

HISPANIC-BLACK ACHIEVEMENT GAP: THE EDUCATIONAL SCHISM
IN SOUTH CAROLINA MIDDLE SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

MONTRIO MONTESS' BELTON, SR. Hispanic-Black Achievement Gap: The Educational Schism in South Carolina Middle Schools. (Under direction of ANN MCCOLL)

The academic achievement gap that exists between middle class White and non-White and poor students is well-documented. As policy-makers and educational leaders in South Carolina grapple with the academic achievement gap between White and non-White students, it has become increasingly important for them to include the growing Hispanic population in their discourse. All aspects of their policies and decisions, including the development of student assignment plans, need to take into consideration the achievement gap that exists between Whites-Blacks, Whites-Hispanics and Hispanics-Black. Poor and minority students are not academically performing as well as their White cohorts; however, Hispanics are outperforming Blacks in sixth through eighth grade configured schools in South Carolina. This dynamic in academic performance adds another dimension to the debate as to how to mitigate or alleviate the achievement gap. While focusing on South Carolina, this research chronicled the historical and legal journey of Black and Hispanic students in America's schools, established their current status, substantiated the achievement gap that exists between racial subgroups and highlighted the social constructs contributing to these academic gaps that exist within and between each racial subgroup, outlined the ramifications the achievement gap has on these subgroups and society, and analyzed and synthesized future options allowed by *Parents v. Seattle* that could serve as a model for educational leaders, researchers and policy-makers.

DEDICATION

God, thank you for your GRACE and MERCY! To my wife, Dr. Tonya Belton, I love you immensely. Thank you for your unwavering love, support, and willingness to take life's journey with me. I hope I have brought as much fulfillment to your life as you have brought to mine. To Trio and Sydnee, my children, I love the two of you more than life itself. The two of you are the reasons I get up every morning and make a conscious effort to impact this society in a positive way. I want the community you inherit to be much better than the one your father found. Thank you for hugs, kisses, and love, regardless of my shortcomings. After long days of working and researching, my walking in the house and the two of you meeting me at the door, loudly hollering, "DADDY!" and wrestling over who would be the first to be tossed in the air are memories that put this entire process in context. I pray your mom's and dad's love of learning and passion for education will positively influence your future quests. To my mother, Ellen Ann, who gave birth to me as a 16 year old single mother, I say thank you for allowing me to ride that Piedmont Tech van before I could speak complete sentences. You defied the stereotypes and gave my siblings and me an opportunity to do the same. To my siblings, Baby Brother, Hogg, Baby Sista, Tony and Torrall, thank you for looking up to your big brother, for pushing me to continue to excel in my academics and career, and, for all of the nephews and nieces with which you all have blessed me. To my grandparents, Rayford (Sprout), Lucille, Mary and Mae Etta, thank you for standing in the gap and exemplifying the "village." I especially want to thank my grandfather Sprout. With your 4th grade education, you taught me ingenuity and imparted more wisdom in me within my first 15 years on this earth than I will ever receive from the countless scholars I have read. As a child, I watched you read newspapers and encyclopedias. That is probably why I

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The academic achievement gap is a lingering problem impacting South Carolina's schools. Though research has clearly indicated that there is no genetic linkage to race and intelligence (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2005), the achievement gap is usually centered on genetics, economics, cultural irrelevancy in testing, teacher perceptions, and interactions with peers (Fryer & Torelli, 2005). In 1966, the Coleman Report revealed the achievement gap that existed in racially segregated schools and between middle class White students and minority and/or poor students. Despite the ratification of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and other aggressive approaches, such as reducing class sizes, creating smaller schools, expanding early-childhood programs, and encouraging more minority students to take more academically rigorous courses, school districts have not been able to totally alleviate this gap (Viadero & Johnston, 2000). The typical Black seventeen year old student reads at the same level as the typical White thirteen year old student (Fryer & Torelli, 2005). In the 1970's, Black achievement did rise and White achievement leveled. This trend stalled in the 1980's (Rothman, 2001-2002). As an attempt to remedy this academic disparity between races, scholars have debated its genesis and possible solutions. Payne asserts that this achievement gap exists because of poverty (Payne, 2005). Other scholars contend that schools that are racially and economically segregated do not result in positive academic performance for members of the student body (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Students in racially segregated schools usually have less financial and human capital; therefore, they

do not have equitable access to educational opportunities. “Racially isolated minority schools, research shows, tend to have fewer resources that are critical for the education of students” (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Garces, 2008). Specifically referring to a South Carolina middle school with a high concentration of Black students, President Barack Obama said in his first Address to a Joint Session of Congress on February 24, 2009, “... that school I visited in Dillon, S.C. — a place where the ceilings leak, the paint peels off the walls, and they have to stop teaching six times a day because the train barrels by their classroom” (Barack Obama First Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 2009).

However, other writings reveal that when socio-economic status is removed, there is still an achievement gap between White students and Black middle class students (Ogbu, 2003). Jencks and Phillips contend that race is the major factor, and Black test scores would increase two to three points by simply desegregating schools (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Thernstrom (2005) states “...there is no social science consensus on the educational benefits of racial and ethnic diversity in K-12 education, and that it is thus unwarranted to suspend the equal protection clause on the basis of the complex, confusing, contradictory, and ever-changing social science literature bearing on the issue.” Others argue that the Black family structure is the primary cause of Black children academically lagging their White cohorts. The national trend in the Black family structure may have a negative impact on students in South Carolina. Nationally, “thirty-eight percent of Black children live with both parents and almost one in ten live with neither (Barton, 2004).” In the 1983 publishing of *A Nation at Risk*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education indicated that students’ academic performance

was lackluster because of “disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process is conducted” (U.S., 1983).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 8th grade mathematics scores revealed an achievement gap of 27 points in South Carolina, 29 in North Carolina, 27 in Georgia and 30 in Florida between White and Black students. The 8th grade reading section revealed similar results: 26 points in South Carolina, 29 in North Carolina, 25 in Georgia, and 24 in Florida (State Comparisons, 2007). Nationally, in 8th grade mathematics, Whites had a scale score of 290; Blacks had a scale score of 259; and Hispanics had a scale score of 264. In reading, the results were similar. Whites had a scale score of 270; Blacks had a scale score of 244; and Hispanics had a scale score of 246 (NAEP, 2007).

Statement of Problem

Academic achievement among and between races are not consistent. “Almost 40 years after the Civil Rights Act, Black students, on average, record the poorest academic performance of any major racial or ethnic group in the United States, at all ages, in all subjects, regardless of class level” (McWhorter, 2000). Minority students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend not to perform as well as White and/or middle class students. “The children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of schools are trained for being governed. The former are given the imaginative range to mobilize ideas for economic growth; the latter are provided with the discipline to do the narrow tasks the first group will prescribe” (Kozol, 1991, p. 176). Many educational researchers and scholars have recommended different educational, legislative, and judicial remedies to the achievement gap. These recommendations have

included the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, student assignment plans based on standardized test scores and poverty, and the Supreme Court ruling in *Parents v. Seattle*, which includes building schools in strategic locations based on demographic shifts and using diversity as a central component. Many of the differences found in the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps are reflective of these racial subgroups of students attending schools with unequal resources. In South Carolina, not only is there an achievement gap between White and Black middle school students, there is also an achievement gap between Hispanic and Black students, and no research currently explains that achievement gap, discusses its ramifications and future opportunities that exist, including the ruling in *Parents v. Seattle*, to mitigate it. Though data indicates it exists, none of the research on South Carolina's middle schools includes the achievement gap that exists between Hispanic-Black students on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test. Consequently, this research seeks to answer three (3) questions:

1. Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics?
2. Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government-subsidized meals tested?
3. Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals

tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

Answering these questions in South Carolina is important because it expands the research and contributes to the scholarly body of knowledge as to whether the achievement gap between Whites-Blacks, Whites-Hispanics, or Hispanics-Black is a result of race and can be solved by solely designing student assignment plans based on the parameters of the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Seattle v. Parents* (2007), as some suggest. These parameters include:

- a. Build schools that are strategically located. District leaders must thoroughly research housing patterns and demographic shifts. Using this information, they must strategically build schools that will mitigate the chances of the schools becoming racially homogenous or obtaining a racial identification.
- b. Allocate resources for magnet schools and other special educational programs that will attract a diverse student body. Ensure that all students have access to the special magnets. Leaders must be careful not to establish artificial barriers that will exclude some students from participating in special programs, even though they are students in the school.

Or, is another minority group of students, Hispanics, with very similar demographic attributes as Blacks demonstrating academic progress toward alleviating the achievement gap in South Carolina, thus indicating a more complex societal and educational issue that will require many tentacles of intervention?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is based on Easton's Social Process Model of input, outputs, and outcomes. The independent variables (percentage of Hispanics, Blacks and Whites in a school) represent the inputs. The dependent variables (achievement gaps among White, Hispanic, and Black students) represent the outputs. As a result of the inputs and outputs, there are societal ramifications. The outcome is reflected by *Parents v. Seattle* and the opportunities the Court presented schools to address academic achievement as it relates to student assignment plans. Though still not performing as well as their White cohorts, Hispanic students have made remarkable process in closing the achievement gap with their White cohorts, and arguably, in some respects, second and third generation Hispanic students have eliminated it (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Black students have not demonstrated the same consistent progress. Researchers have offered many reasons for the achievement gap that continues to exist between White and Black students as well as solutions on how it may be alleviated, including developing student assignment plans based on options outlined in *Parents v. Seattle*. The historical and legal significance of these two races in South Carolina schools, the looming achievement gap between White, Black, and Hispanic students, and future opportunities that may aid in the alleviation of this achievement gap as a result of *Parents v. Seattle* and other options guide this research. It is shown in Figure 1.

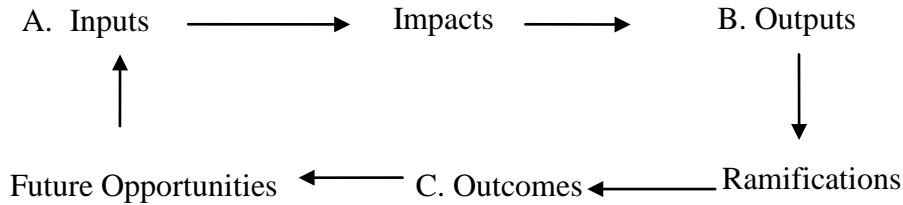


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Questions

Though the primary focus of this research is not to answer the questions of “why” the achievement gap exists, this research is undergirded by one premise: Hispanic students are more likely than Whites or Blacks to attend large schools with high teacher turnover rate and a large number of students that come from poor families (The High Schools Hispanics Attend, 2005), yet they are outperforming Blacks in South Carolina, thus sterilizing the argument that simply desegregating schools would alleviate the achievement gap between minority and White students. Consequently, based on this premise, to mitigate or alleviate its achievement gap, Boards of Education could not only develop school assignment plans based on the parameters outlined in *Parents v. Seattle* (Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1, et al., 2007) but also begin to address some of the more complex societal issues that are rooted in the historical formation of South Carolina’s schools. In South Carolina, Hispanic students represent similar social and economic demographics as Blacks, yet they are making academic progress.

This study sought to answer three (3) questions:

1. Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-

Language Arts and mathematics?

2. Is there a correlation among the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government subsidized meals tested?

3. Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

Assumptions

The following assumption was made:

All Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) and demographic data from the middle schools in South Carolina were collected and reported consistently.

Summary

As policy-makers and educational leaders in South Carolina grapple with the academic achievement gap between White and non-White students, it has become increasingly important for them to include the growing Hispanic population in their discourse. All aspects of their policies and decisions regarding the looming academic achievement gap, including student assignment plans, need to take into consideration the achievement gap that exists between Whites-Blacks, Whites-Hispanics and Hispanics-

Blacks. Poor and minority students are not academically performing as well as their White cohorts; however, Hispanics are outperforming Blacks in South Carolina's middle schools (State Scores by Demographic, 2008). This dynamic in academic performance adds another dimension to the debate as to how to mitigate or alleviate the achievement gap. This research seeks to discern whether the achievement gap that exists between racial subgroups highlights the decaying social constructs of minority students or is exacerbated by racially homogenous schools.

The literature review in Chapter Two will examine several facets:

1. Making of South Carolina Schools: Legal and Historical Journeys
 - a. Blacks
 - b. Hispanics
2. Establishing the Achievement Gap between Whites, Hispanics, and Blacks
3. Societal Ramifications
4. Hispanic-Black Academic Achievement
5. *Parents v. Seattle* and its impact on the achievement gap

These five topics were chosen because they follow the outline of the conceptual framework of the study in that it is important to understand the legal and historical journeys of Black and Hispanics in public schools, especially South Carolina. Also, it is important to highlight the current academic achievement of Black and Hispanic students and the ramifications this achievement has on society and respective racial subgroups. Likewise, it is equally important to research thoroughly the achievement and achievement gap that exist among and within these two groups of students. Finally, if policymakers determine that desegregation of schools is one way in which they can mitigate the

achievement gap, what options were granted to them by the Supreme Court in *Parents v Seattle*? Chapter Three will explain the design of the study and statistical analyses that will be used. Chapter Four will present an analysis of the data collected from the schools' report cards and the results. Chapter Five will present a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Making of South Carolina Schools: Legal and Historical Journeys

Blacks

As we search for causes and solutions to the achievement gap that exists, we must understand the historical and legal journey of the racial subgroups. This is important as researchers such as Armor (2002) stated that the academic achievement of Blacks is grounded in their historical genesis in American society.

“Racial prejudice, segregation and Black disadvantage were sustained by a vicious circle of beliefs and behaviors that found their origins in slavery. Slavery caused objective economic and social disadvantages, which in turn reinforced beliefs that Blacks were inherently inferior, which led to segregation laws after slavery was abolished. These segregation laws perpetuated Black disadvantages, which then reinforced racial prejudice. Like slavery, the segregation forced upon one generation perpetuated further economic and social disadvantages for the next generation, which then sustained existing prejudicial beliefs, and so on in a never-ending cycle of mutually reinforcing beliefs and behaviors passed on from one generation to the next” (Armor, 2002, p. 178).

South Carolina had a dilemma, “what do you do with former slaves when you no longer need his labor” (Kozol, 1991). Through the efforts of the Freedman’s Bureau and some state legislatures, there was an attempt to educate former slaves during the immediate twelve years after the Civil War (1865-1877). This period is known in history as

Reconstruction. South Carolina had a large number of newly freed, uneducated Black citizens. The South Carolina Constitution of 1868, which was created by a convention of forty-eight Whites and seventy six Blacks (Wright, 1976, pp. 192-193) required the state to establish “a uniform system of public schools.....open to all the children and youth of the State, without regard to race and color” (South Carolina Constitution, 1868). The Constitution further stated that it will provide a “minimally adequate education” to all of its citizens (1868). It would be more than 130 years later before South Carolina defined “minimally adequate education” (*Abbeville County School District, et al. v. the State of South Carolina, 1999*). However, the intention of the leaders at the Constitutional Convention was to establish an equitable educational system for all citizens of South Carolina. When Reconstruction ended in 1877, courts and legislatures enacted laws that would divide this nation’s and South Carolina’s educational system for more than three quarters of a century.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) chartered a very different course for America’s public schools. *Plessy* was brought to the Supreme Court as a case dealing with facilities for rail transportation. Its ruling changed the landscape of American schools. The majority opinion stated, in part,

“The object of the Fourteenth Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring their separation in places where they are liable to be brought into

contact do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislature in exercise of their police power.” (1896, p. 544).

Students could remain “separate” as long as resources and access were “equal.”

In South Carolina, neither the resources nor the access were equal, and the State Constitution of 1895 legally sanctioned dual educational systems. It stated, “separate schools shall be provided for children of white and colored races, and not child of either race shall ever be permitted to attend a school provided for children of the other race” (Workman, 1954). In 1900, South Carolina spent 4.21 times more on White students as it did on Black students. In 1901, Greenwood County, South Carolina, spent \$6.29 per White student and \$.23 per Black student, and, in 1941, South Carolina provided 1,644 buses for White schools and only 8 for Blacks (Chesnutt & Wilson, 1991).

To mitigate some of the educational inadequacies that existed throughout the South, several organizations provided resources aimed at helping Blacks gain access to educational opportunities. Among these organizations were the Jeanes Fund and the Rosenwald Foundation. In 1907, the Jeanes Fund was established to “maintain and assist rural schools for Blacks in the South” (Southern Education). The Rosenwald Foundation was established in 1917 and built more than 5,300 schools and other buildings for Black students in the south between 1912 and 1932 (Hoffschwelle, 2006).

After *Plessey*, other cases regarding school segregation were argued before the Supreme Court. In *Cummings v. Board of Education* (1899), the Supreme Court upheld the refusal to obey an injunction to require a school board to close a White high school until it could open a high school for Black students. In 1920, South Carolina had the

lowest per pupil expenditure in the nation, with White schools receiving funds at a much higher rate than Black schools. During this period, school districts like Dillon County would periodically levy higher taxes on its residents to generate funding for schools. During the 1920's, Dillon County gave its White schools twelve times more than it gave its Black schools. By mid-century, Clarendon County allotted \$150 per White child and \$43 per Black child.

In *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), the Supreme Court ruled that a Chinese student was not being denied "equal protection" by being classified as Black and sent to school with Black students, as opposed to White students. By this time, South Carolina had established 279 high schools for Whites and 10 for Blacks (Edgar, 1996). Between the late 1930's and early 1950's, the Supreme Court appeared to be abandoning its stance regarding "separate but equal" facilities. In *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, it ruled that the state-run law school open to Whites violated the plaintiff's constitutional rights, even though the state offered to pay tuition for the plaintiff to attend law school in another state (*Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 1938). In 1948, in *Pearson v. County Board of Education*, Levi Pearson, a South Carolina resident, filed a lawsuit in federal court in an attempt to equalize the public school transportation in Summerton. Pearson demanded that the State of South Carolina cease the use of race to decide who received free bus services to public schools (Cohodas, 1993, pp. 218-219). Though Pearson's lawsuit was dismissed based on a technicality regarding where he paid taxes, it set the stage for *Briggs v. Elliott*. In Clarendon County, South Carolina, school district, some Black parents challenged the de jure segregation policies as they attempted to secure more equal facilities for their children (*Briggs v. Elliott*, 1952). As this lawsuit was

matriculating through the court system, the South Carolina legislature spent more than a 100 million dollars to address the inadequacies in the school facilities (Workman, 1954). The allocation of these funds was a veiled attempt to preempt and stall force desegregation of the public schools.

The final blow to the “separate but equal” philosophy came with the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In this case, the lower courts had ruled that the rights of citizens in four states were not being violated by their respective state’s public school de jure segregation laws. The lower courts had ruled that the schools provided were “equal or in the process of becoming equal.” In *Brown*, the Supreme Court concluded “that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954).

With this ruling, the Court sent the cases back to the lower courts and ordered them to work out the particulars with individual school districts as to how each would remedy its segregation procedures. The lower courts were ordered to “require that the defendants make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance” (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). However, if a state were exhibiting “good faith compliance,” they could delay the process, especially if their delay was in the “best interest of the public.” Unfortunately, this ruling did not dictate specific means in which school districts had to integrate, and there was evidence in South Carolina that the state and its school districts were going to resist integration as long as possible.

In 1954, the year of the *Brown* ruling, there were approximately 524,000 students in South Carolina’s schools. Of those, nearly forty-two percent or 295,500 were Black

(Baker, 1993). Also, in 1954, the South Carolina educational system was operated by the Senate Committees on Educational and Judiciary and studied by South Carolina Segregation Study Commission. The leader of both committees was State Senator L. Marion Gressette of Calhoun County. This commission recommended “that the public schools be operated during the coming school year ““in keeping with previously established policy”” (Workman, 1954). The commission also compelled the governor to continue the state’s efforts to “improve” the educational opportunities for the Black students in the state, including the continuation of building new schools. The commission’s rationale was that if construction funding or any other funding was withheld from Black schools that would give the courts a legal basis to force immediate integration. Before the 1954 academic year started, South Carolina’s General Assembly began devising strategies in which they would technically be complicit with the *Brown* decision; however, they would not actually integrate the schools. They instructed local boards to take control of student assignment plans. If a Black parent wanted to send their child to an all-White school, they would have to petition to the local school board. These petitions would have to be submitted one year in advance, and local boards could always deny them (Lowe, pp. 201-203). State Representative Ernest Fritz Hollings of Charleston, an opponent of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, once stated, “If there’s one thing against our way of life in the South, it’s the NAACP. And if the U.S. Supreme Court can declare certain organizations as subversive, I believe South Carolina can declare the NAACP both subversive and illegal” (Workman, 1955). He campaigned for Lieutenant Governor on the theme of keeping the schools racially segregated by developing convoluted, overly bureaucratic student assignment

plans that were based on residential housing patterns and academic aptitude. His strategy and this logic were simple: Most of the school districts had been gerrymandered based on the race of the residents. Therefore, if attendance lines were developed based on housing patterns, students would naturally end up in racially segregated schools. He concluded that if for some reason the proposed student assignment plans did not work, school officials could use aptitude tests for Black students like voting officials used literacy tests with Black voters (Quint, 1958). The gubernatorial candidate, Lt. Governor George Timmerman, also campaigned using fiery rhetoric and insisting that integration would not happen in South Carolina. He continued his opposition to integration during his inaugural address.

“Loyal South Carolinians will stand firm against organized effort to destroy the right of parents to choose what is best for their children. It is tragic to see our educational progress imperiled by those who practice racial segregation in their own lives while professing to perceive from a great distance that our children should be mixed. The development of future educational opportunities for Negro children will depend in large measure upon preserving the right of each race to attend their own public schools” (Highlights of Inaugural Address Here, 1955, p. 1-A).

In March of 1955, the South Carolina compulsory attendance laws were repealed (Workman, 1955), and in April of 1955, the South Carolina Senate adopted a resolution to restrict funding to any school that desegregated. The resolutions stated, in part, “provided further that the state aid for teachers’ salaries and all other appropriations for the operation of the public school system, shall cease and become inoperative for the time

that any pupil shall by order of any court attend a school other than that which he or she is now attending or may be assigned by local board of trustees or other governing body of such school.” (Workman, 1955, p. 6).

South Carolina’s leaders, however, found themselves in a very perplexing predicament. The White citizenry did not want integrated schools, the Supreme Court had ruled that “separate but equal” was unconstitutional, and the state did not have enough money to continue to operate the dual system, especially if they were going to take the advice of Fritz Hollings and provide commensurate facilities and educational opportunities to its Black students. In 1953, the South Carolina’s per pupil expenditure was \$142 for Whites and \$79 for Blacks (Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina, 1953, p. 210).

In the 1955 *Brown II* decision, the Court ruled that a district had to move with “deliberate speed” in integrating its schools (*Brown v. Board of Education II*, 1955). The Court “remanded with orders to require school districts to ‘make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance’ in implementing its mandates aimed at ending *de jure* segregation (1955, p. 298). Though the *Brown* decision established the legal precedent and the Civil Rights Laws and accompanying initiatives provided the legislative basis and power of enforcement, some districts continued an attempt to defy the law. In North Carolina, only one-fifth of one percent of the Black students attended desegregated school in 1961 (Milliken v. Bradley, 1974). In South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, not one Black child attended a public school with a White child in the 1962-1963 school year (Milliken v. Bradley, 1974). Consequently, other cases were brought before the Court. In 1959, a petition was filed in Clarendon, South Carolina, by ten

parents requesting that their children be reassigned from an all-Black school in which they were assigned to an all-White school (*Miller v. School District 2 Clarendon County*, 1966). The district declared that the petition was submitted “after” school assignments for the year had been made. It was not until 1963, nine years after *Brown v Board of Education*, that eleven Black students entered a previously all White school in Charleston (Edgar, 1996). This number did not rise above 1% until 1965 (*Milliken v. Bradley*, 1974). Because of this resistance, the United States Supreme Court continuously heard cases: (*Griffin v Board of Supervisors Prince Edward County*, 1963); (*Goss v. Board of Supervisors Prince Edward County*, 1964); (*Green v. School Board of New Kent County*, 1968); (*Northcross v. Board of Education Memphis*, 1970). In its ruling in *Green v. School Board of New Kent County* (1968), the Court ruled that the only acceptable plan was one in which the dual school systems fail to exist. The “choice” plan was unconstitutional because it did not effectively address segregation by providing choice. Essentially, students could choose a school within the district to attend. This choice led to only 10 percent of Blacks attending majority White schools, and no Whites attending Black schools (*Green v. School Board of New Kent County*, 1968). Therefore, its remedy was insufficient. This ruling resulted in six criteria known as the Green factors being established as benchmarks to determine desegregation: 1. student assignment; 2. faculties; 3. extracurricular activities; 4. facilities; 5. transportation; and 6. staff. The Court ordered the school district to work immediately to “convert promptly to a system without a ‘White’ school and a ‘Negro’ school, but just schools” (*Green v. School Board of New Kent County*, 1968).

The 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* gave districts permission to use busing as a means to achieve its desegregation goals (*Swann v Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, 1971). This was an important ruling because the Court realized that segregated housing patterns were creating *de facto* segregation in the district. *De facto* segregation happens as a natural consequence and without outside social or other forces as opposed to *de jure* segregation which is caused by laws or policies. In other words, because neighborhoods in Charlotte and other places, including South Carolina, were racially exclusive if students went to their “neighborhood” school, they would be attending a racially segregated school. Therefore, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools used busing to achieve racial balance.

By the 1970-1971 academic year, South Carolina had principally integrated its public schools; therefore, policy-makers’ focus changed, and they began to address the resource inequities that existed throughout the state. Consequently, the Education Finance Act of 1977 was passed. This act established the standard for providing funding for a minimally adequate education in South Carolina. In *Abbeville County School District v. State* (1999), the South Carolina Supreme Court defined minimally adequate education; however, it never solved the central issue of how to fund an adequate education for all students. Instead, the South Carolina Supreme Court remanded the case back to lower courts. Finally, in 2005, the Circuit Court ruled that South Carolina did provide enough money for a minimally adequate education; however, it needed to spend more to ensure children start school ready to learn. Eight school districts have requested the court to reconsider its ruling. The request is being aided by a television documentary entitled “Corridor of Shame.” This documentary highlights the inadequate funding,

facilities, and education opportunities available in many of the rural, mostly Black districts, along the Interstate 95 corridor of South Carolina. Some of the districts in South Carolina that comprise the “Corridor of Shame” are Dillon, Marion, Clarendon, Jasper, and Walterboro.

One solution to this funding issue is proposed legislation to force counties to consolidate the eighty-five districts into forty-six county districts. This is not unprecedented in South Carolina. In 1950, in an effort to improve the condition of Black schools, South Carolina’s legislature reduced the number of school districts from 1,200 to 102. This was done to decrease the number of districts that would have to share limited financial resources that would be gained from a proposed sales tax increase (Workman, 1954). Though the recent proposals have not gotten statewide support, the legislature has already allowed the consolidation of two districts Sumter 17 and Sumter 2. On July 1, 2011, South Carolina’s Legislature will allow these two districts to fully consolidate, and they will be known as Sumter County Consolidated School District (South Carolina House Legislative Session 117).

Finally, two relatively recent Supreme Court cases set the standard for current Boards of Education regarding student assignment plans: *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) and *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* (2007). In *Freeman*, the Court ruled that the racial segregation of schools in Atlanta, though more segregated than they were in the mid-1950’s, are not due to *de jure* segregation as they were at that the time of *Brown*. The segregated schools are a result of housing patterns, and the Court cannot change the trend in the private housing market (*Freeman v Pitts*, 1992). In essence, the school system is not responsible for the segregated school; therefore, they

are not responsible for remedying the problem. Consequently, federal courts can end judicial supervision of the school system. This established a legal basis for school districts across the nation to develop racially segregated pupil assignment plans. In the 2007 ruling of the United States Supreme Court in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No.1*, the Courts declared it unconstitutional to use racial balance for its own sake to develop student assignment plans. This ruling, however, justified the value of diversity. Nevertheless, it limited how race could be used to achieve this diversity (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1, et al.*, 2007). In other words, using race as a sole factor is a violation of student's equal protection rights as outlined by the 14th amendment. However, *Parents* does outline what is possible to voluntarily create more diversity in schools. The options *Parents* give school districts to develop consciously student assignment plans based on race will be discussed later in this chapter.

Hispanics

According to the United States Census Bureau, the term “Latino” or “Hispanic” refers to “persons who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures. Origin can be considered as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.” (Hispanic Population of the United States). In public and private schools throughout the United States, there are approximately 52.2 million students enrolled. Hispanics represent 10.1 million or 19.5%; Blacks represent 7.6 million or 14.7%; and Whites represent 30.3 million or

57.9%. Of these Hispanic students, 84% are US-born, 57% live in households with both parents. Eighty-two percent speak English fluently, and seventy percent speak a language other than English at home (Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2007). Hispanics are considered the fastest growing population in the United States. If Hispanic growth continues in the United States at its current rate of nearly five times that of non-Hispanics, Hispanics will become the largest minority group by 2020 with approximately 1 in 4 persons living in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 1995). More than 55% of Hispanics living in the United States live in married couple households, and the United States has the highest percentage of Hispanics who are not citizens, 29 percent, compared with less than 2 percent of Hispanics living in Puerto Rico (Niner & Rios, 2009). The high school dropout rate for Hispanics is larger than any other ethnic group in the United States. Native-born, first generation Hispanics are less likely to drop out of school than those who were born in the United State, and fewer second generation Hispanics are dropping out (Jones & Bou-Waked, 2007).

Hispanic students are usually at-risk or susceptible to many of the academic and social detriments that beset students for several reasons: 1. Lack of proficiency in English; and, 2. Lack of familiarity with the educational system. However, the opportunity for school is a major reason why many immigrant families, especially Hispanics, come to the United States, and education provides an opportunity for these students and their families to culturally-connect with American society (Suarez-Orozco, 2008).

In South Carolina, Hispanics and Blacks represent a similar demographic profile. Both are racial minorities, and they share a similar income profile. According to South

Carolina's State Budget and Control Office, the per capita income for Hispanics in South Carolina is \$12,143 compared to \$11,776 for Blacks and \$22,095 for Whites (Per Capita Income by Race and Hispanic Origin by County, 1999).

In South Carolina, the total population is approximately 4.4 million, and the Hispanic population is approximately 168,000 or 3.8% (Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 2007). In South Carolina's public schools, there are 274,654 students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. Of those students, approximately 53.6% are White, 39.1% are Black and 5% are Hispanic (Quick Facts About Education in South Carolina, 2009).

In the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Keyes*, academic achievement and segregation trends regarding Hispanics first got noted. In this particular case, the Court declared

"... there is also much evidence that, in the Southwest, Hispanos and Negroes have a great many things in common. The United States Commission on Civil Rights has recently published two Reports on Hispano education in the Southwest. Focusing on students in the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, the Commission concluded that Hispanos suffer from the same educational inequities as Negroes and American Indians. In fact, the District Court itself recognized that "[o]ne of the things which the Hispano has in common with the Negro is economic and cultural deprivation and discrimination." ... though of different origins, Negroes and Hispanos in Denver suffer identical discrimination in treatment when compared with the treatment afforded Anglo students. In that circumstance, we think petitioners are entitled to have schools with a combined predominance of Negroes and Hispanos included in the

category of "segregated" schools (*Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado, 1973*).

Finally, the academic disparities between Whites and Blacks were extended to include Hispanics.

Establishing the Achievement Gaps between Whites, Hispanics, and Blacks

Achievement gap is defined as the “disparity in academic performance between groups of students” (Research Center, 2004). As a result of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, schools must disaggregate their student achievement data by subgroups. Therefore, it is easier to identify the achievement gaps that exist between subgroups. Efforts to alleviate the achievement gap range from effective school leadership (Edmonds, 1979) to developing student assignments that ensure poor and minority children are not segregated in schools in which they are the majority (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weinfeld, 1966). This debate has intensified in recent years as states and districts are aware of the 2014 deadline established by *No Child Left Behind*, which indicates that all students must demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics, and schools must also demonstrate that their students, disaggregated by subgroups, make annual yearly progress (Bohrnstedt & O'Day, 2008), and it further states that “closing the achievement gap between high and low performing students, especially the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged and their more advantaged peers” is a priority. Schools, local educational agencies and states will be held accountable for closing the achievement gap (Elementary and Secondary Education, 2004).

According to 2003 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data compiled and released in 2005 by Education Trust, thirty three percent of 8th grade students in the United States scored below basic on the mathematics portion of the NAEP exam as compared to forty percent that scored basic and twenty seven percent that scored proficient or advanced. When broken down by ethnicity, the achievement gap is very evident. Sixty one percent of Black students scored below basic, as compared to thirty two percent that scored basic and seven percent that scored proficient or advanced. Fifty three percent of Latinos in the same cohort group scored basic, while 36 percent scored basic, and 11 percent scored advanced. Eighth grade Whites scored 21, 43, and 36 percent below basic, basic and proficient/advanced, respectively (Closing the Gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college). According to the U. S. Census Bureau, in 2007 eighteen percent of Black males had graduated from college compared to nearly thirty percent of White males and nearly twelve percent of Hispanic males (Education: Educational Attainment, 2009).

In South Carolina during the 2007-2008 academic year, 22.3% of all Blacks scored proficient and advanced in English/language arts compared to 27.8% of all Hispanics and 49.3% of all Whites. In mathematics, 17.1% of all Blacks scored proficient and advanced compared to 25.8% of all Hispanics and 47% of all Whites (Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test , 2008). In South Carolina during the 2006-2007 academic year, 24.4% of all students receiving subsidized meals scored proficient and advanced on the English/language arts section compared to 53.2% of their cohorts who pay full price for their school meals. In mathematics, only 21% of all students receiving subsidized meals scored proficient and advanced compared to 50% of the students who

pay full price for meals. Blacks and other ethnic minority males scored below basic on the mathematics section of the state's Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), as opposed to only 19.9% of their White male cohorts (2008 South Carolina Kids Count Report). During the 2007-2008 academic year, 49.3% of Whites, 22.3% of Blacks and 27.8% of Hispanics in grades 3-8 scored proficient and advanced on the PACT (Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), 2008).

Hispanics have made academic progress since it has been measured in the United States, and this is reflected in middle school data in South Carolina. During the 2007-2008 academic year, 56.6% of eighth grade Blacks met standards in reading compared to 59.4% of 8th grade Hispanics. Similarly, 54.7% of eighth grade Blacks met standard in mathematics compared to 62.8% of Hispanics. This achievement gap trend between Hispanics and Blacks is also consistent in grades six and seven in both reading and mathematics (State Scores by Demographic, 2008).

Societal Ramifications

The lack of success in k-12 schools by a substantial number of minority students has societal ramifications. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, the National Vital Statistics System, and national surveys (2004), less than 8% of young Black males graduate from college compared to 17% of Whites and 35% of Asians. As we progress through the 21st century, it is becoming evident that job opportunities and upward mobility in society will be limited without some level of post-secondary education. Sadly, even if Black males graduate from high school, they are less apt to hold a job than not only Whites, but Hispanics and Asians. These students have limited access to educational opportunities, financial capital, and upward mobility in society. This lack of

opportunity for students remains a major determinant in their choosing a spouse, political activity, income potential, and employability (Danzinger & Haverman, 2001). Also, Blacks are nearly three times more likely than Hispanics and five times more likely than Whites to be incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). Between 1990 and 2008, Hispanic incarceration rate of growth was 4.5% compared to 3.8% for Whites and 3.3% for Blacks (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009), and one in nine Black men between the ages of 20 and 34 was incarcerated (1 in 100 Adults Behind Bars, 2008). In the state of North Carolina, Blacks are incarcerated six times the rate of Whites and compose only 22% of the state's population; yet, Blacks are 61% of the prison population (North Carolina, 2003).

South Carolina is ranked in the top 20 of states with the highest percentages of total minority population in 2005 with 34.5 percent. South Carolina's White, Black, and Hispanic populations are 67.3%, 28.6% and 3.6%, respectively (CensusScope-- Population by Race). Based on this relatively current demographic information, South Carolina's future economic, social, and political successes are dependent upon finding the answer or multi-faceted approaches to increasing the academic achievement of Hispanic and Black students.

Hispanic-Black Achievement Gap

Southworth (2008) conducted research of North Carolina schools and concluded that third grade reading scores for Hispanics are higher than Blacks but lower than Whites. By sixth grade, Hispanic females, when individual factors are controlled, are scoring higher than White females in reading, and though Hispanic students' parents typically have lower educational level and more of them receive subsidized meals than

Black students, academic achievement for Hispanic students is higher in grades 3-8 (Southworth, 2008). Though Hispanic students have made significant academic gains, there continues to be a disconnect between many Hispanic families and the traditional school. This is often exacerbated because Hispanic families have an expectation for American schools such as that in which they experienced in their native country (Trueba & Delgado-Gaiten, 1988).

McWhorter (2000) research suggests that the achievement gap is caused by Black anti-intellectualism. He claims that Blacks view education as belonging to the “White man.” Therefore, education is rejected consciously and subconsciously by Blacks, and if some Blacks achieve educationally, they are rejected by members of their community. John Ogbu conducted extensive research on race and intelligence. He concluded that the difference between Hispanic and Black achievement is rooted in their historical posture in American society. He distinguishes between “involuntary” and “voluntary” minorities. Involuntary residents were brought to America against their will and voluntary minorities chose to come to America. The voluntary minorities migrated because they felt it was in their best economic interest even if they had to work their way up in society. He claims this “cultural frame of reference” is directly related to the academic achievement of minority students (Fries-Britt, 1998). Ogbu also maintains that Blacks do not perform well academically because they lack motivation; however, he claims they lack motivation because of the lack of opportunities that exist in a White dominated society (Schwartz, 2003). Others suggest that neighborhoods in which students live directly impact their behaviors, including academic behavior. Neighborhood crime and other characteristics of neighborhoods directly influence student academic outcomes,

including grades, attendance, and behavior at school. Neighborhood crime represents a significant factor for at-risk students (Nash, 2002). Ogbu concluded, after interviewing Black students, that they did not recognize a link between level of education and employability (Ogbu, 2003). Parental educational level for Black students is likely to be lower than that of their White peers, but greater than their Hispanic peers. Also, Black students are more likely than Whites, but less likely than Hispanics, to receive subsidized school meals. Ogbu theorizes that poor Black students have no role models that are succeeding financially because of their education, and middle class Black students surmise that they will benefit from their parents' financial success (Ogbu, 2003). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) suggest that Black students suffer from peer pressure not to act "White." Of the several attributes that define "acting" White, including speaking proper English and having a 'cocktail'", one is making good grades (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Others assert that an individual student's background has a more significant impact on their learning than the characteristics of the school in which they attend (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weinfeld, 1966).

Evans (2005) suggests that a student's experiences, habits, values, and ideas that are cultivated in their home environment will dictate whether or not students learn (Evans, 2005). Barton claims there are factors that are beyond the scope of the school's control that directly impact academic achievement of Black versus White students: birth weight, lead poisoning in the home, insecurity regarding meals, lack of proper nutrition, child being read to, amount of television watched, availability of a parent, student mobility, participation of parents in school activities and events (Barton, 2004). Armor (2006) expanded the list of family "characteristics or experiences" that directly impact a

student's academic development. His list includes parents' IQ, cognitive stimulation, emotional support/nurturance, parents' educational attainment, family income and poverty status, family structure: marital status/number of parents, mother's age when child born, number of siblings, child nutrition (including breast feeding), and child's birth weight (Armor D. J., 2006, p. 42). Roseigno (2000) asserts that as students matriculate from elementary to middle school, their family's background impact on academic achievement decline in importance (Roseigno, 2000).

Orfield and Eaton (1996) claim that racially homogenous schools are detrimental to all students. They further claim that integrated schools positively impact minority students and are not detrimental to White academic achievement (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Other researchers claim that the socioeconomic composition of a school is a stronger predictor of academic achievement (Kahlenberg, 2000). Thus, where a student attends school is more of an indicator of academic success than the student's familial characteristics (Borman & Dowling, 2006). Regardless of the contributing factors, schools have not been able to overcome this academic achievement gap (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weinfeld, 1966, p. 21).

Parents v. Seattle and its impact on the achievement gap

From the 1991-1992 academic year to the 2003-2004 academic, the number of Black students that attended a school with more than 50% of the school population being minority increased from 66 percent to 73 percent (Hardy, 2006). Scholars often research the pros and cons of school segregation and desegregation and what impact deliberate efforts to desegregate would have on academic achievement, especially the impact on the performance of White students compared to their minority counterparts. The tentacles of

this research reach back to the Coleman Report. It indicated that Blacks were more negatively impacted by segregated schools that were majority Black, and the impact was neutral for their White cohorts (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weinfeld, 1966). White and Black Americans view the integration of schools very differently. American schools are becoming more racially and economically segregated (Smith, 2004, p. 26). The number of Blacks attending racially dense schools approximately mirrors the corresponding number in 1966 when the Coleman Report was written (Gamoran, 2006). In a 1975 study, Coleman furthered reiterated that segregation was still very apparent in American society, and little had been done to unite the races. He decried mandatory busing as an ineffective strategy (Time, 1975).

Other studies contradict the notion that desegregation of schools and a change of the school's racial composition would change the achievement gap that exists between White-Black students (Armor, 2002). His study found that academic achievement is linked to generational poverty. Other research indicates that the racial composition of a school and demographic profile of the peers attending the school does impact academic achievement (Lee, 2007).

This debate regarding school composition and its relationship to academic achievement climaxed on June 28, 2007, when the United States Supreme Court rendered its decision regarding *Parents v. Seattle*. At issue in this case is what school districts can do voluntarily to create diverse schools. This decision denies educational leaders and policy-makers the authority to create public school attendance lines solely on race. The Court ruled that "racial imbalance," for its own sake, does not constitute "segregation" and since the student assignment plan was not narrowly tailored to meet a compelling

state interest, it was declared unconstitutional. Many school districts manufacture their school attendance lines based on housing patterns.

The Court in its majority opinion acknowledged “racial imbalance is the failure of the of school district’s graphic makeup of the student population at large. Racial imbalance is not segregation. Although presently observed racial imbalance might result from past de jure segregation, racial imbalance can also result from any number of innocent private decisions, including voluntary housing choices. Because racial imbalance is not inevitably linked to unconstitutional segregation, it is not unconstitutional in and of itself” (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1, et al.*, 2007).

This sets up that school districts are not required to remedy segregated school. Leaders would have to pursue voluntary efforts.

Research clearly indicates that the academic achievement gap and its causes and solutions are very complex. *Parents* reinforced that diversity in school is very important, and race and ethnicity can be key ingredients in decisions, not a systemic means of discriminating against one race or another. Districts can have a mission that includes diversity and clearly define how and why diversity is important for it to meet its educational objectives and must be able to demonstrate clear results of how using race has improved the educational outcomes of the district. In *Parents*, Justice Kennedy concurred with the judgment. He also offered some suggestions as to how the school district could develop “racially conscious” school attendance zones without using race as a sole factor. The suggestions were:

1. Strategic site selection of new schools;

2. Develop attendance zones with general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods;
3. Allocate resources for special programs (i.e, magnet schools);
4. Recruit students and faculty in a targeted fashion;
5. Track enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race

For educational leaders that subscribe to the notion that desegregated schools would aid in mitigating the achievement gap, these are suggested “race neutral” strategies outlined in *Seattle v. Parents* (Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1, et al., 2007) such as poverty indices and standardized test scores.

Chapter 3: METHOD

Profile of South Carolina Schools

To help understand the context of South Carolina schools and create a frame of reference for the research that was conducted, it is necessary to develop a profile of South Carolina and general information regarding its educational system. South Carolina, located in the southeastern region of the United States, has 46 counties and is bordered by North Carolina to the north, Georgia to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. South Carolina has 85 public school districts and 1,167 public schools serving 701,749 children. Of the public schools in South Carolina, 642 are classified as k-5 elementary; 243 are classified as middle/junior high; and 191 are classified as high schools. The balance is special schools like the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, Department of Juvenile Justice, and John De La Howe for children who have been removed from the home (Quick Facts, 2009). During the 2006-2007 academic year, the State had a total expenditure, including capital outlay, of \$8,079,635,536 and spent approximately \$10,152 per student (Quick Facts, 2009). Of these funds, 43.4% or 3 billion was derived from state government, 46.6% or 3.2 billion was derived from local governments, and 10% or 694 million was derived from the federal government. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the average salary for teachers was \$45,758, assistant principal-\$65,576, and principals-\$83,257. The teaching staff consists of 15.6% Black, 1% Hispanic, and 77% White. Thirty-seven percent of these teachers have master's degrees while 15.1% and 18.9% have a bachelor's plus 18 hours and master's plus 30

hours, respectively. South Carolina schools student populations are 53% White, 37.8% Black, 5.0% Hispanic, and 3.6 % other (Quick Facts, 2009). In the 2003-2004 school year, 49.1% of students paid full price for the school meals, and 50.9% received subsidized school meals (SCDE, 2006).

The 85 school districts range in size from the largest, Greenville County, with approximately 67,586 students to the smallest, Marion 7, with approximately 738 students (S.C. Average Daily Membership and Attendance, 2008). Some school districts, like Greenville, Charleston, Abbeville, and Darlington, are county school districts. Other counties, like York, Greenwood, and Spartanburg, have multiple school districts within a county (S.C. Average Daily Membership and Attendance, 2008). Most schools located in South Carolina's I-95 corridor are racially dense, have high rates of students that receive subsidized meals, and many students that are performing well academically (See table 1).

Table 1. Selected Districts along the I-95 Corridor (“Corridor of Shame”)

School District	% Below Basic on 2003 PACT Mathematics/ELA	Drop Out Rate (%)	% Minority	% Receive Subsidized Meals
Allendale	49/57	60	94.3	90
Dillon 2	38/42	43	72.4	85
Florence 4	48/50	66	86	88
Hampton 2	59/54	54	98.7	85
Jasper	54/53	61	83.3	78
Lee	51/51	67	95.5	87
Marion 7	52/54	n/a	86.8	89
Orangeburg 3	44/44	48	89.9	84

(Abbeville v. The State of South Carolina, et. al)

Assessment Instrument—Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT)

This study was conducted using archival data officially published by the South Carolina State Department of Education and released on individual school’s report cards. Some data was collated specifically for this study by the South Carolina Department of Education Office of Research and Accountability. The data reflects information from the May 2008 administration of the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), and all report cards were published publicly in the fall of 2008. PACT was a criterion-based assessment developed by staff at the South Carolina Department of Education, teachers, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee and an outside company—Data Recognition Corporation (Huynh, Meyer III, & Burton, 2000). It was developed as a result of the South Carolina Education Accountability Act requiring South Carolina to develop a statewide accountability system and assessment. Though the PACT test was replaced in the spring of 2009 by the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), all

data and information used in this research is derived from the PACT. The PACT is divided into four subject areas: English/language arts; mathematics; social studies; and science. Interestingly, only students in grades four and seven take all four parts of the test. In grades 3, 5, 6 and 8, all students take the English/language arts and mathematics sections; however, only a sample take the social studies section, and the remaining students that do not take the social studies subtest take the science section. For each section in which a student is assessed, a score of *below basic* (not met minimum expectations), *basic* (met minimum expectations), *proficient* (met expectations), or *advanced* (exceeded expectations) is assigned. Table 2 below outlines PACT cut scores for mathematics, and Table 3 outlines PACT cut scores for English-Language Arts (ELA) for grades 6, 7, and 8) (Assessment, 2008).

Scoring Guide

Below Basic- The student has not met minimum expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the State Board of Education. The student is not prepared for work at the next grade.

Basic- The student has met minimum expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the State Board of Education. The student is minimally prepared for work at the next grade.

Proficient- The student has met expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the State Board of Education. The student is well prepared for work at the next grade. The “Proficient” level represents the long-term goal for student performance in South Carolina.

Advanced- The student has exceeded expectations for student performance based on the curriculum standards approved by the State Board of Education. The student is very well prepared for work at the next grade.

Table 2. PACT Scoring Rubric for Mathematics

Grade	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
6	555-598	599-616	617-627	628-656
7	654-699	700-716	717-726	727-756
8	755-799	800-817	818-826	827-853

Table 3. PACT Scoring Rubric for English-Language Arts

Grade	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
6	541-595	596-611	612-628	629-652
7	639-695	696-711	712-728	729-751
8	742-796	797-812	813-826	827-848

Reliability

In 2000, the South Carolina Department of Educated shifted PACT technical work to the Rasch model. Using this model, performance levels set on scale scores are identical to those based on raw scores.

“The full test reliability index combines dichotomous and polytomous item formats and follows the computational formula most often referred to as coefficient alpha. In cases where extended-response item formats are used (e.g., in the writing portion of the ELA tests), reliabilities have been increased by use of the Spearman-Brown formula based on the contribution of the extended-response item(s) in relation to the remainder of the test. The use of the Spearman-Brown formula assumes that the ER items are parallel in content and difficulty to the multiple-choice and constructed-response items that comprise the rest of the test. While the full test reliabilities ranged from .779 to .934 across subjects and, the

true length of the exam is the number of scale points. In cases where polytomous (multiple-score) items are introduced, the number of scale points exceeds the number of items. This occurs because the multiple-score items have more score points than do the dichotomous (right or wrong) items. The Spearman-Brown formula can be applied to an existing reliability coefficient to assess the impact of test length on reliability” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2003).

Validity

“Evidence on content validity is presented in terms of how the 2003 PACT assessments were assembled to reflect the state content standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2003). To this end, test items go through a very stringent process in order to be included on a test form. These steps include:

1. Field tested in previous administrations of the PACT
2. Rigorous training of content experts in the writing of test items
3. Review of each item by the staffs of Measured Progress and the South Carolina Department of Education for alignment and quality
4. Content review by South Carolina educators and subject area specialists
5. Bias/sensitivity committee, which includes community members who are not educators, reviews for stereotyping and different social biases (e.g., gender, racial).
6. Different statistical analyses of field test items (South Carolina Department of Education, 2003).

Extant Data

The South Carolina State Department of Education publishes annual school report cards on each of the public schools within the 85 public school districts. According to data published by the South Carolina Department of Education, 268 schools administered the mathematics and English-Language Arts (ELA) sections of the PACT test to its students (<http://ed.sc.gov/topics/researchandstats/schoolreportcard/2007/Middle/>). The reason this research only focused on English-Language Arts and mathematics is every middle school student takes both the English-Language Arts and mathematics tests. Data for this study was extrapolated from the publicly released school report cards and additional information provided by South Carolina Department of Education Research Services Section of the Office of Data management and Analysis. After accessing all necessary data, data was organized into an excel spreadsheet for review. From this data, it was determined that there were 198 sixth through eighth grade configured middle schools in South Carolina during the 2007-2008 academic year. Of the 198 schools, schools were eliminated if the South Carolina Department of Education did not report test scores for a particular subgroup. After schools were eliminated, the sample size for this study is 130 schools. Because of the unique nature of their existence, special schools were not included in this research. Special schools include, but are not limited to, John De La Howe, South Carolina School for the Deaf, South Carolina School for the Blind and any school associated with the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Definition of Terms

Some terms used in this study require clarification. The defining of the following terms is essential to understanding the full scope of the study and the associated implications.

- *Academic Achievement* is scoring proficient or advanced on the English-Language Arts or mathematics section on the South Carolina Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test. Though a scoring of basic is considered “passing” the test, a student is considered only “meeting minimal expectations.” Therefore, for the purposes of this research, academic achievement will only consider proficient or advanced.
- *Academic year* is the term for one school year. In South Carolina, the academic year is from August of one calendar year to June of the next calendar year. For the purpose of this study, the academic year in which the data reflects is August 2007 – June 2008.
- *Achievement gap* is the disparity in academic performance between groups of students
- *Desegregation* is a transitioning in a school’s student racial composition that would render the school racially heterogeneous
- *Middle schools* are those comprehensive, public schools in South Carolina that only serve grades 6, 7, and 8.
- *Non-White students* are those students who are designated as a race other than White or Caucasian.

- *Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT)* is the standardized test that was given in South Carolina in the spring of each academic year to measure the academic achievement of all students in grades 3-8. PACT scores are presented in four (4) categories: 1. Below Basic; 2. Basic; 3. Proficient; and 4. Advanced. Category 1 is reserved for students who do not meet the minimal requirement to “pass” the test. Categories 2-4 are reserved for students who met the minimal requirements in gradual degrees. Students in category 2 met minimal standards, and students in category 4 displayed advanced levels of achievement.
- *Racially dense* is the racial composition of a school’s student body being substantially above the school district’s reported racial demographic profile
- *Segregated school* is a movement in a school’s and/or school district’s population that has rendered populations racially homogeneous. Depending on the context in history, segregation can be de jure (legally sanctioned and orchestrated) or de facto (occurring because of private decisions-i.e., housing patterns)
- *Subsidized school meals* are the poverty indicator for a school. A school’s poverty index is measured by the number of students enrolled in that school who receive government subsidized meals. According to the National School Lunch Program, a student living within a family of four and earning \$28,665 or less is eligible for free lunch (Federal Register, 2009). In South Carolina during the 2007-2008 academic year, 52.6% of students received subsidized meals (Quick Facts, 2009).

Operational Definitions

1. Achievement gap between Hispanics and Blacks in English-Language Arts was derived by subtracting the percentage of Black students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of Hispanic students that scored proficient or advanced.

2. Achievement gap between White and Black in English-Language Arts was derived by subtracting the percentage of Black students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of White students that scored proficient or advanced.
3. Achievement gap between White and Hispanic in English-Language Arts was derived by subtracting the percentage of Hispanic students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of White students that scored proficient or advanced.
4. Percent of Hispanic students in a particular school when the English-Language Arts test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of Hispanic students enrolled by all students enrolled on the first day the English-Language Arts section of the PACT was administered
5. Percent of Black students in a particular school when the English-Language Arts test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of Black students enrolled by all students enrolled on the first day the English-Language Arts section of the PACT was administered
6. Percent of White students in a particular school when the English-Language Arts test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of White students enrolled all students enrolled on the first day the English-Language Arts section of the PACT was administered
7. Percent of students tested in ELA that receive government subsidized meals was derived by dividing the total number of students enrolled in the school that receive government subsidized meals by the number of these students that took the ELA test.
8. Achievement gap between Hispanics and Blacks in mathematics was derived by subtracting the percentage of Black students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of Hispanic students that scored proficient or advanced.
9. Achievement gap between White and Black in mathematics was derived by subtracting the percentage of Black students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of White students that scored proficient or advanced.
10. Achievement gap between White and Hispanics in mathematics was derived by subtracting the percentage of Hispanic students that scored proficient or advanced on the PACT from the percentage of White students that scored proficient or advanced.

11. Percent of Hispanics students in a particular school when the mathematics test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of Hispanic students enrolled by all students enrolled on the first day the mathematics section of the PACT was administered
12. The percent of Black students in a particular school when the mathematics test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of Black students enrolled by all students enrolled on the first day the mathematics section of the PACT was administered
13. Percent of White students in a particular school when the mathematics test was administered was derived by dividing the total number of White students enrolled by all students enrolled on the first day the mathematics section of the PACT was administered
14. Percent of students tested in mathematics that receive government subsidized meals was derived by dividing the total number of students enrolled in the school that receive government subsidized meals by the number of these students that took the mathematics test.

Research Questions

1. Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics?
2. Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government subsidized meals tested?
3. Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics are provided in table 3 for all target variables. To measure the degree and direction of the linear relationship, if one exists, between the variables, a Pearson correlation was used to analyze the first research question (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007). The skewness values fall within the range of +1 to -1. Therefore, the values satisfy the skewness assumptions for multiple regression analysis. To analyze the second question, a Multiple Linear Regression was employed. This type of statistical test was used to predict the dependent variables from a set of predictors (Stevens, 1999). Since predicting the reasons for a school's Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics is very complex and could be influenced by many different factors, multiple regression was used to consider several different variables. To analyze the third research question, a Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to generate latent constructs of the percentage of Hispanic students, percentage Black students, and percentage of students receiving government subsidized meals before running the multiple regression due to the concern of multicollinearity (Stevens, 1999).

Limitations

This study was limited to the 198 sixth through eighth configured schools in South Carolina reduced to 130. The data was collected from information reported by each school on the first day of administration for the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT). Also, for the purposes of this study, academic achievement has been narrowly defined as scoring proficient or advanced on the English-Language Arts or mathematics section on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test. This research did not take into

account any other standardized tests that a student may have taken. This study only focuses on school level data, not student level data. Though the original interest was to research student level data, it soon became very obvious that it would be nearly impossible to retrieve student-level data. South Carolina does not electronically warehouse student level data in the public domain. Therefore, to get student level data, a researcher would have to get permission from individual school districts to release their student level data. A further limitation is the use of the data from the school report card. This study relies heavily on accurate reporting by school and school districts to the South Carolina State Department of Education, and it relies heavily on the State Department of Education accurately reflecting true figures on the published School Report Cards. Also, South Carolina was the only state that used PACT test as its accountability assessment; therefore, the data and results are only applicable to South Carolina and should not be used to make assumptions in other states.

Students receiving subsidized meals were used as a proxy for poverty. This limits the identification of poverty as established by the federal government standard and only calculates the families that complete the application to receive these services.

Summary

This study was designed to discover the impact racial and economic compositions of middle schools have on the English-Language Arts and mathematics achievement gap. It also examined the relationship these variables have with each other.

Pearson correlation and linear regression techniques were used to analyze the three questions. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical analysis to determine if the relationship is statistically significantly different from zero or not.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine:

1. Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics?
2. Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government subsidized meals tested?
3. Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

This chapter will provide the results of the statistical procedures conducted on the data.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for all independent and dependent variables

	Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
1.	Hispanic-Black Achievement Gap in English-Language Arts	7.2	7.25	23	11.5726
2.	White-Black Achievement Gap in ELA	25.26	24.95	14.4	11.15
3.	White-Hispanic Achievement Gap in ELA	18.06	17.85	27.4	13.18
4.	% of Hispanics tested in English-Language Arts	99.58	100	100	1.00
5.	% of Blacks tested in English-Language Arts	99.70	100	100	.056
6.	% of Whites tested in English-Language Arts	99.67	99.9	100	1.03
7.	% of students tested in ELA that receive government subsidized meals	99.63	99.7	100	.45
8.	Hispanic-Black Gap Achievement in Mathematics	13.41	11.85	21.1	11.58
9.	White-Black Achievement Gap in Mathematics	28.95	28.55	19.7	9.69
10.	White-Hispanic Achievement Gap in mathematics	15.55	16.15	2.6	14.28
11.	% of Hispanics tested in Mathematics	99.85	100	100	.63
12.	% of Blacks tested in Mathematics	99.71	100	100	.48
13.	% of Whites tested in Mathematics	99.75	100	100	.61
14.	% of students tested in mathematics that receive government subsidized meals	99.70	100	100	.36

Research Question 1:

Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

A Pearson Correlation was run to examine the correlation between the variables.

There is a significant negative relationship between the gap between Hispanics and Blacks in English and the percent of Hispanic students in a school that took the English test ($r = -.214, p = .015$). There was no significant relationship between the percentage of

Black students in a school that took the English test and the achievement gap between Hispanic and Black students in English ($r = -.053, p = .546$).

There was no significant relationship between the gap between Hispanics and Blacks in mathematics and the percent of Black students in a school that took the mathematics test ($r = -.061, p = .491$). There was no significant relationship between the gap between Hispanics and Blacks in mathematics and the percent of Hispanic students in a school that took the mathematics test ($r = -.135, p = .127$).

Table 5. Correlation of Hispanic-Black Achievement Gap in ELA

Variables	1	2	3
1, Percenthispanic	1	-.214*	-.043
2. Gapenglihbb		1	-.053
3. PercentBlacke			1

$n = 130$

* $p < .05$, two tails

Table 6. Correlation of Hispanic-Black Achievement Gap in Mathematics

Variables	1	2	3
1. PercentBlackmath	1	-.061	-.043
2. Gapmathematicshb	-.061	1	-.135
3. Percentbalck			1

$n = 130$

* $p < .05$, two tails

Research Question 2:

Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government subsidized meals tested?

A multiple linear regression was conducted to determine if there was a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students, the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in mathematics and English, and the percentage of students in a school that receive government subsidized meals. Before conducting the multiple regression, the data were screened for missing data, outliers, and assumptions. No data were missing ($n=130$). Using scatterplots, no outliers in the data were identified. It met the following assumptions of normality, equal variance, nonmulticollinearity, independence (Bluman, 1998).

The unstandardized regression coefficients (β) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β) for English-Language Arts are reported in Table 7. Mathematics is reported in Table 8.

In English-Language Arts, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .060 (adjusted $R^2 = .038$). $F(3, 126) = 2.68, p = .050$. None of the independent variables (percent of Hispanic students who took English test, percent of Black students who took English test and percent of students receiving subsidized meals who took English test) demonstrated a correlation to the achievement gap between Hispanic and Blacks in English. Percent of Black students in school that took the English-Language Arts test had the largest standardized beta. Percent of Hispanic students taking English-Language Arts test and percent of students receiving standardized meals that took the mathematics test had negative standardized betas.

Table 7. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for English-Language Arts

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	13.44	2.91		4.61	.000
Hispanics Students	-40.87	21.29	-.178	-1.920	.057
Black Students	-1.250	6.68	.021	.187	.852
Subsidized Meal Students	-8.43	7.14	-.137	-1.182	.239

In English, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .060 (adjusted $R^2 = .038$). $F(3, 126) = 2.68, p = .050$.

In mathematics, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .027 (adjusted $R^2 = .004$). $F(3, 126) = 1.18, p = .32$. None of the independent variables (percent of Hispanic students who took mathematics test, percent of Black students who took mathematics test

and percent of students receiving subsidized meals who took mathematics test) demonstrated a correlation to the achievement gap between Hispanic and Blacks in mathematics. Students receiving subsidized meals had the largest standardized beta. Percent of Hispanic students taking mathematics test and percent of Black students taking mathematics test had negative standardized betas.

Table 8. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for Mathematics

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	15.44	2.97		5.20	.000
Hispanics Students	-37.72	21.64	-.164	-1.74	.084
Black Students	-7.402	6.80	-.124	-1.09	.278
Subsidized Meal Students	5.73	7.26	.093	.790	.431

In mathematics, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .027 (adjusted $R^2 = .004$). $F(3, 126) = 1.18, p = .32$.

Research Question 3:

Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

A correlation was conducted on the data before a multiple regression was employed. The data from the correlation indicated the independent variables (percent of students that receive subsidized meals that took the English-Language Arts test and Percent of Black students that took the English-Language Arts test) were closely related. They were highly correlated at .600. To avoid multicollinearity in the regression analyses, a Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation yielded two latent constructs: (1) percentage of Black students and students eligible for subsidized meals; and (2) percentage of Hispanic students. The first component explains 54.62% of the variance in English-Language Arts and Mathematics, and the second component explains 34.38% of the variance in English-Language Arts and Mathematics.

After the Principal Component Analysis was conducted, a standard multiple regression was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the White-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics and latent construct to represent the percentage of Black students and the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals who took the English-Language Arts and mathematics tests.

A multiple regression was also conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the White-Hispanic achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics and the latent construct of the percentage of Hispanic students who took the English-Language Arts and mathematics tests and the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals who took the English-Language Arts and mathematics tests.

Before conducting the multiple regressions, the data were screened for missing data, outliers and assumptions. No data were missing ($n = 130$). It met the following assumptions of normality, equal variance, nonmulticollinearity, independence (Bluman, 1998). The unstandardized regression coefficients (β) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β) are reported in Tables 9 for English-Language Arts and Table 10 for mathematics for the White-Black achievement gap. Tables 11 and 12 report the unstandardized regression coefficients (β) and intercept, the standardized regression coefficients (β) for English-Language Arts and mathematics, respectively, for the White-Hispanic achievement gap.

Table 9. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for English-Language Arts

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	25.26	.96		26.42	.000
Black Students and Subsidized Meals Students	-2.56	.960	-.229	-2.664	.009

In English-Language Arts, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .053 (adjusted $R^2 = .045$). $F(1, 128) = 7.10, p = .009$.

Table 10. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values in Mathematics

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	28.95	.82		35.44	.000
Black Students and Subsidized Meal Student	-2.79	.820	-.287	-3.40	.001

In mathematics, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .083 (adjusted $R^2 = .075$). $F(1, 128) = 11.53$, $p = .001$.

The percentage of Hispanic student who took the English-Language Arts or the mathematics tests does not impact the White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts or mathematics, for English-Language Arts ($t = 1.868$; $p = .064$), for mathematics, ($t = .90$; and $p = .373$). Because the variables were not significant predictors, they were excluded.

Table 11. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for English-Language Arts

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	24.16	3.25		7.44	.000
Subsidized Meal	-12.28	.6.12	-.175	-2.007	.047

In English-Language Arts, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .030 (adjusted $R^2 = .023$). $F(1, 128) = 4.03, p = .047$.

Table 12. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B) and Intercept, Standard Error (Std. Error), the Standardized Regression Coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for Mathematics

IV s	B	Std. Error	β	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercept	26.47	3.42		7.74	.000
Subsidized Students	-21.98.	6.45	-.290	-3.410	.001

In mathematics, the variance accounted for (R^2) equaled .083 (adjusted $R^2 = .076$). $F(1, 128) = 11.63, p = .001$.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this research was to examine three research questions:

1. Does the percentage of Hispanic and Black students at a sixth through eighth grade configured middle school impact the Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts and mathematics?
2. Is there a correlation between the percentage of Hispanic and Black students tested in South Carolina's sixth through eighth grades configured middle schools, the Hispanic-Black achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics, and the percentage of students that receive government subsidized meals tested?
3. Is there a relationship between percentage of Black students tested, percentage of Hispanic students tested and percentage of students receiving subsidized meals tested and the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in English-Language Arts and mathematics?

These questions were investigated using data collected from the results of South Carolina's spring 2008 administration of the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT). The study was conducted to provide educational leaders in South Carolina with research regarding the academic achievement gap between White, Black, and Hispanic middle school students. This research was also important because it analyzed Hispanic achievement and compared it to other racial groups, and it expands the research and contributes to the scholarly body of knowledge as to whether the achievement gap

between Whites-Blacks, Whites-Hispanics, or Hispanics-Black is a result of race and can be solved by solely designing student assignment plans based on the parameters of the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Seattle v Parents* (2007). Or, is another minority group of students, Hispanics, with very similar demographic attributes as Blacks demonstrating academic progress toward alleviating the achievement gap in South Carolina, thus indicating a more complex societal and educational issue that will require many prongs of intervention? Since the Hispanic population is growing in South Carolina, it has become increasingly important for that subgroup to be included in the discourse.

Based on the review of literature, the academic achievement gap in South Carolina is evident between White and minority groups. However, Hispanics have surpassed Blacks in academic achievement at the middle school level. It is disputable as to why Blacks are not achieving at the levels of their White or Hispanic cohorts. Researchers have surmised many different reasons why minority students, especially Blacks are not performing. The reasons include low birth weight, anti-intellectualism, and the historical posture of racial minorities in America. The literature also revealed that Black students faced very difficult social and legal battles to achieve access to equal educational opportunities. From a disparity in funding to a lack of access to free transportation, Blacks were limited in their pursuit of educational parity. Hispanics have overcome tremendous educational and social obstacles within a short period of time in South Carolina schools. Hispanic achievement was not officially recognized until 1973. The major barrier to their academic success is the language. Though no data was found on the academic performance of third and second generation Hispanics in South Carolina,

second and third generation Hispanics nationwide are closing the achievement gap with their White cohorts (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). This is significant because it challenges the rationale and research theories as to why current Black students, many whom are at least two generations removed from *de jure* segregation, are not recognizing significant academic gains. Or is the *de facto* segregation as detrimental to current Black students as *de jure* was to their parents and grandparents as suggested by Armor (2002)?

Despite the end of the continuum to which a theorist subscribes, the research is clear that the lack of robust academic achievement by Black and Hispanic, as compared to their White cohorts is having a detrimental impact on them as they matriculate through society. These students are limited in their choice of a spouse, upward financial and political mobility, and constitute a majority in the penal system.

To examine the achievement gap in South Carolina's middle schools and explore the proposed research questions, several statistical tests were employed. For the first research question a Pearson correlation was conducted. A multiple regression was used to examine question number two, and a Principal Component Analysis and multiple regression were used to answer question number three.

Findings

The following are the major findings of this study:

- For research question number 1, there is a negative relationship between the independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the English-Language Arts test and percent of Black students taking the English-Language Arts test) and dependent variable (Hispanic-Black achievement gap in English-Language Arts). As one set of variables increases, the other set decreases. Though there is a

relationship, it is a weak relationship because both correlation coefficients (-.214 and -.053) are closer to 0 in value, as oppose to -1. One should note that the correlation between the Hispanic-Black achievement gap and the percentage of Hispanic students taking the English-Language Arts test is significant; however, there was not a significant relationship between the Hispanic-Black achievement gap and the percent of Black students taking the English-Language Arts test.

Knowing the percentage of Hispanic and Black students taking the ELA test, the researcher is able to predict the Hispanic-Black achievement gap for each of the independent variables calculated separately.

- For research question number 1, there is a negative relationship between the independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the mathematics test and the percent of Black students taking the math test) and the dependent variable (Hispanic-Black achievement gap in math). As one set of variables increases, the other set decreases. Though there is a relationship, it a weak relationship because both correlation coefficients (-.135 and -.061) are closer to 0 in value, as oppose to -1. There was not a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Knowing the percentage of Hispanic and Black students taking the mathematics test, the researcher is able to predict the Hispanic-Black achievement gap for each of the independent variables calculated separately.
- For research question number 2, there is a weak relationship between the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking ELA test, percent of Black students taking ELA test, and the percent of subsidized meal students

taking the ELA test) and the dependent variable (Hispanic-Black achievement gap in ELA). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.245) is closer to 0 than 1. The researcher cannot ascertain which independent variable is causing the weak relationship. There was not a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Knowing the percentage of Hispanics, Blacks, and students receiving subsidized meals taking the ELA test, the researcher is able to predict the achievement gap in a 6-8 middle school in South Carolina.

- For research question number 2, there is a weak relationship between the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the mathematics test, percent of Black students taking mathematics test, and the percent of subsidized meal students taking the mathematics test) and the dependent variable (Hispanic-Black achievement gap in mathematics). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.166) is closer to 0 than 1. There was not a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The researcher cannot ascertain which independent variable is causing the weak relationship. There was not a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Knowing the percentage of Hispanics, Blacks and students receiving subsidized meals taking the mathematics test, the researcher is able to predict the achievement gap in a 6-8 middle school in South Carolina.
- For research question number 3, there is a weak relationship between the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the ELA test, percent

of Black students taking ELA test and the percent of subsidized meal students taking the ELA test) and the dependent variable (achievement gap in ELA between White-Black students). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.229) is closer to 0 than 1. There is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Running the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gap data gives the researcher additional information about the academic proficiency level of Black and Hispanic students. Historically, there has been an achievement gap between White and Black students in South Carolina. So, closing the achievement gap between Hispanic and Black students does not indicate that Hispanics are scoring as academically proficient as Whites in ELA.

- For research question number 3, there is a weak relationship between the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the ELA test, percent of Black students taking ELA test and the percent of subsidized meal students taking the ELA test) and the dependent variable (achievement gap in ELA between White-Hispanic students). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.175) is closer to 0 than 1. There is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Running the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gap data gives the researcher additional information about the academic proficiency level of Black and Hispanic student. Historically, there has been an achievement gap between White and Black students in South Carolina. So, closing the achievement gap

between Hispanic and Black students does not indicate that Hispanics are scoring as academically proficient as Whites in ELA.

- For research question number 3, there is a weak relationship among the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the mathematics test, percent of Black students taking mathematics test and the percent of subsidized meal students taking the math test) and the dependent variable (achievement gap in mathematics between White-Black students). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.287) is closer to 0 than 1. There is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Running the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gap data gives the researcher additional information about the academic proficiency level of Black and Hispanic student. Historically, there has been an achievement gap between White and Black students in South Carolina. So, closing the achievement gap between Hispanic and Black students does not indicate that Hispanics are scoring as academically proficient as Whites in mathematics.
- For research question number 3, there is a weak relationship among the three independent variables (percent of Hispanic students taking the mathematics test, percent of Black students taking mathematics test and the percent of subsidized meal students taking the mathematics test) and the dependent variable (achievement gap in mathematics between White-Hispanic students). This relationship is weak because the multiple correlation coefficient (.289) is closer to 0 than 1. There is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Running the White-Black and White-Hispanic

achievement gap data gives the researcher additional information about the academic proficiency level of Black and Hispanic student. Historically, there has been an achievement gap between White and Black students in South Carolina. So, closing the achievement gap between Hispanic and Black students does not indicate that Hispanics are scoring as academically proficient as Whites in mathematics.

Explanation of Research

From this analysis, it can be surmised that as the percentage of Black and Hispanic students in a school increases, the achievement gaps in ELA and mathematics should decrease. More clearly, in schools where more Blacks and Hispanics take the PACT subtests in ELA and mathematics, they appear to be performing better, hence--closing the achievement gap. This research is narrowly focused, and this pattern of performance is very weak and cannot be generalized for all 6-8 middle schools in South Carolina, as indicated by the low academic performance of minority students in racially dense schools along South Carolina's "Corridor of Shame" outlined in Table 1.

Though this research did not examine the characteristics of specific schools, previous research does suggest students in racially dense schools may be less likely to be victims of cultural mismatch (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2008). Cultural mismatch is the "cultural disjunctures" between schools and the communities in which they serve, especially regarding dialects and cognitive styles (Villegas, 1988). "Many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality" (Freire, 2007). Students and families do not experience a cultural connectedness with the school, and the professionals do not possess the cultural

competence adequately to serve the students. The educational leaders are culturally disconnected from the communities and life experiences of the students. The racially dense middle schools in South Carolina that demonstrate academic success with Black and/or Hispanic students may have a cultural sensitivity and understand cultural practices of the minority students they serve. Dee (2005) concluded from his research that Black students in racially segregated schools that are taught by Black teachers perform better than Black students in diverse settings (Dee, 2005). Researchers in anthropology, history, psychology and other disciplines have documented research indicating that schools that effectively implement educational strategies that are based on culturally relevant realisms experience academic success with Black students. Halle (2001) outlined these strategies:

- “Spirituality-An approach that views life as essentially vitalistic rather than mechanistic, with the conviction that nonmaterial forces influence people’s everyday lives”
- “Harmony- The notion that one’s fate is interrelated with other elements in the scheme of things, such that humankind and nature are harmonically conjoined”
- “Movement-An emphasis on the interweaving of rhythm, percussiveness, music, and dance as central to the psychological health”
- “Verve-A propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation and for action that is energetic and lively”
- “Affect- An emphasis on emotions and feelings together with a special sensitivity to emotional cues and a tendency to be emotionally expressive”
- “Communalism- A commitment to social connectedness, which includes an awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privileges”
- “Expressive individualism- The cultivation of a distinctive personality and a proclivity for spontaneous and genuine personal expression

- Oral tradition- A preference for oral and auditory modes of communication in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances in which oral virtuosity-the ability to use alliterative, metaphorically colorful, graphic forms of spoken language-is emphasized and cultivated”
- “Social time perspective- An orientation toward time as passing through a social space rather than a material one, in which time is seen as recurring, personal and phenomenological” (Hale, 2001, p. 116)

Competing Theories

The explanations for the achievement gap are complex. Theorists provide multiple solutions to solving this problem. The solutions stretch the continuum from effective school leadership, eliminating the language barrier between students and teachers, to acknowledging the “cultural mismatch” and employing strategies that adequately connect with students of different backgrounds. However, two theorists, John Ogbu and Gary Orfield, have two competing beliefs. Ogbu claims that a student’s “cultural frame of reference” is influenced by the student’s “involuntary” versus “voluntary” historic posture in America, and this posture influences Blacks’ academic performance. Ogbu further explained this theory in a study he conducted in the Midwest. Black parents were concerned that their middle-class Black children were not scoring as high on standardized tests as their White cohorts, despite the fact that the Black students had never lived in or experienced poverty. Ogbu summarized his theory as the “cultural ecological theory of academic disengagement” (Foley, 2005). Structural and systemic slavery, segregation, and discrimination are mitigating factors that influence Blacks to reject the “White” educational system and social norms. This rejection is also reflected in Black music, dress, and dialect. Regardless of the interventions, including the development of racial integration plans, Blacks consciously and subconsciously reject educational achievement as “acting white”. And until this issue is addressed, widespread

academic improvement among Blacks will not be realized. Orfield, however, emphatically claims that segregated schools that are limited in human and financial resources are the precipitous factors strongly influencing poor academic performance by minority and poor students. His solutions to mitigating the achievement gap are grounded in the belief of developing racially and financially integrated student assignment plans.

Both of these approaches are simplistic and fail to consider the complexities of individuals, cultures, neighborhood, and community dynamics. Ogbu seems to ignore the legal struggles and ultimate death of some who died attempting to obtain educational parity for minority students. His theory also does not go far enough into explaining the detriments of generational poverty and its impact on academic achievement. Is the rejection of education by some Blacks more closely related to a Black student's historic involuntary status in America, as Ogbu suggests, or is it immediately linked to the financial structure in which the student currently exists as a consequence of generational poverty? Ogbu also discounts research conducted by Payne (2005) and others that suggest many Blacks define success in terms of relationships with each other and service to God and the church, not academic achievement. This belief is consciously and subconsciously transferred to members of the Black community. This is clearly reflected in a sermon given by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968...."and the church is the one place where a doctor ought to forget that he's a doctor. The church is the one place where a Ph.D. ought to forget that he's a Ph.D. (Yes) The church is the one place that the school teacher ought to forget the degree she has behind her name. The church is the one place where the lawyer ought to forget that he's a lawyer. And any church that violates the

‘whosoever will, let him come’ doctrine is a dead, cold church, (Yes) and nothing but a little social club with a thin veneer of religiosity” (The Drum Major Instinct, 1968).

Also, Ogbu’s theory does not take into account research conducted by Cook and Ludwig (1998) that concluded that White students that achieve at high levels academically experience very similar forms of peer pressure from other White students (Cook & Ludwig, 1998). Ogbu’s theory is not conclusive regarding whether or not “antiachievement norms are stronger among Blacks or Whites” (Cook & Ludwig, 1998, p. 380). Orfield’s approach of simply assigning a White middle-class student to schools with minority or poor students is, too, oversimplified. Tatum (1997) explains that White and Black students assigned to the same schools tend to insulate themselves within like racial social circles (Tatum, 1997). Also, evidence suggests that minorities in racially integrated school are tracked into lower level courses and often times are not culturally or socially integrated into the dominant culture of the school.

Solutions

The solutions for the achievement gap are multipronged. Historic and contemporary educational and judicial “solutions” to the achievement gap fail to consider the complexities of individual students, families, neighborhoods, communities and schools. Reliance on one strategy, including simple racial integration of schools, will not be sufficient. Like McWhorter (2000), I suggest that Blacks must reject anti-intellectualism and embrace academic achievement (McWhorter, 2000). Society must also acknowledge and attempt to combat some of the contemporary structures and disparities that exist because of historic practices. This acknowledgement must be linked with educational, legislative, and judicial policies to address generational poverty and

access to quality educational opportunities, healthcare, and housing. Research has clearly indicated that these factors strongly influence academic achievement. Leaders must also consider the effect on social development and the positive ramifications diversity has on students' view of the world and society beyond their immediate community. Coleman (1988) referred to this as “public good” (Coleman, 1988).). “White students—who remained the most isolated group of students—also lose critical opportunities to learn in racially diverse schools because of end wing segregation. Integrated learning experiences challenge racial prejudice and stereotype formation, allow for the formation of cross-racial friendships, and enable students to gain comfort living and working across racial/ethnic lines” (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Garces, 2008, pp. 100-101).

In most of the sixty four amicus curiae filed in *Parents*, research was cited indicating that “a growing body of social science provides evidence that racially isolated minority schools are indeed harmful to minority students and that all students derive lifelong benefits from positive interracial exposure as schoolchildren” (Chambers, Osmet, Dodson, & Guillory, 2008). *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) indicated that diversity in a Michigan Law School advances “cross-racial understanding” and elevates the opportunities for law students to understand different races. It expounded its opinion by stating that “student body diversity promotes learning outcomes” and “better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society” (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). There is substantial research that reiterates the assertions of *Brown* regarding the psychological harm of segregation. “Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authority (1954, p. 347). Orfield, Frankenberg, and Garces (2008)

also concluded: 1. “Racially integrated schools are good for students and the community;” 2. “Racially isolated schools have harmful educational implications for students” (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Garces, 2008, p. Abstract).

To achieve the goals of developing “race neutral” student assignment plans that may be constitutionally defensible and promote diversity, *Parents* provide guidance. Districts should abandon student assignment plans that are based on “neighborhood” schools. This implicitly suggests that schools in certain neighborhoods are better than schools in other neighborhoods (Carey, 2006). Parents with the financial means usually seek residences in the “neighborhood” with the “best” schools. Leaders just take into consideration the financial and human capital that will flow into a school and future student patterns. Educational leaders should consider alternatives to property taxes for school construction. People who pay the most in property taxes want schools built in their areas (Carey, 2006). By *de facto*, housing patterns are based on socioeconomics, and socioeconomics are disproportionately skewed toward Whites having more financial resources than minorities. Because of the income disparity that exists between Black, White, and Hispanic families that was discussed in an earlier chapter, it is very difficult for racially dense schools to have equitable access to the community capital. For example, band and other extra-curricular activities are heavily supported by Parent Teacher Organizations and Booster Clubs. Minority and poor students that attend these schools will benefit from the capital that comes to the school as a result of their more affluent cohorts.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research was narrowly focused on one academic year of school level PACT data in South Carolina. Consequently, the findings must be narrowly applied to South Carolina middle schools. To expand the scope of the research, there are recommendations for future research:

1. Research needs to be expanded to include this minority group so policy-makers and educational leaders can more definitively explore the causes and whether or not developing school assignment plans based on race and/or socioeconomic status will make a difference in the achievement gap.
2. Expand scope of research to include student level data for grades 3-8. This will give educators information on individual students, and one can more closely analyze the specific characteristics of students.
3. Expand scope of research to include individual grade level data for grades 6, 7, and 8. Analyze grade levels separately. This will give researchers the opportunity to review separately each grade to determine if the achievement gap is consistent across grade levels.
4. Expand research to measure community capital (i.e., tax base, crime statistics, and educational level of parents). Research indicates that there are many factors that influence academic achievement. Measuring the influence of these factors on achievement may aid leaders in developing solutions.
5. Expand data to include human and financial resources and multiple years of test scores of schools where Blacks are closing the achievement gap with whites. This

will provide educators with evidence as to whether or not achievement in these schools is being sustained over multiple years.

6. Qualitative data analysis of cultural characteristics of school where Blacks are closing the achievement gap (i.e., curricula choices, pedagogical methods). If Blacks are being successful in these schools, the characteristics need to be substantiated in research and replicated in other schools.
7. Family characteristics are huge indicators for the academic performance of minority students. They must be willing to address these issues that initially cause the gap. According to Nash (2002), leaders could work with families to reduce neighborhood crime and develop a consensus regarding norms and values for the community and strategies as to how those norms and values are to be replicated in the home, community-at large, and school. Students could be partnered with positive neighborhood role models, and safe nurturing environments could be provided for students beyond school hours (Nash, 2002). Research could be expanded to explore the effect these characteristics have on academic performance.

Conclusion

Though the findings of this study is contrary to research that promotes the racial desegregation of middle schools in South Carolina, the much broader benefit that students receive from a diverse school population eclipses the narrow findings of this study. The Supreme Court has ruled that it will not force school districts to develop student assignment plans to remedy segregated schools that have developed as a result of free market decisions. Therefore, to create opportunities of “public good”

and racially diverse environments, it is going to take courage from educational leaders. Simply placing Black, Hispanic and White students in the same building will not successfully address the academic achievement gap. Asa Hilliard (1991) asks a very profound question: “Do we have the will to educate all children to high standards?” Racially dense or heterogeneous environments must be conducive to promoting cultural competence and responsiveness among students and staff. “To help people [children] find meaning in their own heritage is to help them find power ... In that act they begin to help people discover meaning and hope in their experience” (Hale, 2001, p. 202). There are debates as to how to create and sustain a complex culture of institutional reform and pedagogical underpinnings that promote cultural competence, cultural responsiveness and high academic achievement among minority students, particularly those attending schools that are racially heterogeneous. It is clear that “there is no one size fits all approach for African-American students; good systemic teaching works with African American as well as other children; and there is a substantive range of ways of teaching within a broad band-with that defines effective teaching” (Lee, 2005, p. 109-110). These premises have been documented by scholars who have conducted research on successful schools serving typical low performing, poor students. Some of these scholars are: “Ron Edmunds’s research on effective schools, Barbara Sizemore’s Scholastic Achievement Structure, Asa Hilliard and Sizemore’s video series on effective schools for poor youth, and the United States Department of Education’s, “Hope for Urban Education: A Study of High-Performing, High-Poverty Elementary Schools”” (Lee, 2005, p. 109). Sizemore

created common characteristics from research, which were cited by Lee (2005), in which schools that have served these students well academically have possessed:

1. "Assessment of skills;"
2. "Student placements;"
3. "Monitoring of implementation;"
4. "Pacing of instruction;"
5. "Measurements of mastery;"
6. "School and Classroom discipline;"
7. "Instructional Routines;"
8. "Teacher Evaluation;"
9. "Staff development routines and;"
10. "Decision making" (p. 101).

Lee (2005) expanded the list to include:

11. "High expectations for all students;"
12. "A school wide coordinated focus on achievement;"
13. "Focusing on one achievable outcome at a time;"
14. "Providing school wide explicit and ongoing instructional support for teachers and students;"
15. "Aligning academic goals with state and district standards;"
16. Building a sense of community with common goals among all stakeholders (including students, teachers, staff and parents);
17. "Time on task, including additional instructional time and;"
18. "Persistence through setbacks" (p. 110).

Minority and poor students can be educated, and the academic gap that exists between them and their more affluent and White cohorts can be alleviated. However, it is going to take courage from educational leaders, policy-makers, parents and community members to truly respond to Hilliard's question.

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