS and across the district this line of thought was pervasive among participants.

Every single participant mentioned the idea that parents are instrumental in the academic success of a student. Next to teachers, parents are considered the most influential person that participates in a student's life. However, in a community and school district experiencing demographic change, several problems exist that prevent students from reaching their full

academic potential. When contemplating factors such as demographic change, consideration

must be given to the background of parents and their ascent to a middle-class environment.

Because suburban public schools have been described as middle-class institutions

(Orfield, 1996), many parents who have been socially promoted to the middle class are not aware

of the inherent rules and expectations associated with conformity into the middle-class

environment. Dr. Everett states:

> It isn't just about how much people make, always, but it's also about, maybe, their
>
> background, maybe what their traditions might be because if you had folks who their
>
> parents were always involved in schools and that kind of thing, it's different. So, they're
>
> working jobs, and they're not able to be involved, you know, that just means we have a
>
> different parent group (Everett, 03/22/2018).

Research consistently insists that parents of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are less likely to

visit their child's school. This can be explained because they are less able to access social capital

resources (Frankenberg et al., 2016; Hackman, et al., 2014). Although SES may not be the

predominant issue related to student academic success, parents who are struggling financially

have to place survival as a priority. Dr. Everett agrees, "It's hard to focus on what they need

(academically) when you're hungry, or you're fearful of what could happen, or you'll find that

parent struggles, financially" (Everett, 03/22/2018).

In many cases, education is not considered to be a tool for survival. However, for

educators and community members, alike, education is a tool for success. One of the community

leaders in the WRMS community said,

> We like to say that education is a great equalizer. In theory, that's true. It's one of the
>
> greater ways that someone can reposition themselves. There's got to be a way to

facilitate education in a way where more of our kids are using it as a launching pad

(Gabe, 03/12/2018).

Lane adamantly exclaims, "I think the one factor that matters the most is the one factor we have the least control over and that's home life. There has to be someone that says education matters" (Lane, 02/22/2018). When asked whether parents are providing enough structure at home, Yara replied, "That's their business, but I think a lot of them are in survival mode, and right now we're tring to make sure we eat, take care of our basic needs, and then we can work out the rest" (Yara, 02/11/2018).

The principal of WRMS stated that families are "struggling to survive, financially, and so that plays into how [parents] interact with the school" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Many times when students are struggling academically or behaviorally, parents loathe to come in to support their children not because they do not want to, or are unwilling. It is due more to the disruption of providing for their children.

Thus, when parents arrive at the school they are frustrated because they had to leave work or have to take unpaid time off or even the interuption of sleep in preparation for the night shift. In many cases, parents who are struggling financially do not even communicate with the school. All of these types of incidents create a communication barrier between home and school which ultimately impacts the student. Gabe articulated,

All of these social issues, when you're talking about poverty, or people that are struggling

with financial resources, it all goes hand in hand with low academic achievement; it goes

hand in hand with even mental illness, addiction. Poverty just really does a number on a

person. It creates a number of issues that, from a distance, you can assume there's some

pathology there. But when you get underneath the hood and see that this is really driven

by a lack of resources, and survival, just trying to survive (Gabe, 03/12/2018).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that parents care about their children's well-being. Sarah

notes that, "Parents want to be involved. I think that either they don't quite know how to do that,

or they, literally, can;t do it, because they have so much going on" (Sarah, 02/09/2018). The

participants were not unsympathetic. Except one participant, who was due to have a child in

June, all of those who participated in the study had children. They were all well aware of the

complexities of raising children in today's environment. The acquisition of resources is

important. However, lifestyle balance and communication seem to be two of the keys that, at

least, open the door to academic success.

Teachers:

A teacher's influence can be far reaching in the life of a student. Tefera, Frankenberg,

and Siegel-Hawley (2011) state, "Educators play a fundamentally critical role in shaping the

educational experiences of their students" (p. 36). One parent of WRMS described the teacher

as, "the single greatest factor in a student's life" (Gabe, 03/12/2018). The participants in this

study overwhelmingly chose two important qualities that teachers have to possess for students to

have any chance of success in a school experiencing demographic change. The first quality is

relatability or the ability to establish positive and respectful relationships that are based on the

premise that the teacher truly cares about students' well-being and their future success. The

second quality is high expectations for students. Teachers are leaders who are authorized and

entrusted by the public to facilitate the process of learning effectively and efficiently. This can

be accomplished, if the school climate is one in which students are being led to become

confident in the successful acquisition of knowledge.

During the school year, teachers often spend more time with a child/student than the parents. Angel, a parent of two WRMS students, exclaimed, "My kid is with you all day!" (Angel, 03/22/2018). Hence, teachers become an extension of the parent based on the principle of *in loco parentis* (Dayton, 2012). This Latin term meaning "In the place of the parent" gives legal responsibilities to schools to act in the best interest of a child/student.[5] As a result, it becomes incumbent on the teacher to show the same care and concern (even to a greater extent in many cases) that a parent would exhibit.

People are naturally interdependent and rely on the relationships of others. Research on socially responsible behavior conducted by Zenko and Mulej (2012) found:

> Everybody is specialized for a small selected view of the entire stock of knowledge and skills; this capacity makes him or her needed by others. The same limitations or reductions make him or her need others who are capable of something else to contribute. What is natural is interdependence rather than independence or dependence (pp. 191-192).

The same is true for the relationship between teachers and students. Mark, a White male teacher, reflected, "I think having that relatability with the students has helped me out a lot, whereas maybe my race and even my gender might've been a barrier before" (Mark, 03/15/2018). Teachers need students, and students need teachers. The relationship is symbiotic in that each

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[5] In loco parentis has certain legal limitations in public schools adjudicated by the courts. See *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943)*; Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969); *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (1985); *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1987)

needs the other to acquire or develop a skill necessary to perform in the environment in which he or she lives.

Sarah supports this line of reasoning, "Being able to relate to your teacher and have a relationship and being able to connect, is hugely important to their success" (Sarah, 02/09/2018). Dr. Everett makes it sound simple, "I think some of it's not a secret. It's those teachers that establish and connect with their kids and build the relationships" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Establishing positive relationships with students, however, is not easy and to some teachers it is not natural or instinctive.

The success of teacher/student relationship recognizes the importance of authority. Lane remarks, "While I care about them (students) and I want them to know that I am there for them, I still have to be the teacher" (Lane, 02/22/2018). In a demographically changing middle school like WRMS, students who have not been conditioned to respond to authority properly often challenge the lines of authority. Some of that may be due to the roles and the types of communication students have outside of schools.

For example, Mark, a first-year teacher at WRMS, said some of his students "are responsible, when they get home, for doing a lot. They're responsible for doing things that are a lot more mature than what most other students in their age group are doing, taking care of younger siblings, making dinner" (Mark, 03/15/2018). Pam acknowledges:

I think some foundational things that we assume that students have been trained at home...we assume that students know how to be respectful, we assume that students even know the difference. A lot of students because they have such a casual relationship with their parents, they don't even know they're being disrespectful and here I am, I've got a

tone with them because I'm trying to reboot something that's not there (Pam, 02/14/2018).

She adds, "A lot of these children are coming from parenting or homes where they're on par with the parent. They're cooking, they're helping with their sibling, they're in adult conversations" (Pam, 02/14/2018). The teacher often becomes the trainer when parents are unable to help their children understand social hierarchies and other social nuances that aid them in communicating socially. There are those teachers who understand the nature of these relationships outside the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995). As Emily reflected:

> I think that a teacher always needs to keep in mind that their students are walking a different path than they may have walked growing up, but there's something about building that relationship between teacher and student that crosses those (racial) boundaries (Emily, 02/28/2018).

These teachers invest in helping students build bridges that aid in connecting to foreign social environments because the teacher understands the "poverty of culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Children communicate in the ways that another taught them or they learn based on what they see in others (Schunk, 1987). A WRMS school administrator shared:

> I think helping them find the connection to relevance is important. So, if they come to a class, a teacher, a world that they just don't have a connection to, and I think it goes both ways, I think there are cases where teachers struggle with how to connect with some of our students, because they do come from very different places than what they're used to (Everett, 03/22/2018).

Communication is a two-way street. Relationships grow because two people are willing to have a respectful and productive conversation. Sarah shared her belief:

I think that there's steps to it that the teachers aren't being patient enough and working through the steps before giving a consequence. I think there's a lot of teachers that aren't helping the kids work through what they're doing wrong. I think that working through that piece with them (the student) about really talking about— 'Here's what the expectation was.' 'Here's what you didn't do.' 'How can you change this the next time?' I think that's missing still. I think we're missing that piece (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

The reality is that there are novice teachers who are pedagogically inexperienced, veteran teachers who are complacent, and effective teachers who are leaders and innovators. The special education lead teacher unapologetically said:

The dirty truth is some teachers are better than others. It's that way in every population, every career. Not all teachers are going to have it in them to want to know who that kid is walking through the door. Some people went to college because they want to be the person that's standing in the front of the room just delivering the message. They don't necessarily understand what teaching is really going to be (Cathy, 03/06/2018).

Although teachers have lives outside of the profession, there should be an expectation that leads to a dialogue between student and teacher that is conducive to the construction of a relationship built with the materials of respect, care, and concern for one another. The relationship experience between a teacher and student can be even more productive when there is a mutual and respectful fondness.

Teachers in this current study were of the belief that students performed better if they "liked" you. Emily explained:

A lot of our kids will work hard for somebody they like. And it's silly because it just hurts them in the end. But they're kids, and that's the way that they think. So, they like

the teacher; they trust the teacher, they're gonna work hard for them. And that's a huge

factor. It doesn't make sense but it's their logic. They're kids (Emily, 02/28/2018).

Similarly, Lilly, an 8th grade Math teacher and Department Chair said:

If they don't like their teacher, they're not going to do their work in class. Only those

few that are motivated. That's why when I kind of said, I want them to like me, not

because I need the popularity. If I've made them mad for some reason I can

completely— They just shut down (Lilly, 02/14/2018).

Lane, a veteran teacher, stated:

The kids have to want to work for the teacher. If the kids hate you and have no respect for

you, they're not going to do the work. I think this has been my best year because I have

these awesome kids, but I've also made it a point that I'm going to get to know the kids

this year. And I feel like I have the best relationship ever with my kids this year (Lane,

02/22/2018).

According to the educators at WRMS establishing positive relationships, setting high

expectations, and being likable are key factors that WRMS teachers help the student become

academically successful. These abstract concepts are also important in the development of a

child (Barton et al., 2004).

In a changing demographic, expectations are founded on a complex dichotomy of low

and high expectations. Respondents in this current study were of the belief that expectations

needed to be high. Research conducted by Nona Tollefson (2000) on student motivation found,

"Teachers' outcome and efficacy expectations exert a strong influence on their classroom

interactions with students and on their willingness to expend effort working with students with

different abilities and different levels of interest in school tasks" (p. 73). However, because of

the changing demographics at WRMS, many educators felt like the expectations changed. Dr. Everett, the principal at WRMS, shared:

> We have to be more deliberate, ensuring that we have high expectations for all students, that we expect teachers and us (administration) to believe that, regardless of what students we have, racially, economically, all those kind of things, that we can still have them perform at very high levels (Everett, 03/22/2018).

Conversely, Dr. Everett said, "Kids, a lot of times, will perform at the level we believe in them, so if we have lowered expectations, they'll meet those expectations. If we have high expectations, they'll meet those expectations" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Some respondents were practical in the belief that just caring for students is motivational. Amy, a sixth-grade teacher of gifted students, believed the number one characteristic of a teacher is to "care about your students" (Amy, 02/12/2018). She adds, "let them know that you care about them" (Amy, 02/12/2018). This thought kind of supports the adage, "Students do not care what you know, until they know that you care." Sarah agrees, "Teachers need to be able to somehow show the kids that they believe in them" (Sarah, 02/09/2018). When teachers show appreciation for their students, the students respond in positive ways.

Theme 8: Student behavior and other environmental factors interferes with instruction.

In any organization, there must be some level of cooperation between those who lead and those who are being led. Teachers are leaders in their classrooms. Researchers have recognized that both the individual background characteristics of students and the composition of the school's student body impact student achievement (Frankenberg et al., 2016). When asked if behaviors at WRMS were racially, ethnically or culturally based, Cathy responded, "I think of behaviors as more cultural based, but then you've got pockets of neighborhoods where the

socioeconomics impacts their behavior regardless of their race" (Cathy, 03/06/2018). Thus, if you are a person of color and/or poor behavior is problematic.

The culture was frequently mentioned. There were a few times where it may have been used as a pseudonym for race. Ladson-Billings (2006) explains that culture is used as an "explanation for everything from school failure to problems with student behavior and discipline" (p. 104). She further states, "Of course 'culture' becomes the answer to every question if the students in question are not white, not English-speaking, and not native-born U.S. citizens." (p. 106). However, Pam says:

> Demographics bring a culture. When I say culture, I mean a way of thinking, support systems, lack of support systems. I think that culture, that the demographics that the socioeconomic and the race can create a culture. If you're African American and grew up in an affluent neighborhood, then you are around like people who are in the same socioeconomic and [educational], then that's a culture in itself, no matter what color you are (Pam, 02/14/2018).

Both respondents were teachers. However, racially, Cathy is White, and Pam is Black. It is interesting how both Cathy and Pam took the time to explain what they meant by culture and were reluctant to assign the term "culture" to the term "race." They also included socioeconomics in relation to behavior. Hughes et al. (2007) state, "poverty may result in a poorly developed sense of self-formed early in life and reinforced at home, affecting children's and adolescents' demeanor and behavior at school (p. 25). Demographics at WRMS are not overlooked and the respondents were sympathetic to the challenges facing their students. It is important to note, "Effective teachers understand that student responses to situations that occur in the classroom are often learned responses have been normalized and regularized" (Ladson-

Billings, 2006). Teachers at WRMS are faced with the reality that students who are not socially

prepared to interact appropriately in a classroom setting might disrupt the continuity of learning.

Teacher frustration sets in when classroom interruptions influence academic

performance. Sarah shared some major concerns:

> I think teachers are worried about discipline. I think that the classroom atmosphere is not
>
> always conducive to learning. You're having to stop a lot to redirect students, and I think
>
> that that's the biggest factor. There's so many disruptions during class with having to
>
> redirect kids or like I said, it takes five minutes for kids to get things out, you know, to
>
> dig around and find it or to get a pencil (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

Many of these concerns are rooted in the environmental challenges facing students. In her

experience Emily describes some the issues:

> The kids that we've had the biggest issues with in the past are the ones that usually go
>
> home and are maybe taking care of younger siblings or their parents are working, so
>
> there's nobody there at night maybe to reinforce something we said earlier in the day, or
>
> maybe to check up on grades, or just to check up on them. And then when the kid comes
>
> to school, it just feels like they know that we're going to have a hard time reaching their
>
> parents, so the consequences might not fall at home, because the parents aren't there
>
> during the evening at least (Emily, 02/28/2018).

It seems to be all connected. Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics each have their role in how

students perform in school. When any of these factors are not balanced, students become

academically frustrated which affects their behavior. Lane commented on the academic

performance of some of her students:

When they're not frustrated with academics, they behave better. A lot of these kids who

are behaving so poorly, they can't read. They can't do math. You're not going to notice

me for being a good student. So, you are going to notice me because, boy, am I going to

interrupt your class (Lane, 02/22/2018).

She continues, "Our behavior issues we're seeing are because of gaps. You get a kid who's

going to disrupt class. Well, he's mad. He can't read and can't do math. Kids that are chronic

disruptors, not always, but they're poor students" (Lane, 02/22/2018).

Theme 9: School policies are aligned with district goals but not with demographic changes.

Although educators that participated in this study were confident in the abilities of the

district to accommodate the demographic changes in Piedmont County Public Schools and the

Western Reserve school cluster, parents and community advocates were much more skeptical

about the district's trajectory. All participants expressed some apprehension regarding school

policies that were not consistent with what needed to be done to prevent or at least prepare for

the shifting demographic changes. That does not mean that the district does not have capable

leadership and a strategy in place. It may be as a result of communication efforts by the district.

One of the major concerns facing WRMS is the lack of staff diversity.

Many of the participants questioned the district's hiring policy. WRMS has a Black,

Asian, and Hispanic student population of over 70%. However, less than 5% of the instructional

staff is racially or ethnically diverse. As of matter of fact, there are no Hispanic teachers and

only two teachers of Asian descent. Gabe, a parent of former students at WRMS, remarked that

it could be more of an institutional problem or a lack of awareness:

The folks in the systems and in the network that are influencing decisions, that only

works for everybody if there's some level of empathy where they kind of know what's

going on in the community. If you've got people in office, or people in decision making

roles that are kind of out of touch, then they're making decisions that they have no idea

how it affects the outcome of certain individuals (Gabe, 03/12/2018).

Teachers are noticing that despite the changes in the demographic landscape, the school is not

keeping up with what is happening in the community and across the district as evidenced by

Pam's analysis:

I don't think that the staff faculty have caught up with the demographic change much like

when we look at how we teach as opposed to the social media and the technology that our

students have access to that sometimes the school hadn't been able ... The educational

system as a whole not just our cluster (Pam, 02/14/2018).

There are some educators who are not satisfied with the training of newer teachers. Two

teachers blame the colleges and universities for not providing enough diversity training or for

placing them in student teaching programs that are rural and/or majority White. Janet stated:

The millennials, ironically, are the ones that don't have any understanding of it. You can

blame student teaching for that. They're from UGA, and they're sent to a rural county

and have an all-White school, they don't have diversity, and they don't know how to deal

with those kinds of changes. Teacher training definitely needs to make sure that teachers

have exposure to all areas in the state of Georgia, whether it's your poor White kids or

your rich white kids, or in an area where you're going to have primarily Hispanic

(students) (Janet, 03/21/2018).

Cathy shared:

We're really not doing it as teachers either because I don't think teachers are trained

enough regarding child development. We get a couple of classes. I got so many more

classes as a social worker having to do with development and cultural background. We need to start with the colleges and the way we educate teachers. Colleges need to acknowledge that we've got to start to understand who our new customer is. Our customer has changed, and our customer is our children and their parents. In college, they've got to get on board with educating teachers, not just about lesson plans and not just about their subject matter they're going to teach because let's face it, depending on what's going on with the school and the numbers, you could be teaching language arts one year or you could be teaching social studies another year. It's not just about the content. I don't think they give us long enough to learn the craft well enough before switching people around. You're just supposed to be proficient in all areas. I think it starts with colleges and educating the teacher about our new customer, our new clientele, our new culture (Cathy, 03/06/2018).

Our new customer, our new clientele, our new culture. The participants in this study recognized the patterns of a demographic shift. Administrators, teachers, parents, and community educational advocates are all going to have to recognize how to best meet the needs of diverse students in a multicultural school setting.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations present in this study.

Resources

Time, financial means, and staffing presented difficulties. Research suggests single case studies because multiple-cases often necessitate extensive resources and time that are beyond the capacity of a single student or independent researcher investigator (Yin, 2003). The goal was to

maximize the allotted time and available resources while creating a study that was comprehensive enough to garner the essence of the lived experiences of each participant.

Participants

The selection of the participants should have been more strategic. Although a wide variety of participants were selected to participate in the study including administrators, teachers, former students who are now teachers, parents, and community members this study would have benefited from more participants from each of the categories above. Also, participants should have been chosen to be from a more multicultural background and more males should have been asked to participate. This would have produced a more diverse and fully developed explanation surrounding the essence of the phenomenon of demographic change in suburban communities.

Research Setting

The school selected for this study has been and continues to experience demographic change. However, I currently teach at the school where the study was conducted. It can be argued that there was an inherent bias due to my relationship with the participants in the study and my knowledge of their personal and professional backgrounds. Additionally, there are other schools in the district that have undergone more drastic demographic changes that can be studied relative to the chosen site. Nevertheless, each school within the district is mutually exclusive and vary greatly from one school to the next. Thus, the data and research gleaned from this study may not be transferable to all suburban schools experiencing demographic change.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the implications of demographic change in a multi-racial suburban school. This study focused on the essence of how local school administrators, teachers, parents, and community advocates described their experience with the demographic changes occurring in their school. This study is unique because the school district under study is one of the largest suburban districts in the metropolitan statistical area of Atlanta, Georgia. Also, the community has rapidly shifted to a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse community while maintaining a racially balanced school enrollment. Previous research on demographic change in this district has mainly focused on instruction. In this study, multiple perspectives were investigated to determine how educators and educational advocates described demographic change and its impact on academic achievement.

This study was based on a broader study completed by the Civil Rights Project at UCLS that focused on rapid racial change and the resegregation of suburban schools (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). Although the school that was studied has not experienced resegregation, the patterns that exists in this community could lead to a school enrollment that is racially and ethnically isolated. To explore the context of demographic change in a suburban public school, three specific research questions were posed:

1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators in Western Reserve Middle School describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

   a. What policies and strategies have been adopted to accommodate students from all backgrounds?

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel, community advocates, and policymakers describe and conceptualize the unique differences within the WRMS School Cluster that have led to academic achievement disparities?

A case-study analysis was used for this research. A single middle school was selected in a countywide school district that never experienced the oversight of desegregation legislation. Although the growth in the county has slowed, especially in the school under study, the county continues to swell as immigrants and transient populations flow in for jobs, high performing schools, and the opportunity to enjoy the middle-class lifestyle.

The data used throughout this study were collected mainly from interviews and document analysis. An interview protocol was prepared that asked open-ended questions structured based on the type of participant being interviewed. There were fifteen participants, and all were either personally or professionally associated with the school in various capacities. The interview questions were also designed to encourage authentic perspectives from each participant.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the major finding and implications of the study. In the next section, the results from each question are discussed in greater detail. The final

section discusses the implications for future research on the larger topics of demographic change, resegregation, and academic achievement.

Discussion

This section outlines in greater detail the finding for each the three research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

Piedmont County is a diverse, multicultural area and host to 13 distinct cities/municipalities. Each city/municipality is unique and exhibits distinguishable cultural characteristics created by the people that reside there. Because of the multicultural environment that exists in the county, there are also differences in beliefs that influence the individual and collective decisions of the residents. Familial and historical background often create an ethos that affects where people live and the standards by which people live. These elements are not static and shape the formation and demographic structure of communities.

There are multiple forces shaping the communities in Piedmont County. For this study, social and political forces were examined at one middle school located in the center of the county. Five themes emerged from the interview question related to the social and political forces driving demographic change: geographic placement and social standing, living arrangements and the structure of housing, demographic change is not accidental, the economy, and resources.

The geographic placement and social standing of people identified the influence of where people live. Living arrangements brought attention to the dynamic factors that impact family and housing structures. Although the community is aging and many of the houses are older the housing market has retained stable market values. Additionally, the average price to purchase a

home in the Western Reserve community has restricted access to those of lower socioeconomic status and has also counterbalanced the construction of apartments and other transient housing structures.

As a result, the demographic structure of the school, especially as it relates to race and ethnicity, has maintained a balance unlike the majority of the other schools in the district. Nevertheless, demographic change happens especially in older communities like Western Reserve. Increases in the amount of transient housing have led to an increase in the number of students who are not used to performing in an environment based on high standards of achievement. According to the participants, a lack of resources and other environmental factors such as parental employment status, values/morals, and support systems were other factors.

Investigations did not reveal any specific law or policy that helped maintain the racial balance at WRMS. However, because the economy is based on decisions made by political leaders, this study connected the economy to political forces. Political forces were a second theme emerging from that data. These forces represent those factors that strongly influence economic social, and political stability. Within an organization, political forces also include environmental factors, legal factors, ethical factors, and demographic factors.   There are certain triggers that often go unnoticed and therefore influence the changes happening in the community.

The economy is important but often goes unnoticed as a change agent because making a living is instinctual. Providing for a family is about helping those who are under your care survive. Several respondents mentioned survival because many parents become so overwhelmed with the responsibility of providing for the family that everything else becomes secondary including the education of their children. The WRMS principal stated, "Their (students) parents

are working to survive. It's a very different background, and creates different challenges for our students" (Everett, 03/22/2018).

When there is an economic downturn or when parents have trouble finding and keeping jobs, their trouble becomes a distraction to the student's learning process. In an interview with Mark, he commented,

I hadn't seen necessarily a correlation with race in any way, to me it's more the   kids who are coming from families with more money, with parents who have   stable jobs, or even more traditional 9 to 5 jobs, or parents that can alternate, one   works the night shift, one works the day shift. The ones that are coming from homes like that are doing better (Mark, 03/15/2018).

Students are aware of the financial circumstances in their home and begin to stress along with the parents. It, thus, becomes a shared burden. The burden of trying to help to support the household and maintain the rigors of school is stressful for a middle school student. One of the teachers at WRMS said,

We're raising kids that don't know how to manage that stress. We have parents   that don't know how to come in the back door and help them manage that stress.   They don't have the time. When they don't have the time, they're not able to   learn it. They don't have the skillset (Cathy, 03/06/2018).

Time and human capital are unlikely resources that when used to its maximum benefit can be helpful to parents and students. The economy emerged as a theme because of its influence on decision making. However, a consequence of an unstable financial situation is a lack of access to resources.

WRMS is racially and ethnically balanced. Nevertheless, as demographic changes are happening over time in the WRMS community, there are students along the economic continuum who struggle economically. As a result, they lack the material and academic resources to perform well in school. As noted above, at least half (50%) of the students at WRMS receive free/reduced lunch. From an administrative view point Dr. Everett explained,

"As I've moved into administration, I kind of saw the transition and the changes that started to occur, with diversity, both racially and then from a socioeconomic standpoint, to the point where, here at WRMS, we have a very diverse school and a mix from an SES standpoint, too. We're about 53% free and reduced" (Everett, 03/22/2018). Resources, however, cannot just be confined to students' economic standing. There is a myriad of resources that research has identified as factors of academic success (Gorski, 2008). Payne (2013) argues that mental/emotional and spiritual resources are important. There are classroom resources like class size, teacher education, and experience (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). There are digital and technological resources like lap and desk top computers, tablets, the internet, and smartphones. Resources serve as the core to the individual and collective success of a school. Cuban (1992) states, "To survive, every organization must secure resources from its environment" (p. 248).

In this study, the findings indicate that WRMS has to determine ways to maximize social and political factors such as the existing multicultural population by engaging the different racial and ethnic groups and making them an integral part of the school environment. WRMS should create opportunities for the community to share resource. When the school serves as an intermediary between the community and its needs, there is a healthy ecology created based on trust and altruism.

Research Question 2: How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators at Western Reserve Middle School, describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

The discussion of race alone can be an emotionally powerful and sensitive topic when discussed in isolation. However, when combined with ethnicity and socioeconomics, a complete picture emerges providing more in-depth knowledge of the topic of study; in this case, the demographic change in a multi-racial middle school. Many of Piedmont county's school clusters have residents that are discernable by a mixture of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. A few school clusters, however, are rapidly changing into homogeneous communities distinct by the individual characteristics of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics.

The Western Reserve cluster is fortunate in that it remains demographically heterogeneous. Nevertheless, patterns are forming similar to communities that have experienced resegregation. In particular, there is a decline in the White students enrolled at WRMS, the Hispanic/Latino population at WRMS is steadily growing, and the rate of poverty is increasing. Although there has not been a drastic increase in low-income students (as determined by free/reduced lunch numbers), the enrollment of financially challenged students continues to rise slowly. These factors align with the findings in the case studies of the seven suburban districts examined in *The Resegregation of Suburban Schools* (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a). Demographic change in suburban communities is not a disease that is transferred from on community to the next and then healed with the same type of medication. Each suburban community is unique, and the responses differ from one suburban community to the next. Therefore, the solutions vary and are tailored to the needs of each specific suburban community and the school in which it serves.

People experience demographic change differently. Within the school, educators are facing changes that in many cases are unfamiliar to them. Considering the majority of educators in PCPS, at WRMS, and across the country are White and female, the way educators experience demographic change could be a function of their racial, ethnic, or economic background. Educators that participated in this study were a representation of many different demographic genres. However, it is important to note that the majority of participants in the study were not indicative of the demographic structure of the school and community but was more reflective of the educational staff which is mostly White females.

Two themes relating to educators' experience with racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic changes emerged from the interviews: race and ethnicity cannot be ignored, and diverse environments are beneficial. It would be to the detriment of the Western Reserve community to ignore race and ethnicity by adopting race neutral or color-blind policies and instructional practices. There were many instances during the interviews in which educators believed race should not be considered as a factor in the school environment. The principal shared, "I don't know that race or anything like that ever plays into it" (Everett, 03/22/2018). When asked about policies and communication involving race and ethnicity, Yara stated, "Race is not something we consider when making the teams" (Yara, 02/11/2018). A veteran teacher who has taught in two different middle schools in PCPS bluntly stated, "I will say, there is some pressure there. But, in general, honestly it doesn't matter, as far as race" (Sarah, 02/09/2018).

A new teacher and former student of WRMS supported the idea that there were factors besides race and ethnicity that are more significant, "It has a lot more to do, I think, with familial status and various social stratifiers [sic] than it does with race or ethnicity" (Mark, 03/15/2018). In conjunction with the teachers, one parent noted, "There are differences that are difficult to

explain beyond race" (David, 03/20/2018). Other teachers agreed and cited factors like poverty (Lane, 02/22/2018), lower-income housing (Lilly, 02/14/2018), values (Brenda, 02/09/2018) that have more influence than racial or ethnic factors. If WRMS wants to be a high-performing multi-racial school in a rapidly changing demographic environment, race must be overtly intertwined in the vision and mission and every decision made at WRMS.

In a manual written to aid in the promotion of racial diversity and avoid racial isolation in suburban school districts, Tefera et al. (2011) wrote, "Years of experience and social science research show that schools cannot achieve racial integration without making it an explicit goal through policies that consider race" (p. 64). According to Diem, Welton, Frankenberg, and jellison-Holme (2016), "Race-neutral responses to demographic change perpetuate inequalities" (p. 731). King (1991) in her scholarship on *Dysconscious Racism*, argued "Critical, transformative teachers must develop a pedagogy of social action and advocacy that really celebrates diversity, not just random holidays, isolated cultural artifacts" (p. 134). Because of the passionate responses that develop from situations involving race and ethnicity, educators have to be mindful and purposeful about how they interact with students and parents. They also must be aware of how their own racial and ethnic biases influence their pedagogy. Tefera et al. (2011) found, "Teachers are among the most important factors affecting relations between students of different racial groups in the classroom. They set the tone for democratic behavior and model appropriate attitudes for students" (p. 36). The way that teachers and administrators communicate and interact with students can be a result of existing or past experiences.

Nevertheless, the personal experiences of teachers must be tempered so that the needs of the students are prioritized. Pam realizes the significance of race, "I know as African Americans that we are in touch with the world, especially those that are there in our age range know that

race means something in this country, it always has" (Pam, 02/14/2018). Because our society is becoming more interracial, race may one day be less of an issue. For now, however, those who teach and those who support teachers in multi-racial suburban environments have to be aware of race and the important role it plays in the facilitation of quality instruction. This is not an easy concept to learn for those educators who are uncomfortable with the issue of race.

People learn from others and respond based on the knowledge of what is understood about the nature and background of other people. We live in a global society. To maneuver successfully, a level of awareness must exist that includes other cultures and demographic indicators. Western Reserve Middle School is one of the most multicultural schools in the district. The level of diversity in this school setting offers a unique perspective in which students and teachers have the opportunity to interact in an environment similar to what could be experienced in multifaceted milieus such as colleges and universities, public and private corporations, charitable organizations, and governmental entities. The responses from participants reflected their knowledge and awareness regarding the uniqueness of the school and its impact on the educational and social community at large.

Research Question 3: How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel and community advocates, describe the unique differences within the Western Reserve Middle School Cluster that have led to academic disparity?

Because of the diversity and multicultural environment in the Western Reserve Middle School cluster, there are unique differences that impact academic achievement. Research is replete with articles, books, lectures, and reports on how race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics effects academic performance (Diamond, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). The implementation of instructional practices that take into account the diversity and multiculural school environment is instrumental in how students perform.

More importantly, how these practices are perceived by parents and students also affect a student's level of performance.

The third question includes three themes that were constructed based on interview responses: parents and teachers are instrumental in the educational process, student behavior and other environmental factors interfere with instruction, and the misalignment of school policies with district goal/objectives and demographic change. There can be no doubt about the influence of parents and teachers in the learning process. Both have a profound impact on the success or failure of a student. The question is who has the greater culpability? It depends on whom you ask and in what context the question is asked. Nevertheless, respondents (educators and community advocates) were not at a loss for comments when determining who had the greater responsibility.

There is enough blame to go around for everyone. Academic achievement is based on so many countless factors. The objective, however, is to maximize individual strengths and to develop student's confidence in their ability to learn. Within the theme determining the impact of parents and teachers, there were two sub-themes: relationships and high-expectations. Educators, parents, and community advocates all agreed that developing positive and appropriate relationships with students were vital in the learning process. They also were in support of the school setting high expectations for students. It was clear that both the parent and teachers needed to create environments where there was an expectation of success. Success in the classroom, however, can be interrupted by inappropiate and distracting student behaviors.

Students are a reflection of their environments. When that environment is toxic or unhealthy, students struggle academically. Educators who participated in this study were frustrated by their inability to influence student behavior. It was not a matter of classroom

management. The conversations with educators revolved around the lack of student

preparedness caused by environmental issues related to the level of parent involvement. These

factors, as well as many others, are often outside the control of teachers but directly affect the

facilitation of instruction.

As a result, it becomes a problem that has to be reconciled by administration whose

objective is to protect the learning environment and students' right to a free and public education.

Unfortunately, PCPS suspends just over three times as many Black students per capita than

White students (French & Ernsthausen, 2014). The school district's objective is teaching and

learning. When the issue of the demographic identity of students who are disrupting the classes

is juxtaposed with goals and objectives of the school/district, there is a distinct imbalance

between school/district policies and objectives and the demographic changes occurring at

WRMS. Yes, student behavior can be tied to teacher classroom management. However,

principals have multiple roles. They are the lead or "principal" teachers, and they are also

responsible for the implementation of the district's goals and objectives. One of the roles of a

principal is providing support for teachers who struggle with classroom behavior. This aid

invariably help in the maintenance of the district's desire for student performance in the

classroom. Included in how local school administrators support teachers should be policies that

support students who are racially, ethnically, and socially diverse.

Considering the changing demographics and the racial diversity that exists at Western

Reserve Middle School, there should be policies that promote multicultural practices including

the hiring of staff representatives for the student enrollments. As the final theme was discussed,

many of the respondents acknowledged the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the instructional

staff at WRMS. Also noted was the lack of training and professional development necessary to

confront issues related to demographic change. When educators are apathetic to the concerns in a multi-racial school, frustration for all is the likely consequence. The strategies implemented to sustain and maintain strong growth and healthy development will be vital to the success of the community and the school experiencing rapid demographic change. If not, the results will be greater divisions and a destablization of the future of the WRMS community.

Implications for Future Research

Part of the mission of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA is "to deepen the understanding of the issues that must be resolved to achieve racial and ethnic equity" (Orfield & Gandara, 2010). One of the stated rationales for diverse schools outlined by Frankenberg and Orfield (2012) in the *Resegregation of Suburban Schools* was "newer research detailing the benefits of integrated schools for students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds" (p, 19). This current research can serve as a foundation for future discussions that address a variety of relevant topics and frameworks related to the demographic changes in suburban public schools.

Topics that formed the basis of this study include political and social forces that affect geographic location and social identification, the economy and resource allocation, demographic changes and its impact on characteristics of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics, the influence of parents and teachers on academic achievement, the effect of classroom disruptions on the classroom environment and its association to demographic identity, and the alignment of school/district policies with demographic changes in a multi-racial suburb of Atlanta.

The Greater Atlanta area is unique specifically because it is a large district. Frankenberg (2012) argues "larger district size helps to moderate racial transitions" (p.31). Like the large suburban areas in Boston and Pittsburgh,the Western Reserve community, as a suburb of Atlanta, has been able to maintain its racial and ethnic balance. In reality, much of the racial and ethnic

balance enjoyed by the WRMS community can be contributed to stable housing prices, good schools, strategic location to major highways, prosperous shopping areas (Mall of Georgia), multiple parks and recreation suitable for small children, and a host of multicultural venues that celebrate different cultural genres of food and activities. Because of its unique multicultural blend and diversity, the Western Reserve community will be able to provide an educational experience that prepares its students for life in a diversity society (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). However, there are demographic changes in the community that are potentially threatening to the muli-racial diversity that currently exists in the Western Reserve community.

This research study was not intended to place blame on leaders on what they have or have not done. It is more about describing the state of affairs on the issue of demographic change in a multi- racial suburban public school in Piedmont County, Georgia. The responses of local school administrators and teachers, parents, and educational advocates in the Western Reserve school cluster were measured and examined in relation to what is known about the demographic changes that are happening. I am concerned that school leaders and community leaders are not taking the appropriate action to prevent racial isolation and the symptoms that lead to school resegregation. This is significant because there are other school clusters in the county that have already resegregated due to the inaction of residents, school officials, and community leaders.

The success of schools often rise and fall with the level of community engagement and cultural capital (DiMaggio, 1982). Active engagement between those who are powerless and those who are powerful is paramount when there is a shift in the demographic structure of a community. Piedmont County offers an opportunity for extensive collaboration. The problem becomes awareness, knowledge, and the desire to change. Better information should be disseminated from school and community officials to make residents aware of what is occurring.

This happens when civic capacity is at its peak and the various sectors of the community come together to solve a problem (Stone et al., 2001).

Engagement includes being involved in social and political activities impacting the community. When involved in the activities around the community, there is a level of awareness that helps with understanding the needs of the community. Educational attainment is important. The acquisition of information, however, may help in overcoming the lack of formal education. There are many immigrants and residents of lower socioeconomic status that reside in Piedmont County. The lack of language and social skills along with the inability to access financial and material resources act as barriers to school improvement and the facilitation of learning.

Creating and extending opportunities to help acquire and improve access to resources will not only help improve the community and surrounding infrastructure but will by extension also relieve some of the ill effects that some of these factors have on public schools. Education and training are important and go a long way to supporting a better, more developed community. However, in a multi-racial community there are other factors that have to be considered.

The Western Reserve Middle School cluster offers a wide array of living structures and standards from Section 8 subsidized housing to homes that cost several hundred thousand dollars. Sustaining diversity over time is created when there is a stable housing market and schools are integrated across the district (Orfield 2012a; 2012b). Consequently, there is a learning curve as residents try to maneuver in and around unfamiliar social environments and local leaders try to implement creative solutions that work. Commitment to lasting integration is advantageous to everyone in the community including organizations like public schools (Orfield 2012a; 2012b). Unfortunately, there is no instruction manual and what works for one suburban community might be destructive to another. Overcoming inevitable failures will be contingent

on everyone having a willingness to work together to correct what went wrong. Failing that, the community declines and the negative characteristics of demographic change becomes a reality.

One interesting note is the fact that the enrollment at WRMS is declining. This is problematic because in Frankenberg's (2012) review of the case studies in *The Resegregation of Suburban schools*, she found that as the enrollment declined so did the number of White students. This current research study serves as confirmation of this fact. Next year the enrollment at WRMS is estimated to be below 2,000 students for the first time in the school's history. WRMS, in conjunction with civic and community leaders, is going to have to carefully evaluate the current inventory of houses and create a proactive strategy that attracts Whites and those of higher socioeconomic status.

Another issue that can hinder and threaten forward progress is the absence of diversity in leadership positions especially in the political or policy-making sphere. Piedmont County Public Schools have a chance in November to elect two extremely qualified school board members who are of color for the first time in school history. Multi-racial and fully integrated schools are more successful when the staff and leadership are culturally diverse (Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). Considering that the majority of students at WRMS and PCPS are students of color, the school and the district will have to be more proactive in developing and attracting more educators of color.

This process has already started with a legal suit filed by Georgia NAACP, the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials and a group of residents with the U.S. District Court of Northern Georgia. The groups and the residents are filing because they want the County Commission and School Board Districts redrawn. They contend that the majority of Piedmont County is of color. However, the four commission districts and all but one of the school board

districts have a White voting majority. This provides a unique opportunity for Piedmont to embrace integration and demographic change.

Although civic capacity is not a strategy or framework used in this study, future research on how civic capacity is used to maintain racial balance in the Western Reserve community can be productive research and provide solutions to help the community and school advocates. The civic capacity framework established by Stone et al. (2001) emphasizes public activities and involves governance institutions and major group representatives including community and educational leaders. Collectively, they work together to construct a thriving and prosperous community that is accepting of the strategically multicultural environment. A stagnant community, however, will be susceptible to the effect of community decline including racial and ethnic isolation.

Resegregation is a real possibility if there are no strategic plans formulated by district leaders to redirect and balance enrollment numbers (Orfield, 2012a; 2012b). Community members, educational advocates, and parents must be actively engaged in the growth and development of their communities and the surrounding infrastructure. Schools are not immune to societal idiosyncrasies. They are often directly affected by the tone or mood of the community in which it exists.

The goal is to prevent racial isolation. Demographic change is healthy. However, research conducted in a suburb of San Antonio, Texas by Gumus-Dawes, Orfield, and Luce (2012) warns, "Once schools have transitioned to become racially isolated, it is very difficult to reverse the trend and to build understanding and political support" (p. 138). Although there are external circumstances and trends that cannot be controlled by the school, the policies implemented by the school should proactively seek to provide comprehensive services to

students and families who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Teachers and students can benefit from additional resources in any form.

Of course, resources are necessary, and teachers need and deserve quality professional development, instructional tools, and support to handle the significant challenges they face. However, simply increasing resources will not change the flaws in a school system unwilling to acknowledge the demographic changes. Eric Hanushek (1991) reviewed 187 studies on the impact of increased resources on student achievement. He found that "the education of children depends directly on the ability of school districts to translate resources into student achievement. If schools are ineffective at this, simply heaping more resources on poorly performing districts will do little to improve educational equity" (p. 454). It is important to recognize the fact that resources are more readily available when the economy is thriving.

Further, decision-making should also incorporate the maintenance of demographic integration. Orfield (2011) suggests, "Wherever we can, we should produce stably integrated schools in stably integrated communities" (p. 1). What that means is there must be an intentional strategy in place to propagate the principles of integration without the fear of offending those who want to maintain historical and outdated contexts. This current case study research yields a wealth of data that highlights what a multi-racial suburban public school looks like and the challenges it faces in trying to remain diverse. The student enrollment is changing. Local school and district leaders must start now if they want to impede the progress of becoming another racially isolated school in the district. This research concludes that racial and ethnic diversity should be reflected in the staff and leaders in multi-racial schools. Students should have cultural references that empathize with their path and provide direction in which students can trust. Teachers, administrators, and parents should work together to protect the classroom environment

and promote high academic achievement. The school is a reference point for the resources necessary for academic and social improvement. If the school is not able to provide resources, then there should be conduits or links to different types of services that can help students (and parents) get their needs met. As a result, students will be able to focus on academics without environmental distractions. The school and the community create an ecological system in which every organism relies on the other for survival. A healthy habitat forms when there is solidarity and common union between all participants working toward the same goal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The Implications of Demographic Change in Suburban Public Schools:

A Qualitative Study

Hello. My name is John Iverson, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Administration and Policy (EDAP) at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research project on the demographic change in suburban public schools. More precisely, I want to learn more about how community members, education professionals, and other school advocates think about demographic change and its impact on student achievement. It is from my own personal experience as a person of color and a male, middle school educator that I am interested in studying the impact of demographic change in suburban public schools. As a community member, education professional, or school advocate who lives and or/works in this community, you offer a unique perspective on the impact of demographic change at Western Reserve Middle School. I am honored at your presence here today and appreciate you meeting with me to talk more about the impact of demographic.

Before we begin the interview, I would like to remind you that the information you share during the interview will be kept confidential as explained in the consent form. I will not use your name or any other identifying information about you that might allow someone to figure out who you are. Please, feel free to skip any questions you do not want to answer and at any time you may end the interview. I anticipate that the interview will take approximately one hour. Though I will be asking you questions, if at any time you have questions throughout the

interview, please feel free to ask. At this point, do you have any questions for me before we

begin?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

I would like to start our conversation by getting to know you a little better, so please tell me about yourself.

1. Background

    - family origin

    - length of residence

    - racial profile

    - educational background

Transition: I would like to learn more about your experiences with race. In order to learn more about that, I have questions that will guide our conversation. To start…

Research Questions

1. What are the underlying social and political forces that have shaped the demographic structure of Western Reserve Middle School (WRMS), a multiracial suburban middle school?

2. How do practitioners, such as teachers and administrators at Western Reserve Middle School, describe their experience with the racial, ethnic and socioeconomic changes occurring in their school?

3. How do educational stakeholders, including school personnel and community advocates, describe the unique differences within the Community School Cluster and across Piedmont County Public Schools that have led to academic disparity?

My research seeks to give voice to the experiences of educators and advocates in a multiracial school setting. In order to learn more about that, I have questions that will guide our conversation. I would like to start our conversation by getting to know you a little better, so please tell me about how you identify yourself.

All Participants
1) How are your related to Western Reserve Middle School?
2) Tell me about the backgrounds of the students you teach or associate with your children?

Probes:
   a. Socioeconomics
   b. Origin
   c. Religion
   d. Parentage (from educated parents or not; single parent/two parents)

3) What are some of the demographic differences among the student population?

Probes:
   a. Can you tell me a little about the history of Western Reserve and how it has changed over the past several years?
   b. Can you describe some of the changes that have taken place within and around the community?
   c. What are some of the comments from community members about this school and the schools in this Western Reserve Cluster?

Teachers

1) What are some of the changes occurring in your classroom?

Probes:
   a. Over 60% of Western Reserve's student body is non-White. Why do you think this is the case?
   b. How do these changes/differences play out in your classroom during the school day? Elaborate.
   c. Describe the demographics of the staff and how they relate to students.
   d. Western Reserve was formerly structured as Schools Within Schools (SWS) called Communities. Describe how SWS is different than the team system used today.
   e. How do teachers acknowledge racial and ethnic differences and what did they do?
   f. What culturally responsive measures do you use to aid these differences?
   e. What role does your racial/ethnic background of the teacher play when trying to instruct or redirect students who are culturally different/alike?
   f. What role does/has society play(ed) in the changing behaviors at school?
   g. What are the behavioral expectations in your classroom? How are behavioral expectations taught or communicated to students?

h. What is the percentage of time spent on teaching behavioral expectations?
i. How important is teachers' approach to redirection of misbehavior?
j. Cultural flexibility is defined as the ability to value and negotiate different cultural and social peer groups and environments. Describe some of the changes you have seen in the school/community over the past several years that would cause students and teachers to have to use cultural flexibility.
k. How do educators create a caring, safe, and secure learning environment that protects the existing cultural and linguistic diversity of students enrolled at your school?
l. How important is teaching appropriate classroom/school behavior vs. the curriculum/content?
m. Explain how your students respond to redirection based on gender, ethnicity, or race?
n. How has access to technology impacted the educational environment?

2) What are some of the school polices that have changed relative to the changes described above?

Probes:
a. What are some policies that you think should be implemented to help students and teachers maneuver successfully in an environment experiencing demographic change?
b. Who makes decisions about policy changes and who is "invited to the table" for input?
c. How are decisions about policy communicated to school staff and stakeholders?

3) Which students excel, academically, in your class?
4) How can the school help students overcome some of the factors that lead to academic disparities between the different subgroups (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic)?

Probes:
a. What strategies do you use to either get student to excel or to maintain that excellence?
b. What do you recall about the learning or study habits of these students?
c. Describe the parents of these students and what conversations you have with them about their children.
d. What do you do to make sure that these students are recognized for their excellence?
e. Describe what other teachers are doing for students who excel. Do not excel.
f. What type of strategy, if any, is used when grouping students?
g. How would you describe the structure of discipline?
h. What students present the greatest discipline problems in a classroom?
i. How would you describe students who are motivated to excel academically?
j. What factors contribute to the lack of student motivation?
k. What structures could be put in place to enroll more students of color and different ethnicities in gifted classes?
l. How are parents (of color) informed about gifted programming?
m. Describe the student who is failing in school?

Former Western Reserve Students who are now Teachers at Western Reserve
1) Note: ask questions from the Teacher section

2) Looking back on your middle school experience, I would like for you to describe the culture of Western Reserve when you were a student.
   a. How is it the same? Different?
3) Compare the instructional practices when you were a student with the instructional practices of today.
   a. Identify some instances in which you have felt the need to be politically correct.

4) Western Reserve has a very diverse student enrollment, how do you think teachers are meeting the needs of students are ethnically and culturally different?
   a. What advice would you give teachers who struggle engaging multicultural students?

Administrators
1) Describe the process of creating a team of students? Teachers?

Probes:
   a. How are students/teachers racially distributed?
   a. Describe how the placement of students includes accountability scores.
   b. How are socioeconomic indicators factored into student placement?
   c. How important is racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic balance when creating academic teams? Why or why not?

2) What factors are impediments to closing the academic Achievement Gap?

Probes:
   a. What suggestions do you propose to close the achievement gap that exist between students of color and White and Asian students?
   b. What happens if the same principles, suggested above, were applied for all students without consideration for race and ethnicity?
   c. How can schools assist students in overcoming some of the factors causing gaps in achievement?
   d. What impact does a teacher have on student achievement?
   e. Describe a teacher who is successful/unsuccessful
   f. How would you describe environmental factors that contribute to the achievement gap?
3) Leadership

Probes:
   a. How do you define success at your school?
   b. What is your role in helping this school become successful?
   c. What are some of the differences in your school and other schools across the county/district?
   d. How do educators create a caring, safe, and secure learning environment that protects the existing cultural and linguistic diversity of students enrolled at your school?
   e. How do we create more student leaders?

4) What are some of the organizations in and around the school/community that are instrumental in helping the schools in your community?

Probes:
    a. How active is the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and what activities does it sponsor throughout the year to promote cultural awareness and integration?
    b. How active is the Homeowner's Associations in your school cluster?
    c. Name some the business partners that are active in your school?
    d. The Chamber of Commerce is an important organization in bringing businesses and corporations to the community. How would you evaluate their performance?
    e. What are the social and political interactions/networks influencing/driving the demographic changes in suburban public schools?

Parents

1) When did you move to the Western Reserve District?
2) As a parent of color, what do you do to make sure your children are recognized for their academic excellence?
3) Explain how external reinforcements/rewards motivate your children.
4) Describe the parent's role in the success of WRMS and their students.

Probes:
    a. How would you explain why this Cluster was appealing to you?
    b. How has your residential community/neighborhood changed over the past several years?
    c. How would you assess these changes? Beneficial? Detrimental?
    d. How did the school factor into your decision to live in this area?

5) Western Reserve is one of the largest and most diverse middle schools in the District, how would you evaluate your experience as a parent in this Cluster?
6) Describe your feelings about the academic programming/curriculum at WRMS/District.

Probes:
    a. Describe what your student (s) say about the school.
    b. How do you discuss racial and ethnic differences with you children?
    c. If you have lived in another area prior to Lawrenceville, how would you compare Western Reserve with your previous school?

Conclusion:

Although I have asked you many questions, I want to give you an opportunity to share any subject or situation that I may have missed or anything else that you would like to add. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Summary Statement

During our discussion, several themes presented themselves as possible opportunities for analysis. These included (insert themes). Do you think I summarized these themes correctly? Are there any other topics that stand out to you from the interview?

Wrap Up

I want to thank you for sharing your experiences with me. I really appreciated your insight and time you spent with me today. If I have any follow-up questions later, may I contact you again?

Appendix C: Pilot Study - Development of Analytic Concepts

Analytic Concept: <u>ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR and ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE</u>
Definition: The conditions and setting under which students and school personnel live and attend school.
Characteristics: positive, negative, cultural, climate, social, changing, relationships, urban, parents, teachers
Conditions Under Which the Concept Works: A student interacts in multiple milieus based on where they are at any given time. How they adapt to these environments will determine their level success.
Proposition: Students live in one academic environment and attend school in another. The two environments are not always alike and are different most of the time. Trying to balance the two environments is difficult especially when one considers that those who are directing those environments may come from a background and have goals that contradict one environment or the other.
Verbatim Excerpts and Examples:

1. "So, I've seen...I've definitely seen the change. Um What I am noting is that just environmentally. I'm noticing that there are more businesses that are owned by East Indians. We have um I'm seeing a small number of African Americans...African, people from Africa, of African descent maybe Ghana, Nigeria that are coming to the area."

2. "I've been to alot of different suburban areas and I like what Piedmont had to offer. Um it was enough educational opportunities not only for my daughter but for myself as well um the environment was comfortable it was a great place to raise children. And so, um this was more appealing to me than maybe um a Stone Mountain."

3. "There's some things that come there's some you know non-own homeowner issues that come up. Um the environment may have to...may go bad. You know you may find yourself saying "okay...maybe this is not where I need to be." Um would...just this is starting to become a city environment. And, of course, there's public transportation in those areas. Um so people are not car owners so you having to...to...to deal with that...that kind of um you know crowd and... and...and all the things that go on with that.

4. "We support a number of apartment complexes on Jimmy Carter, Harbins Road our kids cannot walk to school. They could but it would be...you're talking about Jimmy Carter traffic that is...that is a safety issue and you're talking about 29, Highway 29. So, our students they don't...they don't go to school in the community they live in. So it is a challenge for them to get there. um we have alot um ...um...um immigra...immigrants...immigration issues. So we have some... we do some of our

parents are undocumented. Um there is a language barrier. There's a socioeconomic barrier."

5. "And so, I you know the environment here can't be toxic to where the least lil' thing the teacher holds are it makes a mountain out of a mole hill..."

6. "I think that it's a distinct difference because when you're, when you're teaching the student as opposed to just teaching the subject then the you develop a positive relationship with that student and you meet'n the needs of that student as a whole as an individual as opposed just a name and number on my class roster."

7. "We're very big on building relationships with our student. Um because that's what we have to do first. If we don't build relationships with our students, then we're not going to be able to get them where they need to be. They have to know that someone believes in them um and...and...and...and the beliefs system to me is...is...very big at our school you know."

Negative Case(s):

- **Urbanization is not always a negative and can be a positive factor when one considers gentrification and the rejuvenation of our urban neighborhoods.**

"The environment definitely was...was becoming more urbanized and not that that was a negative. But depending on your station in life depends what your environment (request 17:11?) are going to be. Um...When you're young and your single um...you know an urban life seems to great for you on and, and...and sometimes if you're married and have children that may work for you too...it just depends on your situation and where you are."

Analytic Concept: <u>EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO RESEGREGATION AND RAPID RACIAL CHANGE</u>
Definition: The systems put in place to improve the academic success of students and the prospect of their success in college and/or their selective career.
Characteristics: content area classes, political systems (i.e., Title I), social programs, behavioral programs, extra-curricular activities, mentoring
Conditions Under Which the Concept Works: Selecting the right tool for the job is often a precarious undertaking. Many schools struggling with rapid racial change and resegregation are trying many programs and initiatives to help achieve greater success. The responses that seem to be most effective are those that are embraced by both local school district and the community. The combination of these two factions accompanied by implementation that is thorough and performed with commitment by all participants will only add to the probability of success.
Proposition: In order for students to be prepared to compete in increasingly global society, they have to have the prerequisite classes that enable them to adequately meet the rigorous curriculums of colleges and university and the technical knowledge of a demanding career. Schools that are not performing up to governmental or district standards are often at a disadvantage and require outside support and/or systems of support to meet academic standards.
Verbatim Excerpts and Examples:

1. "The work that we do is a different kind of work. You know we're 90% free and reduced lunch We're probably at 60% Hispanic population. We have a 90% transient population. Um...our special ed. population is really increasing this year."

2. "They have the Banking Center in their building. They are...they're one of the academy high schools. Their high school graduation rate...it's not as high as it could be, but it definitely is increasing. They have gifted programs there. They have AP programs there. They're doing great things. I look at um...um Lilburn we're doing the same things. We have um...um our gifted program, our accelerated Math programs, our accelerated Science programs."

3. "We have a PBIS program and that really works to support that. We have alot of diverse activities that um that we um we...we host our um...at um...Lilburn. Our…our parent instructional support center leader is phenomenal. Um Mr. Michael Dewayne does a phenomenal job at reaching to the community making sure that we're connected. Um we are...I'm feeling that we are getting alot more support."

4. ". Um he sets up our mentoring program, so we have outside mentors. They come from Salem Missionary Baptist Church as well. We have Saint Mary's Church, and we have um Lilburn First Baptist Church. So, we have our mentors. They come and they mentor our students. Then we have a Piedmont County Mentor um program which we utilize and... but our need is so great that we need a little more than Mr. Raiford offers. Mr. offers a great opportunity but we...our students are just so much need and we have um...they have female, male mentors. And we do that during our advisement time on Fridays. And we have um Girls Inc. comes in and they do a program with our um...with our female students. We're really...I'm really excited. I handle the um Boy Scouts...um introduction program every year. And every year the girls say, "Mrs. Carmichael, when are we going to have Girl Scouts?" Well this year we're going to have Girl Scouts. We're excited. Um Gretchen Lopez works with the Girl Scouts and they are very, very interested in really building that relationship um with our school. So we've kind of brought them on board with us. Um but...we have Subway. We have a great organization too. SEPTA is another organization that works with us. Um SEPTA is a um...an agency that supports um Hispanic students of Hispanic descent. Um they provide counseling service. They provide after school tutoring. Um some...some job preparation for parents. Um and they...they had a bus that comes out and picks up the students and takes them to the SEPTA program."

5. "So we do um...the other organization is um the Latino um American Association. That um very...very large organization. And they're based out of...they're based off of Buford Highway. That was their home office. But every year except for this past year I've attended the Latino Youth Conference."

6. "Junior Core Leadership. It's not ROTC. Um had made a huge difference with our students. Um they, they do rater drill. I think they came in 2nd place this year which was phenomenal. It was the first year that we had JLC."

7. "I Success… Uh hmm after school program students get additional support in any content area that they are lacking and our teachers run that."

8. "Matter of fact some of the AVID strategies we use school-wide…Cornell notes we use school-wide and um philosophical chairs, Socratic seminars. If, if we can successfully implement those, those two strategies. Socratic um, um chairs, philosophical chairs and Socratic seminars then what, what, what you doing it's a positive in so many ways. Philosophical Chairs, Socratic Seminars you gettin the students to think number one...to think deeply you know...to think deep but not just uh level one type questions to where its a it's a yes or no but you know you you just provide a date. They have to think. They have to be able to appreciate different perspective."

9. "Community Partners In Education… So you know we just call'em CPIES...They do provide um incentives you know for our students, faculty, and staff. Rewards um for our students, faculty and staff as well. Our community partners matter of fact our I was talking to a Lt. Colonel from Moody this morning in the Gym they want to assist us with mentoring some of our students."

Negative Case(s):

- **Title I is a good funding mechanism. However, many schools have not figured out how to successfully document and provide programs that work.**

  "Um but when you're there and you're doing that kind of work as a Title 1 school, its not that the county's not supporting us 'cause our you know I could not say that. But we just need a different level of support and the level of support that we often get is that while your day is looking this way so now you're gonna be the focus, the target school and then we're gonna give you the support we think that you need. When in actuality we needed that support before that data got to that place. Um we needed a preventive measure."

- **Students unable to get to after school and academic support programs due to transportation issues.**

  "But here in Piedmont there's.... there's a limit to that public transportation. I can just remember um conversations um were...well we need to get transportation in Piedmont and there's just been an ad... verse um conversations about not letting that happen. Um, I'm glad to see that we do have um a bus service. That does help you know our...our people who live out here they're able to transport to and from more and not have to drive all the time."

Analytic Concept: EXPECTATIONS of STUDENTS and SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Definition: The beliefs and practices exhibited to create the climate and culture of the school.
Characteristics: clear, consistent, unwavering, published

Conditions Under Which the Concept Works: Organizations are a collection of people from different and diverse backgrounds. Nevertheless, a properly functioning and well-maintained

organization exist when the rules and procedures are well known to everyone in the organization and when all individuals within the organization are equally beholden to the rules and procedures that have been put in place to guide and protect the organization as a whole. This becomes even more significant when dealing with situations that are associated with those in power versus the powerless.

Proposition: Students, teachers, and administrators are expected to follow the established and published rules and procedures. However, when these rules and procedures are ambiguous and consistently violated, the organizational values and opportunities for success are placed at risk. These rules and procedures can also be in conflict with the cultural and social values that exist outside of the school. Reconciling the two competing factors can be a daunting and challenging task to school personnel and students who originate from different backgrounds.

Verbatim Excerpts and Examples:

1. "the biggest thing I focused on was changing the culture and the climate um we we we um had a climate that was toxic and that the number one the expectations were too low for our students"

2. "we have to sustain and maintain um a culture of high expectations and provide the opportunity for our students to succeed holistically"

3. "Clear expectations. Consistent expectations that is centered and based on positive relationships and high expectations."

4. "So they don't always know and value they...they don't always know what that expectation level is and I say to say this um parents want the...our parents want the best for their kids. And so when they drop them off at school in their mind you...you...you are taking care of them you're...you're working with them."

5. "You just have to understand where those students are trying to meet them there, givem that encourage daily and yes I'm not saying that you know it's a...it's...It's a peaches and cream world because you have to be firm. You have to set up the expectations. And you have to know that there gonna be good days and bad days but it's how you manage those days."

6. "But again going back to what I...in the classroom as a teacher, I would just again make sure the students knew the rules and procedures.

Negative Case(s):

- **Students often act or behave based on what they believe is appropriate**

"But again when you put all the students in the housing projects... in one area, one facility, one school what do you expect… even though we have all the students from the housing projects...all

students from the housing project attend MY School they can be respectful, they can be

mannerable, you know they can pass class

Appendix D: Participant Log

Interview	Interviewee Position	Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Date	Time	Length of interview (min)	Pages transcribed
1	*Teacher	Brenda	White	Female	2/9/18	11:00 AM	60	20
2	*Teacher	Sarah	White	Female	2/9/18	9:00 AM	60	23
3	*Teacher	Yara	Black/African American	Female	2/11/18	12:30 PM	60	21
4	*Teacher	Amy	Black/African American	Female	2/12/18	5:30 PM	60	14
5	*Teacher	Lilly	White	Female	2/14/18	7:30 AM	60	26
6	*Teacher	Pam	Black/African American	Female	2/14/18	5:30 PM	60	21
7	*Teacher	Lane	White	Female	2/22/18	7:30 AM	60	21
8	Former Student/Teacher	Emily	White	Female	2/28/18	7:30 AM	60	16
9	*Teacher	Cathy	White	Female	3/6/18	5:30 PM	60	22
10	Parent	Gabe	White	Male	3/12/18	5:30 PM	60	17
11	Former Student/Teacher	Mark	White	Male	3/15/18	7:30 AM	60	18
12	Parent	David	Black/African American	Male	3/20/18	6:00 PM	60	18

13	Parent/Teacher	Janet	White	Female	3/21/18	7:30 AM	60	17
14	Parent	Angel	Black/African American	Female	3/22/18	5:30 PM	60	17
15	*Administrator/Principal	Everett	Asian	Male	3/22/18	5:30 PM	60	17

* - Parent to current or former student of WRMS

Appendix E: Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
Causes of academic disparity		14	14
Educators		15	88
Colorblind		12	30
Demographic Structure of the Staff		10	18
Equity		5	6
Relationship		7	17
Parental		12	29
Involvement (support)		11	20
Reinforcement		3	4
Time		6	7
Values (Background)		7	12
School Policies		9	34
Students		4	10
Behavior		9	17
Motivation		6	8
Demographic Structure of the Students		8	16
Environment		7	14

Appendix F: Black Student Enrollments in Georgia>40%

System Name	Gender	Race: Black	Total Students	%
Baker County	Total	181	232	78%
Baldwin County	Total	3,444	5,157	67%
Ben Hill County	Total	1,335	3,085	43%
Bibb County	Total	17,401	23,965	73%
Brooks County	Total	1,155	2,152	54%
Burke County	Total	2,704	4,154	65%
Calhoun County	Total	536	536	100%
Savannah-Chatham County	Total	21,464	37,390	57%
Clarke County	Total	6,617	13,445	49%
Clay County	Total	219	219	100%
Clayton County	Total	37,728	54,273	70%
Crisp County	Total	2,324	4,031	58%
Decatur County	Total	2,552	5,104	50%
DeKalb County	Total	61,244	99,253	62%
Dooly County	Total	908	1,229	74%
Dougherty County	Total	12,925	14,462	89%
Douglas County	Total	14,271	26,600	54%
Early County	Total	1,461	2,071	71%
Emanuel County	Total	1,813	4,282	42%
Fulton County	Total	39,779	95,114	42%
Greene County	Total	1,194	2,562	47%

System Name	Gender	Race: Black	Total Students	%
Hancock County	Total	852	852	100%
Henry County	Total	22,757	42,455	54%
Jefferson County	Total	1,773	2,602	68%
Jenkins County	Total	600	1,123	53%
Johnson County	Total	483	1,135	43%
Liberty County	Total	5,301	9,944	53%
Macon County	Total	1,094	1,318	83%
McDuffie County	Total	2,176	3,911	56%
McIntosh County	Total	583	1,363	43%
Meriwether County	Total	1,587	2,712	59%
Miller County	Total	380	932	41%
Mitchell County	Total	1,320	2,173	61%
Muscogee County	Total	18,410	31,569	58%
Newton County	Total	11,042	19,627	56%
Peach County	Total	1,821	3,597	51%
Pulaski County	Total	562	1,283	44%
Quitman County	Total	246	315	78%
Randolph County	Total	867	867	100%
Richmond County	Total	22,654	30,695	74%
Rockdale County	Total	11,329	16,855	67%
Screven County	Total	1,124	2,342	48%
Seminole County	Total	613	1,428	43%
Griffin-Spalding County	Total	4,880	10,271	48%
Stewart County	Total	446	446	100%
Sumter County	Total	3,249	4,487	72%
Taliaferro County	Total	131	131	100%

System Name	Gender	Race: Black	Total Students	%
Taylor County	Total	602	1,401	43%
Telfair County	Total	719	1,743	41%
Terrell County	Total	1,256	1,322	95%
Treutlen County	Total	451	1,095	41%
Troup County	Total	5,227	12,091	43%
Turner County	Total	792	1,218	65%
Twiggs County	Total	498	766	65%
Warren County	Total	549	592	93%
Washington County	Total	2,000	3,080	65%
Webster County	Total	146	323	45%
Wilkes County	Total	806	1,540	52%
Wilkinson County	Total	779	1,404	55%
Atlanta Public Schools	Total	38,057	51,662	74%
Dublin City	Total	2,166	2,355	92%
State Charter Schools- Graduation Achievement Center Charter High School	Total	1,159	2,032	57%
State Charter Schools- Utopian Academy for the Arts Charter School	Total	222	222	100%
State Charter Schools- Ivy Preparatory Academy, Inc	Female	460	460	100%
State Charter Schools- Scintilla Charter Academy	Total	186	418	44%
State Charter Schools- Dubois Integrity Academy	Total	644	644	100%
State Charter Schools II- Ivy Preparatory Academy at Gwinnett	Female	64	81	79%
State Charter Schools II- Atlanta Heights Charter School	Total	692	692	100%
State Charter Schools II- Cirrus Charter Academy	Total	408	408	100%
State Charter Schools II- Resurgence Hall Charter School	Total	104	104	100%
State Charter Schools II- International Academy of Smyrna	Total	387	485	80%
Pelham City	Total	812	1,419	57%
Thomasville City	Total	1,638	2,842	58%

System Name	Gender	Race: Black	Total Students	%
Valdosta City	Total	6,302	8,324	76%
Vidalia City	Total	1,253	2,521	50%
State Schools- Atlanta Area School for the Deaf	Total	86	140	61%
State Schools- Georgia Academy for the Blind	Total	54	93	58%
Department of Juvenile Justice	Total	335	335	100%

Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2018