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A Case Study of Rural Southern Desegregation: How Black Students in a South Carolina Community Experienced Segregated Schooling and the Integration Process

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Dedication

This research project would not have been possible without the unwavering love and support of my amazing family. I thank my beautiful children James, Heather, and Kristen for your enduring love and reassurance as we all faced heartbreak and unimaginable difficulties. I, also, thank my sisters and brothers for your steadfast support. Each of you encouraged me to finish this journey and never accepted me giving up as an option, even when life events rocked my momentum.

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Abstract

My purpose for this study is to shed light on how the African-American community in a small Southern rural community experienced segregated schools and the long school desegregation process. Conflicts over school integration in urban centers like Little Rock drew the media's attention, but how small communities beyond the glare of the media fared is less well understood and documented. Archival data and contemporary media coverage provide a timeline and context for the experiences of this Black community, and oral history interviews were collected and analyzed to document the range of desegregation experiences.

Although the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954 was the culmination of a long struggle and formally started with the Briggs v. Elliot case in South Carolina, the desegregation era effectively gained traction after the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, when the Federal government utilized financial incentives to encourage the racial desegregation of public schools in America. The desegregation era is typically understood by the heavily publicized events surrounding court-mandated desegregation of public schools in American cities. The reporting of events related to desegregation in rural Southern school districts generally was not well known. Less is understood about the personal experiences and emotional impact made on the individuals who experienced, firsthand, changes surrounding the desegregation schools. I hope to understand how the events of that time shaped the feelings and perspectives of those individuals.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Now that was a rough year. Integration as I said, with the kids, we didn't get along in the beginning, but eventually, we got to some of them. You still had some of them that shined. The ones that had money, they didn't want to be around us. And you could tell that it was drilled and taught in them about not being and getting along with the Blacks. And some of them was transferred, and (parents) took them other places. Other than that, we had a few white friends that got close to us. (Edwinda Goodman, Winnsboro High School Class of 1974. Interview October 16, 2017, in Fairfield, SC)

Edwinda Goodman was one of thirty-six individuals who shared their own unique and personal experiences before and during the integration of Fairfield Public Schools, a Mdistrict located in the Midlands Region of South Carolina. This study collected and analyzed her experiences and those of her classmates to develop a broader portrait of the experience of members of the Black community in this rural area through the long struggle over desegregation. There was a range of experiences, of course, and the study seeks to appreciate both the patterns that emerge across their experiences and the variations among them. To contextualize their experiences, I conducted archival research with education and school board records and with contemporary media coverage to help provide a sketch of the evolving policy context within which the Black communities'

experiences took place. This policy context included complex maneuvering between local and federal authorities. This maneuvering created strong counter incentives and difficult choices for Black families, who came to different conclusions about what was good and right for their own children and broader community.

This introduction provides a brief sketch of Fairfield County and the timeline of desegregation there, followed by the purpose statement, research questions, research methodology, and emergent themes.

The Context of Fairfield County

Fairfield County, South Carolina covers 687 square miles in the Midlands region of South Carolina. The Town of Winnsboro, the county seat, is currently a stable community with a population of approximately 3300. Public school students reside in Winnsboro and other surrounding townships including Ridgeway and Blair. With over 600 employees in five elementary schools and four secondary schools, more than 2900 students attend school in the Fairfield County Public School district (Fairfield school district website 2018). The school district operates by the motto “Excellence through Teamwork.”

Although there are no institutions of higher education in Fairfield County, there are several colleges and universities in greater Columbia, a short distance away (Executive Summary 2008). These universities now serve students of diverse races and backgrounds. This has not always been the case. This exclusion is discussed by some of the individuals interviewed for this study.

In the four decades between 1940 and 1980, African American students and faculty in Fairfield faced a range of experiences within their community and schools.

Each time period presented different challenges, encounters and modifications to society and the status quo. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs, which strengthened the movement to desegregate schools. From 1940 until President Johnson signed the Act, Jim Crow laws were prevalent throughout communities and Black students in the rural south attended segregated schools with only Black teachers. Many Blacks in Fairfield expressed pride and a feeling of security that surrounded the Black segregated school.

Six Rosenwald schools were built in Fairfield County in the first half of the 20th Century (SC Department of Archives and History, 2020). According to the Annual Report of the County Superintendent for the year ending June 30, 1951, Fairfield County's 31 school districts were consolidated into 6 areas under a Reorganization Plan. Nearly six times the number of Black students (189,213) than white students (32,212) attended Fairfield Public schools for the year ending June 30, 1951. South Carolina school equalization policy then attempted to prevent school integration efforts by reducing the most extreme disparities so that it could be plausibly claimed that 'separate but equal' was in effect.

Winnsboro High School opened in the Fall of 1960 after a decision by the Fairfield County School Board to consolidate four of the county high schools for white students (Winnsboro High School Yearbooks, 2017). Black students in grades eight through twelve attended either Fairfield County Training School or McCrory Liston School until the Freedom of Choice option was made available in 1965.

In 1965, school officials in Fairfield developed the "Freedom of Choice" plan which gave the option for parents to enroll their child in a white school. Very few Blacks

participated in the Freedom of Choice and the schools in Fairfield remained predominantly segregated. In 1970, amidst pressure from the federal government, Fairfield schools were officially integrated with the closing of Fairfield High School, where most Black students attended. Many white students left Fairfield Public Schools to attend Richard Winn Academy, a private school established in 1965 by white parents in response to the impending integration mandates by the federal government. The appearance and culture of Fairfield County Public Schools were transformed. Evidence of the transformation is still apparent today.

Although a few African American students chose to attend under the Freedom of Choice option, most African American students chose to remain at Fairfield High School, the "Black" school, until it closed in 1970. The closure of Fairfield High School forced all remaining Black students to transfer to Winnsboro High School in an effort to integrate Black students with the predominantly white population of students at Winnsboro High School. It took 16 years after the Brown decision before full implementation of integration here and in much of the region; most children in the area who were three years old when the Brown decision passed would never experience integrated schooling.

This transition occurred following years of dialogue and debate between the Fairfield School Board's superintendent William Mitchell and representatives from the Federal Office of Health, Education and Welfare. Negotiation and discussion surrounded Fairfield's compliance with federal mandates regarding the desegregation of schools following the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Many Southern school districts adopted Freedom of Choice plans as appeasement to federal mandates to integrate schools. In 1966,

Fairfield County adopted a freedom of choice plan to address the issue of separate schools for Blacks and whites. While a few African Americans chose to attend the "white" school, no white students chose to move to a "Black" school.

The desegregation of public schools, as required by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, sparked a period of change in America. The imbalance of funding for white and Black public schools was publicly exposed, especially in Southern schools. Rural school districts with large African American populations were faced with federal mandates calling for an end to dual school systems within districts. Racial incidents received national publicity, which complicated the decisions that small communities had to make. This study takes a deeper look into the personal accounts of African American individuals who experienced first-hand the integration of schools in a rural southern community in South Carolina.

Since the early 1970s, Fairfield, as well as other Southern school districts, were compelled to take action to combine formerly all-Black and all-white schools into mixed schools that reflect the local population ratios. Yet, the process and experiences of Black students in rural school districts that experienced a less-publicized "white flight" have not been extensively documented in the scholarship. Integration challenges still confront rural Southern school districts more than five decades after federal courts mandated desegregation.

Recent statistics report that African Americans make up 85.4% of 2,744 students currently enrolled in Fairfield County Public Schools. Caucasians make up only 10.2% of the student population (Niche, 2020).

In the decades following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the choices made by parents, students and teachers influenced the current makeup of the schools in Fairfield. Like Winnsboro, the county seat of Fairfield County, the Richard Winn Academy private school was named in honor of American Revolution patriot Colonel Richard Winn. Although a native of Virginia, Richard Winn commanded a regiment of refugee militia, served as County Court judge and served on the State Legislature while residing in Fairfield. There is little public documentation of the personal experiences of the students and staff who experienced public education as the "exodus" of white students was occurring.

In 2021, the Private School Review report indicates that students of color represent only 1% of enrolled students at Richard Winn Academy, compared to the state average of 18% (Private School Review, 2021). The school is referenced by this study's participants as the school of "white flight."

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to shed light on the experiences of the African American community members who went through the integration process of schools in Fairfield community. The community reaction is presented through the accounts of individuals who shared their experiences in oral history interviews.

Problem Statement

The opening quote from Edwinda Goodman encompasses a common sentiment among the Black individuals who made the shift from a segregated to an integrated school system. Goodman's recollection of that transition year demonstrates that each person's experiences were unique and may have been perceived differently depending on the individual. Ms. Goodman's quote also speaks to a gap in the literature around the experiences and perspectives of individuals in the African American community and how they viewed the events surrounding integration.

The Supreme Court's decree in *Brown II* stated that the dismantling of separate schools for Black and white students must proceed "with all deliberate speed." The poignant wording of this decision gave local, political and educational leaders primary responsibility for solving the problems posed by the elimination of state-sanctioned segregation. South Carolina and other Southern states, recognizing the legitimacy of *Brown***,** used local control of educational policy to evade desegregation (Baker, 2001, p. 127) by implementing strategies intended to resist the decision. One such strategy was the implementation of the Freedom of Choice option.

The manner by which Blacks dealt with desegregation is evident through personal accounts of community members who were directly involved in school integration. Deep-rooted values and beliefs of the white community as a whole were challenged and guided the actions and responses of white district leaders to federal mandates relating to desegregation.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1) What values and beliefs guided African American families, teachers, and students within segregated schools and the integration process?
2) How did African American teachers and students experience and adapt to the transition into an integrated school environment?
3) How did the integration process affect African American students' attitudes, values, and perceptions of student equality following the exodus of white students from public schools (white flight)?

Research Methodology

Personal accounts of the participants in this study illuminate the beliefs that motivated the community and the context surrounding their reactions to government mandates. Participants shared personal stories that paint a picture of the changes that resulted within the community.

Written references and newspaper articles from the Fairfield County Library and the South Caroliniana Library were utilized as sources to add to the context of the period during the era covered in this study. Artifacts from the Fairfield Museum helped paint a clearer picture of the history prior to and during desegregation.

Correspondence from Fairfield school district leaders and local school board members highlights the community's dissent. School board records were accessed from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. School board financial records and written correspondence confirm the disparities among schools. A timeline of the actions taken by school leaders is generated and parallels the recollections of the featured

individuals in this study. However, the narratives open the door to the experiences of those who lived the history.

Fairfield school board records and correspondence pertaining to integration provide context and document the actions and decisions of school leaders. Attendance legends and employment data were aggregated to identify the race of students and staff. Correspondence between Superintendent Mitchell and federal representatives reveal tensions surrounding the imminent changes. This study contributes to both the literature and the larger discourses regarding the journey toward racial integration of rural school districts in the South.

Thirty-six individuals were interviewed. Most interviews took place at the restored historic Fairfield High School. Participants' emotions were triggered as they sat in the rooms where many of them completed all or part of their grade school education. The next section briefly reviews the themes that emerged from the data analysis and that are discussed in detail in Chapter four.

This topic is of significant personal interest to me. Racial integration unfolded quite differently in school districts in the rural South as compared with school districts in other parts of the United States. I reflected upon events that shaped my own experiences as a young student in Boston, Massachusetts during the same era. In the early 1970s, I was immersed in the very public issues surrounding court-ordered desegregation in a large New England city. My parents chose to participate in a voluntary desegregation program. I completed grades 3 through 12 in Wellesley, a predominantly white middle-class suburban school district.

To accomplish the intellectual goal of the study, I drew from my own experiences as a student in Boston Public Schools and Wellesley Public Schools during the desegregation era and the historical accounts of the featured participants. I began this study after working over two decades as a teacher and administrator in Aiken Public Schools Aiken, South Carolina. Aiken County's history has similarities to Fairfield and helped to shape my thinking for this study. As I listened to and read the stories of the participants, I was able to identify similarities and differences regarding the desegregation of school districts in America.

All participants were residents of Fairfield County and were students and/or staff members in Fairfield County Schools. Ten participants completed their grade school education in segregated schools. Fourteen participants began their education in a segregated setting and transitioned into the integrated Winnsboro High school in 1970. Several of these students returned as teachers after federal mandates to integrate all schools were enforced. Former school employees provided insight into their perception of the transition from the segregated school system.

Themes

Despite the participants' range of ages and experiences, threads of commonality were revealed. Participants who completed their K-12 educational experience in segregated schools spoke extensively about the moral bonds that were rooted in the African American families and the close connection they felt with one another within the Black schools. They also spoke of inequalities that were ingrained in the mindsets and practices of the community. These common themes include:

Moral Bonds

Pride and strong religious and moral values were deeply rooted in African American families throughout the 20th century. Parents wanted better social opportunities for their children than they were able to acquire. Education, hard work, ethical behavior, and strong religious ideals were highly valued. Pride for those who had acquired higher education resonated throughout the African American community.

Nurturing Educators and Community

Participants speak fondly of the quality education, love, and support that existed within close-knit segregated Black schools and the Black community. Teachers often lived with students' families and were an integral part of the larger African American community.

Jim Crow Community Influences

The Black school was an oasis of cultural support within the broader discriminatory context of the Jim Crow South. Laws separating Blacks and whites were prevalent within the community. Separate facilities for dining, entertainment, and other public entities were a staple in Fairfield.

Inequalities within Segregated Schools

Laws sanctioning the separation of people based on race infiltrated decisions for the education of Black children. Funding allotted for Black schools was substantially less than the amount designated for white schools. School facilities in Black schools were often old and run-down. African American students had to use discarded furniture and books from the white schools. School bus transportation was available only for white students during the 1940s and 1950s. Black students walked long distances to school from an early age.

Ironies of Free Choice

When the Freedom of Choice plan was offered, only a few Blacks chose to attend white schools. Feelings of apprehension among parents and teachers dominated the Black community. Students who experienced the transition to integrate Fairfield schools had a range of experiences.

Blending White and Black School Traditions

After the mandated integration was implemented, Black teachers and students had to adjust to cultural differences. Fairfield High School was closed, forcing Black students to transfer to Winnsboro High School, which was predominantly white before integration. Black teachers were also transferred to schools with predominantly white populations in the surrounding area.

Chapter One Summary

This study is organized into five chapters a bibliography and appendices. The first chapter introduces my goal and purpose for this qualitative case study. The intent of my research is to contribute to the counternarrative and give voice to the African American community who experienced, first-hand, the integration of schools in Fairfield County.

The literature review, Chapter Two, provides a historical overview of the struggle of African Americans to obtain an education. I then narrow my literature review to encompass the decades of 1960s and 1970s when rural Southeast communities made the transition from a dual school system in which Black students and white students attended segregated schools to an integrated school system.

Chapter Three explains how I conducted my qualitative research process. I give the rationale for data collection procedures and the interview and transcription process. I

explain my positionality and subjectivity as they relate to this study and identify the limitations of my research.

The primary focus of this research study is exhibited in Chapter Four. To give context, I describe demographic information about Fairfield County. I explain the historical political and community response to the process of integration of schools. The remainder of the chapter details the themes that emerged from the interview transcripts and includes excerpts from 36 participant interviews as they relate to each theme.

Chapter Five revisits and summarizes each of the themes gleaned from the narratives and an interpretation of this qualitative research project. I describe my experience as a student in Boston, Massachusetts where I was a participant in a voluntary desegregation program, Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO) in the early 1970s.

This study provides a counternarrative to the literature surrounding desegregation and the integration process in rural Southern cities and towns. The stories shared by the participants in the Fairfield community only provide a small fraction of the many experiences of African Americans who were a part of the integration process in the rural South. Further research will be beneficial in increasing awareness and may provide implications for improvements in the current school systems.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The successes of the civil rights movement combined the Black community's long-running legal effort to overturn segregation in the courts with a grassroots movement that included boycotts and marches. The civil rights movement and the legal effort are relatively well documented. Before these successes, external efforts to support Black education had emerged less from the federal government and more from civil society, particularly the philanthropy of wealthy Northern industrialists like Julius Rosenwald. With the federal government passing legislation in the 1960s, new dimensions came into play: new legal structures and efforts at enforcement arose and met local resistance from white communities. For the Black communities, this white resistance to the rights of Black people fit into patterns they had known for decades, generations, centuries.

For much of this American history and especially the antebellum period, there is not extensive evidence available to address how Black communities understood and responded to these challenges. Documentation improves in more recent decades, though the experiences of Black communities faced with these changes still constitute a gap in the literature, particularly as it comes to rural communities in the South. This literature review draws upon a range of studies to better contextualize this period in the broad sweep of history that shaped the cultural memories and experiences of Black communities like the one in Fairfield, S.C. Because the period spanning segregated

schools and desegregation is still in living memory, the stories collected and analyzed here constitute a meaningful contribution to the literature in the field.

The perceptions of individuals in the years immediately following government-mandated integration varied. In general, tensions were augmented as the white community was faced with an upset with the status quo. The public was cognizant of the crises that were taking place in America at the time. For some, excitement along with apprehension stemmed from the realization that long-awaited societal changes were becoming reality. These feelings were juxtaposed with an uneasy reverence for the revolutionaries, or those individuals bold enough to make personal sacrifices to initiate action.

Although the perspectives varied, a sense of self-pride emerged as the essence of individual accounts was examined. This pride stems from African American cultural upbringing, in the extended community and within individual families. As situations arose, this pride is expressed through their actions in handling the events of community nuances and school integration.

Historical Context

The struggle to integrate schools dates as far back as the 18th century. Black parents in Boston made two attempts, in 1787 and 1849, to convince the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to allow their children to attend the same schools as white students. In each of these attempts, the state Supreme Court found that racially segregated schools did not violate the state constitution's guarantee of equal liberty. However, in 1855, the same court outlawed segregation of public schools (Rutenberg, 2005). Despite

this bold action of free African Americans in Massachusetts before the Civil War, the struggle for educational equality was far from over in every region of the United States.

Following the emancipation of slaves in 1863 with the subsequent passage of the 13th amendment to the Constitution of the United States, racial segregation continued throughout American cities and towns. The nation, especially the South, was still unprepared to deal with the question of full citizenship for its newly freed Black population. For a brief period, African Americans were allowed to vote, actively participate in the political process, acquire the land of former owners, seek their employment, and use public accommodations. Opponents of this progress, however, soon rallied against the former slaves' freedom (Library of Congress, 2020).

In the South, the struggle for educational equality became paradoxical. Reconstruction, 1866 to 1877, was designed to reorganize and readmit Southern states into the Union after the Civil War. The intention was to define how whites and Blacks could live together in a non-slave society. However, the attempt was viewed as humiliating to many white Southerners (Library of Congress, 2020). A complex range of mindsets stemming from slavery complicated educational advancement for the African American population.

A common thread within the African American community following the Civil War was the fundamental belief in the value of a literate culture and the desirability of learning to read and write. This belief was expressed in the pride with which they held literate Blacks (Anderson, 1988, p.5). Reconstruction opened the avenue for Black and white teachers from the North and South, missionary organizations, churches, and schools to allow the emancipated population to learn. Former slaves of every age took

advantage of the opportunity to become literate. Grandfathers and their grandchildren sat together in classrooms seeking to obtain the tools of freedom (Library of Congress, 2020).

Former slaves were among the first native Southerners to campaign for universal state-supported public education which led to the foundation of the freedmen's educational movement. A determination to acquire formal knowledge has been one of the most striking features of the Black struggle for equality (Fairclough, 2000). Harriet Beecher Stowe provided one of the glimpses into Black community attitudes and responses in 1879, summing up Blacks' intense desire for education, "They rushed not to the grog shop but to the schoolroom – they cried for the spelling book as bread and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life" (quoted in Anderson, 2011, p. 5).

During Reconstruction, voting restrictions led the way to increased discrimination in education. Although the foundation of the freedmen's educational movement was African American's self-reliance and deep-seated desire to control and sustain schools for themselves (Anderson, 2011, p.6), integration, seemingly unthinkable by most in this era, was a means of ensuring educational equality. In South Carolina, discriminatory appropriations were legalized in an 1896 statute that allowed local school boards to appropriate funds "for the best interests of the school district, according to the judgement of the board of trustees" (Baker, 2000, p. 3). In the South, approximately 12 percent of funding was allocated for public education. The general attitude toward educating African Americans was in line with a statement in 1899, made by A. A. Kincannon, Mississippi's Superintendent of education in 1899. He said, "Our public school system is designed primarily for the welfare of the white children of the state and incidentally for

the negro children" (as quoted in Salvatore, et al., 2000, p. 14). The precedent of separate but equal schools was decided upon in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that same year.

During the 1920s, expenditures for public education rose sharply. The decisions regarding expenditures also increased the disparities between white and Black schools in the South. In areas with a large Black population, expenditures for Black schools were substantially lower those expenditures for white schools. South Carolina state law permitted school officials to allocate funds "in the best interests of the district." School boards responded to the growing demand for public education by appropriating a greater share of school fund to white institutions. Whites benefited from segregation (Baker, 2006, p. 23)

Challenges of Black Teachers during Jim Crow

In the decades prior to 1940, almost three-fourths of African American teachers in the South taught in rural schools (Fultz, 1995, p. 401). Teaching in the Jim Crow South presented unique challenges for African American teachers. African American teachers were often confronted with overcrowded classrooms with poor school facilities.

James L. Leloudis described the segregated Black schools of the South as "vital bridges between the freedom struggles of the late nineteenth century and those of the mid twentieth." Although the buildings had been upgraded, African American teachers in segregated Southern schools during the Jim Crow era still had to teach with meager materials and supplies including "hand-me-down" textbooks and equipment discarded after being used at the white schools, used construction paper, poorly repaired buses and dilapidated chalkboards. According to Hilton Kelly, in spite of unequal treatment, poor facilities and inferior materials, the creativity and ingenuity of Black teachers made the

difference in the acquisition of educational capital (Kelly, 2010). Jessie Jones, a teacher during the Jim Crow era, explained, “Inequality came from most basically not having equipment and supplies to work with, but we used what was around.” Other teachers recall having to spend their own money on materials necessary to effectively teach their students.

Between 1940 and 1960 teaching conditions for African American teachers had improved, primarily because of the efforts of southern states to increase funding to African American schools as a way of avoiding desegregation. African American schools still lagged behind their white counterparts in state expenditures per child, capital outlays, transportation, library books and school services (Ashmore, 1954; Pierce, 1955). By 1952 in the South, the average expenditure for an African American student was $115.08 per child. This compares to an expenditure of $164.83 per white child (Ashmore, 1954; Siddle-Walker, 2001, p. 754).

De Facto vs. *De Jure* Racial Segregation

No better example of racial prejudice and efforts to separate Blacks from whites was more blatantly exhibited than in the Jim Crow laws set up throughout the Southeast after the end of reconstruction. For more than half of the next century, Blacks were not allowed to ride in the same part of the bus as whites, drink from the same water fountain, attend the same schools, or enter into private restaurants that served whites only. This type of segregation is referred to as “de jure” segregation.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2014), de jure racial segregation is separation enforced by law. The practice designed to perpetuate racial subordination and was most commonly found in Southeastern cities and towns. As a response to this blatant

display of white supremacy, white and Black civil rights activists and progressives established the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. The Legal Defense Education Fund was later established in 1939 to focus primarily on courts cases related to education.

De facto segregation parallels de jure segregation and occurs when widespread individual preferences, sometimes coerced with private pressure, leads to separation. De facto segregation of African Americans in the North, like de jure segregation found primarily in the Southeast, also contributed to racial hierarchy, but sometimes could be defended as a result simply of private choice (Tushnet, 1987).

School Construction (Early 20th century)

Between 1917 and 1932, Sears and Roebuck president Julius Rosenwald provided a matching grant fund to construct Black schools throughout the South. According to 1925-1926 data gathered by S. L. Smith during his work as administrator of the Rosenwald Fund's school-building program, 93.4 percent of the 24,079 African American schools in fourteen southern states were rural (Fultz, 1995). Dilapidated privately-owned structures were often utilized as one and two-room schools.

Over one-third of Black children in the South attended a Rosenwald school in the first half of the twentieth century. Nearly 500 buildings were constructed in South Carolina with six in Fairfield County (SC Department of Archives and History, 2020). According to the Annual Report of the County Superintendent for the year ending June 30, 1951, Fairfield County's 31 school districts were consolidated into 6 areas under a Reorganization Plan. The annual report for the year ending June 30, 1951 indicated that the total value of White school property was $1,007,500. The total value of "Negro"

school property was $205,995. The average expenditure per pupil for White students in elementary and high school was $203. The average expenditure per pupil for “Negro” was $68.

The condition of Black schools began to improve in 1951 under South Carolina Governor James F. Byrnes. In an effort to thwart integration, South Carolina passed a 3% general sales tax earmarked to consolidate the rural Rosenwald schools and construct new state-of the-art Black schools. The School Equalization program, as the general tax was named, was an attempt to create “separate but equal” schools to forestall an order by the Supreme Court requiring desegregation of the state’s public schools. In six years, South Carolina spent almost $100 million within School Equalization program, funding the construction of 65 new Black high schools (SC Department of Archives and History, 2020).

Parallel System v. Integration

Local activism and NAACP litigation in the 1940s and 1950s brought contending visions of Black advancement to the surface. Conflicts were raised between activists, who wanted to desegregate white institutions and accommodationists, who favored the construction of parallel system of Black schools and colleges (Baker, 2006). While this difference in mindsets was most evident in the realm of higher education, grade school students were also affected.

Activism was further complicated by social divisions within African American communities in southern cities. In Charleston, South Carolina, dissention within the African American community stemmed from the 1930s establishment of Charleston’s Avery Normal Institute, a private school for African Americans. An unspoken division

developed that separated Charleston's class- and color-conscious Black elite from most African Americans in the Lowcountry (Baker, 2006, p.xviii). This type of division existed throughout South Carolina and other southeastern states.

The construction of separate law and professional schools for African Americans created dilemmas and sparked debates about whether African American educators should support these institutions and whether Black students should enroll in them (Baker, 2006, p.79). Many African American leaders saw separate professional programs as an advancement over exclusion. Herbert Hill, labor director of the NAACP, recalled that by the late 1940s "real progress toward equalization was beginning to be made" (Baker, 2006. p.79). In contrast, others shared Thurgood Marshall's sentiment, feeling the need to oppose the practice of separate facilities and press toward integration, where Blacks could attend white colleges and graduate school programs.

Simultaneously, in the grade schools, as more African Americans enrolled in public school, severe overcrowding and glaring disparities between white and Black facilities fueled discourse. In 1951, the dissent in the *Briggs* case challenged the separate but equal practice and repudiated state-enforced segregation. The decision brought to the forefront the overwhelming disparities between white and Black schools.

Much of the public opposition was initiated by African American youth through boycotts, walkouts and other forms of protest. The conflict was manifested to the world on May 17, 1954, marking the official start of the national fight against the segregation of students in American schools. On that date in *Brown v. Board of Education (1954),* the United States Supreme Court unanimously repudiated *de jure* school segregation.

Although resistance to caste restrictions and segregation statutes had arisen years prior (Baker, 2006), this momentous case set precedent for school policies and practices.

Political Timeline

The Civil Rights movement was thrust into the political agenda and was difficult for public leaders to ignore. President Dwight D. Eisenhower publicly disagreed with the *Brown* ruling as a violation of states' rights and as an invitation to the massive resistance which followed (Roark 2002; McAndrews 2009). Yet, he implemented changes that laid the foundation for the integration of American students. In 1957, President Eisenhower dispatched federal troops to enforce the precedent set by *Brown* at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. In addition, President Eisenhower was responsible for desegregating the nation's capital and military bases and establishing federal civil rights agencies through the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 (McAndrews, 2009). Although, Eisenhower's efforts resulted in change in some parts of the United States, when he left office, seven years after *Brown*, only 0.2 percent of African American children in the Deep South attended desegregated schools (Burk, 1984; McAndrews, 2009).

Five months prior to his assassination, President John F. Kennedy opted to separate education from civil rights in proposing a stand-alone civil rights law (McAndrews, 2009). President Kennedy had laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law on July 2, 1964. Title IV of the Act empowered the Justice Department to litigate school desegregation cases and Title VI permitted the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to withdraw monies from segregated schools (Douglas, 1994). This action led to passage of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which President Johnson signed into law on April 9, 1965.

ESEA was the first comprehensive federal aid to primary and high schools, dispersing money to ninety percent of the nation's school districts and disqualifying 125 racially segregated school districts from receiving aid (McAndrews, 1991, 2009). At the time of its enactment, only one percent of African American children in the South were attending desegregated schools (Douglas, 1994; McAndrews, 2009). ESEA succeeded in desegregating one-third of formerly all-Black schools in the South (Halperin, 1995; McAndrews, 2009). *De jure* segregation was being addressed but inequality continued to exist in most Southern schools.

President Richard Nixon focused his attention on urban desegregation. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District,* the United States Supreme court upheld intradistrict urban-suburban busing to compel public school desegregation. To receive federal funds, Southern school districts had to comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by desegregating the schools (Cascio et al., 2010). The following year, two major events occurred that purportedly coerced school districts to desegregate. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) created large grants for schools, generating significant costs of noncompliance. In addition, passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 contributed to the upsurge toward egalitarianism that energized the nation. Researchers have speculated that these policies caused the abrupt rise in desegregation witnessed in aggregate data for the mid-1960s (Cascio et al., 2010).

Phases of Public School Desegregation

Historically, public school desegregation in the United States can be divided into three major phases (Levine 1996).

The first phase began in 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* ruling that renounced the "separate but equal" doctrine and mindset that had been adopted following *Plessy v. Ferguson.* It found that government imposed or government supported segregation unconstitutionally violates the rights of Black students (1996, p. 260). The decision in *Brown* set precedent that initiated government involvement with the desegregation of schools. The Supreme Court in 1955 ordered school districts to desegregate with "all deliberate speed." Yet one decade later in the South, only 7.5 percent of Black students attended school with white children (1996).

The second phase of desegregation was triggered by two legislative forces. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 marked the beginning of government-imposed school integration. According to the *New York Times* of September 4, 1965, "under the threat of a loss of Federal assistance, rural southern towns integrated schools with virtually no violence or resistance" (Levine 1996, p. 261).

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination by entities receiving federal funding, including school districts. Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, districts that continued to segregate students based on race could lose all federal funding. According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, federal aid to some Southern school districts made up more than 30 percent of local school funding (Daugherity 2016, p.160).

During the mid-60s, litigation pursued by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), direct action protests and demonstrations, and growing pressure from the federal government accelerated school desegregation in some Southern states. By the fall of 1966, only 16.9 percent of Black students in the eleven states of the former Confederacy attended desegregated schools (Daugherity, 2016). However, three years after the Civil Rights Act passed, many school districts in the Deep South had not begun an adequate desegregation plan.

During the third phase of desegregation, emphasis shifted significantly to large urban school districts. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Keys v. School District No. 1 Denver* brought out the practice of school districts intentionally generating residential de jure segregation. The school district in Denver was accused of "purposefully and systematically" assigning minority students to some schools and white students to another school based on patterns of residential segregation (Levine, 1996). Denver's student assignment actions brought attention to similar actions in other large urban school systems.

Because the U.S. Constitution reserves powers not explicitly delegated to the federal government to the state, conditional grants are key levers for federal policymakers seeking to affect a broad range of state and local policies. To receive federal funds, Southern school districts had to comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by desegregating their schools. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) created large grants for schools, generating significant costs of noncompliance (Cascio, et al., 2010).

Significance

During the civil rights era, the distinction between Southern and Northern subcultures became more evident as social changes became imminent. Prior to desegregation, Southern public school education was provided by a dual system in which Black and white students were required by law to attend separate schools. This segregated system was justified by the precedent established by the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case of 1897. In principle, facilities were "separate-but-equal"; in practice, Black schools received fewer resources per student than white schools. Racial inequalities in school resources were greatest in counties with relatively large Black populations (Cready & Fossett, 1998). Segregation patterns became more pronounced in urban areas as well as Southern rural areas. These patterns became a pivotal issue in communities as federal mandates designed to integrate schools were executed.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked the era when the Federal government utilized financial incentives to encourage the racial desegregation of public schools in America. School districts have had to deal with challenges associated with the integration of subgroups within one school system. Societal changes continue to influence trends of re-segregation and racial imbalance in public schools. An analysis of individual actions and motivations will help clarify the reasoning behind community decisions related to integration of schools.

Public reaction to federal desegregation mandates challenged school leaders in American communities. The underlying goal nationwide was to address the issue of segregation in American society. During the civil rights movement, distinction between Southern and Northern communities became more evident as changes unfolded. To

school districts in the rural South, the notion of integration since 1954 when the United States Supreme Court unanimously repudiated *de jure* school segregation was often met with either outright rebellion or sometimes subtle protest.

White Flight in Southern Schools

Mandates requiring Southern schools to integrate students forced whites to share resources more equally with African Americans and increased contact between the races. Integration prompted many whites to seek alternatives to racially integrated public education for their children. In the rural South, transferring their children to another public school district often was not a viable option. Racially segregated private education became the most common alternative to racially integrated public education (Cready & Fossett, 1998). Private schooling became an escape for many whites who lived in communities with relatively large African American populations (Cleghorn, 1970).

This scenario was evident in many Southern communities such as in Lowndes County, Alabama, where African Americans outnumbered whites four to one. Whites deserted the public schools soon after Blacks were admitted in the mid-1960s (Cready & Fossett, 1998). Also, following the 1969 *Alexander* decision to integrate schools "at once" (396 U.S. 19); only one percent of the white students who were enrolled in Wilkinson County Public Schools in Mississippi returned in 1970 (Minor, 1970). According to Cooper (1994) the legacy of such early white responses to public school desegregation is still evident today.

Chapter Two Summary

This review of literature begins with an historical overview of the struggle of African Americas to obtain education. I then narrow my literature review to encompass the decades of 1960s and 1970s when rural Southeast communities made the transition from a dual school system in which Black students and white students attended segregated schools to an integrated school system.

In the next chapter, I describe the qualitative research methods, including the data collection and interview processes used in this case study. My analysis of the participants' narratives resulted in the emergence of themes. Because qualitative studies are influenced by the researcher's experiences, I address my own personal experiences during the desegregation of schools in a large New England city. Finally, I identify some limitations to this study.

Chapter Three: Methods

In order to understand the experiences of the Black community of Fairfield County in late segregation and during the integration process, a qualitative case study approach using oral histories was chosen. Work with contemporary documents such as school board minutes in archives and with local newspaper coverage from the period served to provide a timeline and context for the memories of community members. Combining archival research with the oral histories enabled me to chronicle the evolution of activities and actions of individuals in the Fairfield County School District in the years surrounding school desegregation. Recent demographic data was available to help further contextualize the research.

The Oral History Society defines oral history as a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities and participants in past events. This is an exploration of first-hand accounts from community members who were involved in some capacity in the integration of Fairfield schools. Common sentiments as well as differing opinions based on individual experiences are explored. (Oral History Defined, 2018).

To relate the context and historiography of a rural African American school community in the segregated South generally and in relation to broader scholarship, I used published secondary material from libraries at the University of South Carolina, archival and interview data. The secondary material includes history of the evolution of schools for African Americans since reconstruction through post World War II. I

searched the ERIC and JSTOR databases using descriptor terms “desegregation in the South,” “public school integration,” and “African American teachers in the South."

The case study approach used archival research which provided historical context to the times in which key events occurred. The intent was to provide understanding of the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions (Maxwell, 2013; Weaver-Hightower, 2018). The focus of this study is to give voice to the personal experiences of those individuals who experienced integration in various situations. The intent of this study is not to develop causal explanations surrounding the actions and mindsets of the participants nor to determine the role one individual had on determining the actions of another.

According to Weaver-Hightower in his book, *How to Write Qualitative Research,* data consist of the raw words of participant interviews and field notes from observations, memos and artifact descriptions. Data from the participants is transformed into a literary story format. The narrative inquiry approach acknowledges that humans tend to structure knowledge into a narrative form of cognition (Saldana, 2011).

Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. Qualitative researchers engage in naturalistic inquiry, studying real-world settings inductively to generate rich narrative descriptions and construct case studies. Inductive analysis across cases yields patterns and themes, the fruit of qualitative research (Patton, 2005). Fairfield School district was chosen, in part, because of the rich oral history that was available for study.

My data collection and analysis methods included researching archival documents stored at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and scanning microfiche recordings of local newspapers at the South Caroliniana Library. Preliminary interviews were conducted to provide a basis of which experiences to include in the study and to provide information on how to direct further inquiry. Data analysis involved determining context based on written correspondence and documentation and an analysis of the transcribed interviews.

Interview transcripts and recordings shed light on the perspective of participants. Draper (2004) defined qualitative research as inquiry that "is concerned with the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals" (p. 642). The participants in this study are primary sources of culture and history in Fairfield County. Folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes such "bearers of tradition" as "…living links in the historical chain, eyewitnesses to history, and shapers of a vital and indigenous way of life. They are unparalleled in the vividness and authenticity they can bring to the study of local history and culture" (as quoted by Hunt, 2016).

Data Collection: Documents

I began my search for historical data at the Fairfield Library where I reviewed books on the history of Fairfield. I then scheduled visits to the Fairfield County Museum. There I learned about Kelly Miller, a Fairfield Institute alumnus and the first Black mathematics graduate student at Johns Hopkins University. Kelly died in 1939, before desegregation of schools had become a national issue, but he is revered in the community as Fairfield County's most famous African American resident. He was the great uncle of Henry Miller, one of the individuals interviewed in this study. A local elementary school

is named after him. This research led me to find historical markers within the county that provided additional insight into the years leading up to desegregation era.

A visit to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History led me toward much of the contextual data in this study. The South Carolina State Archives houses school board records and official letters and documentation related to the operations of schools. There was a gap in school board minutes prior to 1963. I photographed Fairfield Annual Reports, budget and correspondence from 1959-1977.

The separate funding for Black and white schools was documented as standard procedure prior to the integration of schools. While examining school board records and correspondence from the Office of the School superintendent, I was attentive to the contextual information and the dialogue between the parties.

I streamlined my research at the SC Department of Archives and History to include school board budget spreadsheets and written discussions. These materials assisted me in constructing a timeline beginning in 1965, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. I researched correspondence outlining and describing the "Freedom of Choice" option and the subsequent closing of Fairfield High School, which resulted in the integration of Winnsboro High School.

I then directed my research to newspaper articles stored at the South Caroliniana Library on the University of South Carolina campus. I intended to draw parallels between school board documentation and published reports. The only newspaper covering news and events exclusively for Fairfield between 1940 and 1980 was the *Fairfield Herald and News.* The weekly newspaper's documentation of the conflicts and dialogue between federal and local authorities was scarce or nil.

Newspaper documentation related to the integration of schools was vague. My search did, however, provide contextual information of the community's world view at the time. I researched rolls of microfiche from 1960 until 1977. Beginning in 1968, African American students from Fairfield High School were featured mainly to highlight sporting events.

Fairfield Herald and News was purchased in 1935 by George McMaster Ketchin and remained in publication for 40 years. In 1982, *Fairfield Herald and News* merged with the *Fairfield Independent* and was renamed the *Herald Independent*. But throughout the era of segregated schools, the newspaper contents included little about the experiences of African Americans.

Data Collection: Interviews

I met with the current Superintendent of Fairfield Public Schools, Dr. J. R. Green. He put me in contact with the Assistant to the Superintendent at the Fairfield Schools District Office. I arranged a face-to-face meeting with her to obtain current demographic data about the Fairfield School district. She also provided names of individuals who were life-long residents of Fairfield who were still active in school affairs.

A colleague in my graduate class was also well-acquainted with several life-long members of the Fairfield community. Her familiarity with a few Fairfield community members was invaluable in initiating a chain "snowball" sampling to identify individuals to interview. Through her assistance, I conducted three preliminary interviews to help provide context, give me a flavor for the kinds of experiences they had, and to help formulate my questions. Using the Smithsonian Folklore and Oral History Interview Guide (2016), I constructed a list of clear, concise and open-ended interview questions.

When I spoke with the individuals, I left the door open for participants to share experiences that may go beyond the parameters of the specific question. The participants were willing to share their experiences publicly and have their memories become part of the public record for Fairfield County, as would many of their friends and colleagues when an oral history archive was developed for Fairfield High School soon after.

Ms. Elizabeth Martin was the first person I interviewed. I treated her to lunch at a local Italian restaurant and spent nearly two hours listening to her share her experiences as a teacher and administrator in Fairfield Schools. My colleague also facilitated the scheduling of interviews with Moses Siebels and Carl Jackson, Jr. I drove to their places of business where they communicated their respective experiences as students at the integrated high school and local college.

These interviews helped to inform the oral history project mentioned above, which was conducted within the structure of a graduate course on race and education in the American South that I was completing. My course mates and I conducted a series of interviews that were made possible through a collaboration between my doctoral advisor and a Fairfield community member. The community member contacted and invited Fairfield High School alumni to be interviewed by students. University of South Carolina graduate students were assigned to interview alumni at the historic Fairfield High School building. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Historians at the South Caroliniana library conducted additional interviews at a later time. The interview transcripts and recordings were made available online and became a part of the public domain. These transcripts were a key source of data for this study.

Thirty-six participants described community, family, educational experiences, and race relations before and after Fairfield schools integrated in 1970. Students, teachers and/or school staff who resided in Fairfield between 1940 and 1980 were selected to interview. Each participant interview was developed with the purpose of exploring their perspectives of school integration and the racial demographics of Fairfield schools. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim including some non-verbal cues including body language, facial expressions and voice pitch. I personally conducted six of the interviews.

I worked with the transcripts of the remaining interviews that were conducted by graduate students at the University of South Carolina and Ms. Andrea L'Hommedieu, director of the Department of Oral History at the University of South Carolina. Most of the interviews took place in the recently restored Fairfield High School, which has been taken over as a museum and community center by the Black community and particularly the schools' alumni. An audio recording of each interview was digitally preserved, transcribed and made publicly accessible.

Data Analysis

Once current and historical demographic data from public and private schools in the Fairfield School district were obtained, I constructed a timeline of events and data.

As themes emerged from the participants interviews, they were loosely chronologically ordered using the Setup – Quotation – Commentary format (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Themes did not necessarily suggest uniformity of the participants' thoughts, feeling or beliefs, although commonalities were evident.

Each written transcription was color-coded with highlighting to reflect four common themes and patterns – The Black Family in the Segregated Community; Students' perspective of the Black Segregated School; Black Students perspective of the Integrated School and Teachers/Staff Perspective of the Integrated School. Experiences were then placed in chronological order based on the approximate age of each participant. A handwritten index card was created for each participant with notations and quotes of experiences that correlated with each of the themes. Themes were initially numbered but were later titled to reflect the shared ideas. As transcripts were further analyzed, more specific themes were gleaned from participants experiences. These broader themes were streamlined into six larger themes.

I revised the themes describing African American family values and the close-knit segregated school. The themes titled "Moral Bonds" and "Nurturing Educators and Community" encompass most of the positive experiences associated with African American life before desegregation. The negative community influences associated with the Jim Crow laws were identified as a separate theme entitled "Jim Crow Influences."

Perceptions of inequality associated with school procedures, facilities, transportation, and materials, ranged greatly depending on the age and position of the participant. "Inequality in Schools" is identified as a separate theme.

Historical context guided the last two themes. Freedom of Choice option for students prompted diverse reactions within the African American community. The theme, "Cruel Ironies of Free Choice" embodies the mindsets that guided parents' decision regarding which school their child should attend.

In 1970, Fairfield High School was closed, and students were integrated into Winnsboro High School. The first few years of the transition presented feelings of anxiety, apprehension and, for some, hope. Under the theme "Blending White and Black School Traditions," participants describe their encounters with whites within an integrated school.

Trustworthiness and Confirmability

To ensure trustworthiness, I utilized triangulation through multiple sources of information. Triangulation is an attempt to gain more than one perspective on what is being investigated by emphasizing the use of multiple methods and theoretical constructs. This attempt shows that rigor has been applied to the collection and analysis of the data (Williamson, 2018). The interviews provided multiple perspectives for the researcher to interpret a specific set of data. School Board documents and correspondence between federal, state and local officials were compared to newspaper accounts, letters and documentary evidence. Interview transcripts gave evidence to or identified events that could be cross-referenced with historical documents. In the case of discrepancies, I deferred to the written documentation as evidence.

I sought out the support of qualitative experts as I developed my research and qualitative methods. My coding was discussed, reviewed and revisited with my committee chairperson. I maintained a written log of my progress and a chronological timeline of events and participants' school related experiences.

Subjectivity and Positionality

As the researcher, I serve as the primary data collection instrument. I recognize the perspectives I bring to this study. Other interviewers may have brought subjectivity in

the questions they asked the participants. To monitor instances in which subjectivity may have been expressed, only coded participant responses to the determined themes were included in the study.

Due to the historic and regionally specific nature of my inquiry, I applied cultural relativism to increase my understanding of the rural southern community. Cultural relativism refers to the ability to understand a culture on its own terms and not to make judgments using the standards of one's own culture (Lumen Learning, n.d.). The interviews allowed me to recognize mindsets, beliefs, and culture of the participants without making judgments using the standards of my own culture. My experiences as a student of desegregation in a large New England city in some ways paralleled and in other ways contrasted with the experiences of the participants.

Rationale for Choosing the Fairfield Community

I chose to conduct my studies in the Fairfield community because of the rich history and my interest in public school demographics. In 2021, 85% of the student population in Fairfield was African American. I was interested in understanding the impact that the integration of schools had on "white flight" and how later generations adapted to the decisions from 50 years prior.

As I spoke to both former and current educators and students of the integration era, I was drawn to hear more about their encounters and involvement surrounding the integration of schools in the Fairfield community.

The participants selected are not representative of the students as a whole from that period. They were located and selected largely through existing networks. Key features of these networks include that most of the participants remained in the

community. Those who had moved away may have had less attachment to the community or less positive experiences. This network was also centered on the repurchased high school and those for whom that school was particularly meaningful. It seems likely that participants whose experiences were more negative or whose attainment led them to leave the community would have been less likely to be connected and to participate.

I organized the interviews chronologically to establish parallels between local events of the time and the participants recollections of their experiences. My guiding principle was to be inclusive and ensure that every participant had a voice. The downside of inclusivity was redundancy in the reports. I decided to include enough examples of each type of encounter to provide a clear picture of the events. Recognition of all participants was still important. Appendix H provides a short biography of each participant and a line to access their full interview and transcripts.

Limitations

Research at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History had to be conducted on site. I photographed each page within the files. As I attempted to chronicle events, I noticed some gaps in the correspondence that had become part of the historical record. Staff retrieved only the documents I requested. There may be unexplored correspondence that provide a clearer picture into the context.

Additionally, schools in Fairfield were integrated over one half century ago. This study includes participant's recollections of events between 1940 and 1980. Details of events may have been forgotten or clouded by time.

Chapter Three Summary

In this chapter, I describe the qualitative methods used in research this case study. I explain my data collection methods of historical documents. I also describe the process of collected data by analyzing transcripts from interviews of the participants. Through my analysis of the participants' narratives, I coded themes that emerged. Qualitative studies are influenced by the researcher's experiences, I explain that my personal experiences may influence my positionality and subjectivity in this project so I identify my own experiences as a student during the desegregation era in a large New England city. Finally, I identify some limitations to this study.

In the next chapter, the context of the Fairfield community and an historical timeline of events is provided. The remainder of the chapter is divided into six common themes that emerged from interviews. Excerpts from participant interviews are highlighted as their comments relate to the theme.

Chapter Four: Findings

I could tell you all experiences I went through, and the hurts I had, and the problems I ran into and so forth. But you would never know what I was saying unless you were there and had a part of that.

~Weldon Haire, October 26, 2017, Fairfield High School

The intent of this qualitative case study is to shine a light upon the personal experiences of students, teachers and school leaders during the era of segregation and the years following the mandated desegregation of public schools, as outlined in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is based on the specific case of Fairfield, South Carolina. Their personal experiences inspired their actions and shaped the mindsets of the Fairfield County community. Recollections of events, both positive and negative, remain vibrant through decades within this community. Integration had a profound and emotional impact on the generational beliefs and values that were embedded in the Fairfield community.

Archived school board legends and historical records of correspondence illuminate the initially subtle resistance to government-imposed plans designed to reverse the phenomenon of segregation in schools. Very different in their own perspectives, two Fairfield superintendents who served during the decade following Civil Rights Act of 1964, William D. Mitchell, and Arthur L. Goff, faced difficult challenges as the changes

were implemented. Federal mandates were generally contested. Other times mandates they were ignored or masked with loophole approaches that kept the schools in a segregated state.

Fairfield County

Fairfield County is located within the upper Piedmont Region of South Carolina. The County is situated between the Broad River on the West and Lake Wateree on the East. The area was once hunting ground for several Indian tribes.

Under the leadership of Richard Winn, John Winn and John Vandeerhorst, Winnsborough was chartered and made the seat of justice for the Fairfield District in 1785. In 1832, the town was incorporated and renamed Winnsboro. Fairfield County has over 100 historical building, churches and homes that provide a picture into the unique past (Fairfield County webpage, 2021).

The Fairfield Public School District currently has over 600 employees and serves nearly 2600 students in five elementary schools and four secondary schools (Fairfield School District webpage, 2021). There was an estimated 87.6% of students in poverty in Fairfield schools according to the 2020 South Carolina Department of Education poverty index (South Carolina Department of Education, 2021).

The Interviews

Interviews were conducted between November 7, 2016, and October 27, 2018 in Fairfield, South Carolina. Most interviews took place in the restored Fairfield High School building where many participants attended as students and/or worked before students and staff were integrated (Appendix C). Before desegregation, Black students attended Fairfield High School from eighth grade until graduation. Throughout the

interview, participants readily pointed out artifacts and architecture as memories and emotions were rekindled.

Throughout this chapter, I present an introduction of each participant together with their account of their experiences as presented in their interview. Though there were different opinions and experiences, there was a fair amount of consensus on important issues. I created subtitles to categorize these topics. It was not possible to include all of the participants and their own words without considerable redundancy, so the decision was made to focus on presenting the themes and shared experiences over including every participant explicitly. I precede each quote with a short explanation of their account. I begin with Mr. Henry Miller's emotional narrative at the beginning of his interview, which took place in the restored building of the former Fairfield High School.

Mr. Henry Miller was born in Fairfield in 1956. He was one of nine siblings in a supportive family. Throughout his interview he shared the impact of his family and their emphasis on education. The location of the interview sparked his memory as a student in the same building when it was Fairfield High School. He was a sophomore when the school was closed, and students were sent to Winnsboro High School in an effort to integrate. Miller thoughtfully reminisced about his years at Fairfield High School during his interview.

> ***Henry Miller: So much pride. It was a wonderful time. It tickles me. Sometimes I sit here, and I reminisce. I go through and today on this aisle, I was filled with so much emotion that tears just ran down my face. It was so much emotion because I remember where we came from and then it just brought back all***

those memories. *(Henry Miller, October 27, 2018, at old Fairfield High School, Winnsboro, SC).*

Narratives from African American students, teachers and school leaders open a window to the less-publicized experiences during the desegregation era. Mr. Miller's account is so powerful in part because it defies the larger public narrative about the nature of these institutions and the experience of students in them. Their accounts reflect the emotions, actions and deeply instilled mindsets in the community of Fairfield. Some express promise for a better future. Others convey frustration with attitudes of complacency noting that, in some respects, little has changed.

Certain commonalities or themes emerge and collectively paint a more complete picture of the context and the community of Fairfield. Through the testimonies, otherwise unspoken nuances and mindsets of the Fairfield community are conveyed, and in some cases, explained.

Although each interview reveals a unique and personal testimony, six common threads emerged that provide a lens from the perspective of African Americans in Fairfield during era shaped by community sentiment, attitudes and mindsets. Participants discuss *Moral Bonds within the Black community, Nurturing Community and Educators, Jim Crow Community Influences, Inequality of Resources within Segregated Schools, Ironies of Free Choice and Coping with the Blending of Black and White Traditions.*

The collection of personal narratives illuminated recollections from African American students of the segregated community as they moved into unfamiliar territory that included white teachers and students. Participants articulate the impact of the close

family-like atmosphere within the segregated Black school. Some reveal challenges and cultural changes that students and faculty faced. These challenges and cultural changes were initiated by the mandated integration of schools. Teachers and staff members recall their own experiences in the early years surrounding the integration of Fairfield schools.

The following sections are organized by theme and present illustrative examples from the testimonies about these themes.

The Moral Bonds

The Moral Bonds theme highlights how pride and strong religious and moral values were deeply rooted in African American families and the African American community. This bond anchored the communities as they dealt with prejudice during the segregation period and hostility leading up to and following the integration of schools.

Education, hard work and diligence were valued highly as necessary attributes for future success. Teachers were an integral part of the African American community. Parents were supportive of teachers' efforts to educate their children. African Americans realized the importance of education as the avenue toward a better life, believing that societal change was eminent. Parents and teachers instilled pride in the children. The narratives illuminate the positive recollection of the close-knit relationships among themselves.

Willie Earl Thompson, born 1933, completed his grade school education in the segregated schools of Fairfield. Although he remembers the difficulty of walking long distances to grade school, he received encouragement from his mother to receive an education. He completed his education through seventh grade.

Willie Earl Thompson: We would always (start school) late September, and the reason for that because most of the Black kids they had to help with the farm. … but we had to walk. I had to walk, believe it or not, I had to walk about 5 miles one way to get to the two rural schools that we had, … cold or rain or whatever.

The oldest of five children, Mae Nolia Davis' family moved from Blair, South Carolina to Winnsboro when she was nine years old. Her father was a sharecropper. She attended Fairfield schools and was married at the age of fourteen. Davis recalls the drive her father had for his family and catching a ride with older students attending school.

Mae Nolia Davis (b. 1928): When we got down here (Fairfield)– I went to Black Jack school–it was a small school … and then I started coming up here [Fairfield County Training School]. Yeah, we didn't have a school bus or nothing like that. A family that build it up, helped us… and we'd catch a ride with them most of the time... but we always walked from school.

Hazel Pearson lived in Fairfield her entire life. She attended Gordon Elementary first through sixth grade and graduated from Fairfield High School. After college, she worked for Fairfield County School and then the town of Winnsboro. She volunteers in the community to help children. She credits her mother and teachers for providing a strong foundation and giving her the drive to be successful.

Hazel Pearson: My Mom., one thing she taught us is, if you can't do anything else, she wanted us to get an education. I started at the school right down the street from my house called Gordon Elementary. The times there were real good. Teacher-wise, I can remember the activities that we did there, we don't do today…There were a lot of programs where they had activities where the community would come and see you. The teacher gave us a foundation, the drive, on the way to success you've got to buckle down, get your lesson, study and that will prepare you.

Thelmer Cook grew up in Fairfield County on a 36-acre farm handed down by his grandfather. He felt fortunate that his family owned their land. Cook attended New Hope School and then Fairfield County Training School. Cook was in the last class to graduate in the eleventh grade. He went on to become principal of Geiger Elementary School in Ridgeway, South Carolina and the first Black magistrate in Fairfield since Reconstruction.

Thelmer Cook: I went to a little localized school … It was called New Hope School. Based on the standards then, it was about as nice as you could've expected for Black folk.

And then, when I got to the sixth grade…we came here [Fairfield High School] in the seventh grade. But I was the only one in my community that came to Fairfield. Fairfield was like a university to me [*laughter*] because, we was just

used to going to the localized school, and most of the kids would go as far as that school went, and that would be the limit of their education.
I went right here [Fairfield High School] for four years. And at that time you graduated in the eleventh grade. We were the last class to graduate in the eleventh grade.

Gladys Allen grew up in Fairfield County. She is one of five children. Her mother moved her and her siblings from Winston-Salem, New York to Ridgeway, Fairfield County. Allen remembers the responsibility and routines that followed that start of each day. A schedule including chores and homework was expected of her and her siblings.

Gladys Allen: You thought it was rough and hard at times, but if that's all you knew… that's what you did. You come in from school, change them clothes, you do that outside work. Then you came in the house, and you ate, and you did homework by lamplight. Because we didn't have electricity; so, we had a kerosene lamp on the kitchen table, and you did your homework. And at a certain time, that light went out, you better have that homework done. Yeah, it had to be done; wasn't no such thing as staying up till twelve and one o'clock at night doing homework. No, ma'am, we had a particular time to be in the bed, homework done, kitchen cleaned up. But you know… I would not change a thing. I think it made me appreciate, just appreciate so much more.

Leona Gripper attended Lebanon Presbyterian Church School in Ridgeway first through sixth grade before moving to St. Mark Baptist Church in Simpson for seventh and eighth grade. She then attended Fairfield County Training School, where she graduated. The name was changed to Fairfield High School after the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Gripper reflects on her parents' emphasis on education and their hope for better lives for "colored" people.

> ***Leona Gripper: My dad was [very proud]. He looked up to Franklin D. Roosevelt, because [he was the president that] really [seemed to be interested in better lives for colored people], here in South Carolina [and in the entire United States]. South Carolina was so racially segregated.***
> ***I started attending here… Fairfield County Training School. I guess the white community thought the Black people had to be trained, so they called it the Fairfield County Training School. The children now don't even know anything about Fairfield County Training School.***

High Expectations

African American families in the Fairfield community had high expectations for the future. Those who went on to higher education were revered within the community. Allen University and Benedict College were located in nearby Columbia, South Carolina. South Carolina State College is in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Johnson C. Smith College was in Charlotte, North Carolina. These institutions offered African Americans in Fairfield and the surrounding community opportunities for higher education beyond high school. The University of South Carolina became integrated in the 1960s.

Henry Miller expressed the importance of higher education in his family. His father instilled in him the importance of education to ensure a better life for his children.

> ***Henry Miller: My dad took so much pride in education. He made education a big part of our life. Even though my dad didn't go further than ninth grade, he bestowed that on all of us, all nine siblings, that we had to be educated.***
> ***So, my 8th year, I went to Fairfield (High School). I was ecstatic. I never had to ride the bus because our schools were in the community. (On my walk to school) that's where I met young men like Ted Manning (Theodore Manning, a participant in this study), fresh out of college and some of my teachers including Ms. Elizabeth Martin (a participant in this study).***
> ***At an early age, we would talk about college. They would pump it into all of us. This was the early 60s and we might not have made it into the big schools, but we made it to college whether it was Allen…Benedict…Johnson C. Smith... or whether it was South Carolina State. Some of my friends got a chance to go through integration at South Carolina (USC-Columbia). Walter – he was one of the early ones that made it through.***

Gladys Allen attended Cedar Creek and Presbyterian church schools until third grade, when Geiger Elementary was built for African American students. She then came to Fairfield High School. Allen recalled that college was an expectation for her. Her mother wanted Gladys to have opportunities that she did not have.

Gladys Allen: I graduated, and my mom said, 'Gladys, you going to college.' And I said, "Well, I don't know." She said, 'No, I'm telling you: You going to college.' She wanted us to have better, have better opportunities than what she did.

Nurturing Educators and Community

Participants shared the sentiment that African American students received a quality education encompassed in love and support from passionate teachers. Both parents and educators had high expectation for African American children. Pride was felt by students and teachers.

Eva Armstrong walked long distances to school each day, yet fondly remembers the caring teachers. She recalls that teachers often lived out of town and would temporarily stay with her family during the school year.

Eva Armstrong (b. 1929) - But I never, never ride a bus! –we had to walk, going and coming. My daddy would pick us up when it was raining and it was cold, when he wasn't working out in the weather…And when you'd get to school, you had good teachers. They taught us the best they knew how.
The teachers, a lot of times, would come to my mama's house and stay for two weeks at a time because they had no place–because sometimes they be out of town–and so my mama would just take them in.

Paul Prailleau attended Fairfield County Training school during the 1950s**.** He remembers the caring teachers who helped him when he struggled with his work.

Paul Prailleau: There was one particular teacher that I remember, Miss Ethel Williams. One day I was doing math… and everything was wrong. So, she tell me, "Prailleau, you have been doing well so, why is everything wrong? Can you stay after school?" …So I stay after school and show me the precise steps to do subtraction of a common fraction. And I tell you to this day I had not forgotten that.

Queen Davis moved with her family to Ridgeway, South Carolina from Massachusetts. She began fifth grade in Fairfield. She remembers learning about Black history, songs and poems. She refers to her surroundings at the historic Fairfield High school as she brags on the emphasis on learning that occurred.

Queen Davis (b.1938) - Now, we were taught, like I said, we were taught. We learned it all. Right here. We learned it all. Ah, one thing we did learn our history. The kids in ninth grade now aren't learning it like we learned the Black history. We sang the songs, we learned the poems, we knew all the people who were involved and all the historic Blacks and all the literary Blacks. That was one thing that we had. And we had a… we had… there was a dignity to being here. One, case and point was when there was graduation, the mothers dressed up. They put on their best hat, their best clothes. Everybody at that graduation was totally dressed up.

Edwinda Goodman spent her entire life in Fairfield. She attended segregated schools until her last year of high school when the doors of Fairfield High School were closed. Goodman had fond memories of her school years. She held high esteem for the caring and loving teachers from elementary and secondary school.

> ***Edwinda Goodman: And then going down to Gordon Elementary School, how we used to walk down the street, all of us would meet us together, and we would walk down to the end of the road to the school together, and we all was in different classes. We just had a beautiful time.***
> ***And that seventh-grade graduation - The biggest day of our life! I loved that day. I just loved that day. I can remember it like it was yesterday.***
> ***And we had some beautiful teachers. They was caring and loving teachers. They cared about our education. They made sure that we stayed focused. And it wasn't no suspension and all of that --because all they had to do was to speak, and we respected them. We knew if we didn't, we were gonna get it at home.***

Nadine Boyd attended Geiger Elementary and Fairfield High School before graduating from Winnsboro High School in 1971. She recalls having a great experience in the segregated Elementary School.

> ***Nadine Boyd: I went to school at six and I just loved it. Everybody was right there in the neighborhood and people I knew. But it was a great experience. I remember the teachers actually knowing who parents were, who grandparents***

were, and when kids were disobedient or acting crazy, what we called in that day, they would remember who's yo' mama, who's yo' daddy. They wanted to know, so they could report to them how we were conducting ourselves. And I think in that there was a caring about people and about students and it wasn't like, 'I'm here to teach, get a paycheck'. (It was) 'I'm here to take care of these children the eight hours that they're not home. They're with us.' So, that was a really, really good experience.

Commitment of Black Educators

Pride within the African American community created a family-like environment within schools and was especially strong during the years of segregation. Black educators were committed to the African American students. Henry Miller recognized the commitment of the teachers and administrators.

Henry Miller: I remember it was such a pride that we had when we went to 'Old Fairfield', to Gordon Elementary. I remember all the good teachers. It was so much pride before integration. It was so much pride there that you got to get it. Extra hours – whatever it took.

African American teachers and administrators were part of the African American community. During the 1940s and 1950s, teachers would often board with a family during the school year and in some cases for several years.

Edwinda Goodman: Oh yes, they boarded quite a few of them (teachers). They would come in and leave out, you know, every year. They'd stay like two or three years. Miss Claudette Paul, Doretha Walker, it was a quite of few of them. They would stay about three or four years, then they would go, but they were about teaching. … And sometimes, they loved my grandma so much, there was two of them staying in a room together, but they just didn't want to go back to Columbia.

Leona Gripper received her education in Fairfield schools. She graduated from Fairfield County Training School in 1952. After marrying, she and her family moved to Illinois but returned to Fairfield after retiring. The sincerity of the teachers in Fairfield helped prepare students for the world.

Leona Gripper: The teachers that we've had, they were really sincere about preparing us to go into the world, and do whatever we needed to do.
They were more concerned about the kids, because they–before us they had had hard times. And you know, I know my cousin Amelia, she said that when she started teaching in 1939, she was only making five dollars a month. But the teachers they knew that we needed to be prepared and they instilled in us to do our best. And most of us did –we had some children that kind of fell behind– but it wasn't because of the teachers.

During the winter months, African American students arrived cold and hungry after the long walk to school. Traditionally, teachers had a fire started and prepared warm meals for the students. Most schools were equipped with fireplaces or a kitchen. Alvin Richmond, Sr. attended grade school at St. Mark before moving to Geiger Elementary in 1955. He recalls having to gather firewood to heat the school.

> ***Alvin Richmond, Sr.: We had a little school house there–St. Mark Church, two-room schoolhouse–and Ms. Pearl Peay was one of the teachers and the principal. Ms. Kennedy, was the other teacher. And they made sure that we learned how to read and follow instructions. And it was rough, because of the fact when we went to school we had to go in the afternoon before we went home, we had to go down in the woods and get what we called 'crow trash', little old dead branches and stuff, to bring up so we'd have something to make a fire with [to] stay warm while we was in school during those winter months. We didn't have running water; we had to go to a spring to bring the water up so we'd have drinking water. And they had a big pot belly stove in the classroom that the teachers would bring whatever they needed to make some type of soup. We didn't have a cafeteria. The teachers would provide the soups for lunch. In 1955, we moved over to Geiger Elementary, there at Ridgeway. At Geiger we had some of the most wonderful teachers. They was like mothers to us.***

Jessie May McKinstry recalls positive school experiences from the 1950s where she attended a segregated Black school from first grade through high school graduation.

Her fond memories included time spent reading Dick and Jane softback readers that were passed down by older siblings. She describes the teachers' desire to pull the best out of the students.

> ***Jessie Mae McKinstry: They were encouraging people who wanted to pull your best out of you. Most teachers had our best interests in mind. They knew the community. They knew the parents, and if you didn't know your parent, they knew somebody else who knew your parent. And they made a concerted effort to contact your parents if you needed help in different areas.***

Discipline and Respect

Discipline and respect for elders was emphasized and supported by the adults in the community including parents and educators. Henry Miller uses the familiar phrase "It takes as village to raise a child" to describe the close community in Fairfield.

> ***Henry Miller: You know but back then the teachers they were part of the community. A lot of our teachers stayed right here in Winnsboro, and they knew your parents so it's a difference when the teachers know your parent. You know you respected your elders and on my way to school, if you did anything that was out of the norm, they corrected you as well as told your parents. I just believe it takes a village to raise a child.***

Edwinda Goodman lightheartedly recalls Principal Green's commitment to maintain discipline in the school.

Edwinda Goodman: We were close knitted. Even when we ended up going to school out here (Fairfield High School), they used to have a walkway all the way up. And we used to have to jump across the walkway to go to the convenience store. A lot of times we got--if you got caught--our Principal Green was a short, very small, petite man, and you talk about, run. He could run. He would be sitting in his office one minute, watching. Then when we would come back across the street, he'd be standing right there.

Parent Involvement

As a first grader in 1950, Mary Starks walked a mile and a half every day to get to school, passing Mount Zion, the white school in Fairfield. Starks speaks of the effectiveness of parental involvement and passionate teachers.

Mary Stark: They kept us on our Ps and Qs at all times. And our parents were involved, too. They were involved. If there were anything going wrong in the school system or, if we were in trouble, the teachers could– we had no telephone, but they would get in touch with your parents to let them know, 'Well, Mary's not doing her work', or 'William is not doing his work'. And I guarantee you, there was a change in our classroom performance.
Oh, we had excellent teachers. I will stand on a stack of Bibles and tell you that we had excellent – they were concerned, they were passionate for us, and we were a community, like a community family. The teachers lived in this community– most of the teachers– and they knew every parent; and every

parent would check on their children. So, it was a different story from today, okay… And if there was anything, as I said, going on wrong, the teachers would get in touch with the parents.

Weldon Haire strongly valued the education he received at Fairfield Training School. Haire was a junior in high school when the "new" building construction was completed. The interview took place in what he remembers was his homeroom. He pointed to where the gym was. The name of school changed from Fairfield County Training School to Fairfield High School in the 1960s.

Weldon Haire: All schools at the time was church schools, it wasn't no school like it is here. So, we went to school there, till the seventh grade. From the seventh grade then we came here to Fairfield County Training School. They (teachers) wanted to make sure that we learned how to spell, do mathematics, and read. So, whenever you started, they always taught us that if you can spell, you can read. You can't spell you don't know the words. Mathematics they made us–gave us these timetables and we had to learn them by heart, you know. I'm saying is, this is really what attracted me. So, I got pretty good in mathematics, so from that day on, when I came to high school here, we had really good teachers here who knew how to teach.

I really enjoyed high school. But my dad was always particular about it because he didn't wanna see us get hurt and so forth, and I loved football, I was just

rough as the rest of the boys but he say, 'No'. And whatever mom and dad told us they meant that. We couldn't do like kids today.

And after high school, if you paid attention to what the teacher was teaching you, you knowed how to live when you got out in life and so… And this is what I tried to teach my children; be obedient to your teachers just as well as your parents. If you do those things and so forth, high school is good. Life is good. But the basis starts right here: right here in school. And we had good foundation here.

Based on the preceding accounts, although lack of adequate facilities and rundown buildings played into the general deficit perspective about the educational needs for Blacks, the perspective within the Black community regarding their segregated school was supportive, nurturing and joyful.

Jim Crow Influences

The Black school was an oasis of cultural support within the broader discriminatory context of the Jim Crow South. Laws separating Blacks and whites were prevalent within the community.

Children learned lessons on where racial lines were drawn in the community. African Americans endured humiliation associated with Jim Crow laws and the decades-long common sentiment to enforce the subordination of African Americans. The "Black" schools were given substandard, used facilities and materials.

There were certain understood behaviors and practices that Blacks followed to avoid social conflicts. Queen Davis attended school in Ridgeway, South Carolina until ninth grade. At that time African American students had to go to surrounding towns to attend a "Black" high school. Queen Davis recalls that racism during her time in Massachusetts was "very veiled" and discrimination was "under the cover." She remembers having to learn about living in the South as an African American person.

> ***Queen Davis: I was in fifth grade, when we came here. It (moving to South Carolina) was such a shock. See, my mother and father did not sit us down and say, 'Okay, this is how you have to behave now that you're in the South.' They didn't do that; a formal orientation was probably what we needed. 'Cause my brother had, uh, a very bad experience. We were just fortunate that the man who came down on him was a friendly kind of guy. He was not hateful, but he certainly did not want to be, disrespected as a white man. So, my dad, would cut poke wood, and they could pin it up and sell it. And he said (to my brother), 'Go down to tell Mr. Kelly that we've got these many, uh, cords of wood. That he can come and pick those up.' And daddy was busy doing something, so JD jumped in the truck, and he drove down there, and he went to the man's front door, and knock on his door. And boy! The man let him know that he was angry, he said you got to go around to the back. And he went around to the back. And he dealt with him. He got the message. And daddy- he would just show up when it was time to cut the wood, but he came right up behind my brother and took my daddy out into the yard. I-I don't know what conspired, in***

that conversation because my daddy never told us, but that was the first time he decided he needed to orient us a little bit. He said, 'Okay, now you don't go to the front door of white people's homes. You don't ever do that; you go to the back. No matter what your reason for being there is, you always go to their back door. Always.' And that's all he said about that.

So, they kept it short, they didn't just wash us down in all the rhetoric to let us know we're now in a segregated South. And all these things are before you, and you're going to run into places where they say, "white only," and places where they say this, um, you go to the back, or you go upstairs. They didn't, we had, we had kind of ran into that as we went.

My auntie, who was almost our age, she kept us well informed. She made sure we didn't, we didn't miss a trick if she was around. So that was the way we learned how to live in a segregated South.

You know, it was just so different (from Massachusetts). Not only are we riding in wagons, we never had a wagon ride before 'til we got here. Now we're riding in my granddaddy's two-horse wagon! And that was just fun, fun, fun.

But, also, we have all this stuff about, you need to step off the curb and, and uh all these places you can't go, how we're always in the back. It was demoralizing in a way but there was an aura of, "Wow", this is so different for me to take in. And little kids take in things, and we grew up, we didn't grow up here, so we didn't already know, so we had to learn. And when we learned, I think we learned it well. Because, uh, we learned it with some understanding of why this

is. Because we had come from a place where it wasn't openly, in a way, a process or practiced.

I had that early background of mixing and mingling with white kids (in Massachusetts) and having white friends and all that. So, I had white friends, I had a little white girlfriend who my mother could not stand 'cause she was so bad. - Not because she was white, she was so bad! She just messes up everything. And when she, we would hide her under the bed because my mom didn't want her in the house. So that's how close we were to the little white kids that lived around us. We were the only Blacks in right in that corner for a while, but after a while we moved to an area where there were a lot more. But, kids, kids, we make it happen.

African Americans were expected to ride in the back on buses and public transportation. Thelmer Cook reflects on his experiences in riding the Greyhound but to school or downtown.

Thelmer Cook: I used to have to ride the Greyhound bus sometime, because we didn't have buses down there. It cost me fifteen cent to ride from out there to school or to downtown. All you had to do was wave the bus down and have fifteen cents. And the Blacks had to ride on the back of the bus. The whites rode on the front.

And one day the Blacks were kind of crowded out in the back, nobody hardly was in the front, but the whites was kind of scattered, and you had empty seats

all up in there. And I was standing up a little in front of the white man that was sitting down in the seat over there, and he asked me, 'Nigga, whatchu doing up here?' That hurt me, I never will forget that.

But there was one bus driver–and all the bus drivers were white then–and he was very nice, he had a little jump seat up there, right beside the bus driver, beside the door. He would put me way up there, in front of everybody.

(*laughter*) *You always–it's always been, where you ran across a few whites that were nice.*

They would treat you as nice as they …But they couldn't do that in front of the others (whites)… because they were called 'nigga-lovers.'

African American children grew up seeing the separation of races and were taught to not talk about it. Betty Dorsey attended segregated schools and graduated from Fairfield High School. Dorsey recalls her feelings as a child trying to understand the community mindset.

Betty Dorsey: Well you know, back then our parents just thought that this is the way it's supposed to be. What I always wondered as a child, 'how are we all human beings and we have to separate ourselves by race.' Now that bothered me from a child, but I had nothing really traumatic to happen to me. And we had to–when we sat on the bus, we had to get at the back of the bus and it always bothered me, you know, how could that be? We're all human; it does not matter the color of your skin. You didn't say anything at that time.

"And even when it came to a water fountain, we could not drink out of the same water fountain that a white person drank out of, and I thought that was terrible. But at that time parents taught you, just 'don't say anything', you know, just go ahead with whatever's going on. So, finally, as Dr. Martin Luther King and others began to fight this thing, I was happy because I say it's not fair. And if I never remember anything that Dr. Martin Luther King says it's 'not the color of your skin but the content of your character.'

Jessie McKinstry remembers wondering, as a child, why Blacks could not ride the bus, use the public library and had to learn from discarded books that students from Mount Zion, the white school, had used.

Jessie McKinstry: It wasn't a problem as far as the school itself… but as I got older, I saw some the differences. We would be walking to school and then the white children would be riding the school bus. We had to walk a little over a mile. I was wondering why we couldn't have a school bus to ride. And the Blacks weren't allowed to use the public library. I do remember we had our schoolbooks, because our schoolbooks were issued by the Department of Education. And we would get the old books that the students at Mount Zion had used three to four years. We got the old books and they got new books. I do remember that.

Wade Peay grew up in Shady Grove, on the western side of Fairfield County. He attended Fairfield schools before integration. His parents were unable to help him with his schoolwork but they taught him how to survive negative situations and prejudice that African Americans faced.

> ***Wade Peay: Back in the early years, you see when you started school, there were no heating systems in the school. Two boys had to take their whole day to go out in the woods, and just whatever they could break and bring back to keep the fire going at school. So, see, it was very difficult to get education during those times.***
>
> ***Parents didn't really have an education to teach you, so it was sort of like you had to learn things for yourself. I mean, basically what they really taught you back then, from my standpoint, was how to stay safe, because if they (white people) caught you in the wrong place at the wrong time, they would take your life.***
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> ***So, they (parents) more or less taught you how to recognize that and get away from it as soon as you see it. Try to survive because those years were terrible far as growin' up from a Black person standpoint. I mean, everything was against you. So, a lot of children quit school, because their parents didn't have a lot of education. So, there was no direction.***
>
> ***In my case, I didn't really understand the importance of education until I was promoted to ninth grade. I start coming to school up here (Fairfield High School)–we had teachers up here that really cared about us.***

Mattie Squirewell, Hattie Brice and Thelmer Cook discussed incidences of prejudice against African Americans after Jim Crow law ended. There were some communities within Fairfield County where Blacks were "subject to be" physically attacked, especially Black males. Squirewell recalls an incident in which a Black man was killed by dogs released on him in the Mill Village area.

> ***Mattie Squirewell: I mean, that, you know, somebody turned the dogs on a Black man, it's maybe been about fifteen years ago–and killed him– just right down in that Mill Village…it wasn't that long ago.***
> ***They turned the dogs loose on him, … and they didn't do anything about it. That's how bad it was down there. You couldn't walk down through there after a certain time, you know, at night especially.***

Robert Davis was one of ten children and was born in White Oak, South Carolina. His father worked in the pulp wood mill, and his mother worked in a plant in Winnsboro. He graduated from Fairfield County Training School in 1965 and was drafted into the military. After returning to South Carolina, he received his college degree and was elected to the Fairfield County Council where he served for eighteen years. He shares a glimpse of what life was like for him as a young African American man in Fairfield before the Civil Rights era.

Robert Davis: I worked for the man up there, Winnsboro Furniture Company was the name. (On) Wednesdays the stores closed at twelve, and his secretary wanted me to do some work at her house that afternoon. So, her car was out back there so she said, "Get in the car and I'll be out shortly." So, when I got to the car–a '55 or '56 Ford (laughter) I don't know how I remember that–but I proceeded to open the door to the car, and she had a pie sitting where the passenger would sit. So, I just slid the pie over and got in the front seat. And once she got out, "No, you're gonna . . ." once she came out to get in the car, "You gone disturb my pies." So, I proceeded to get out and just told her, "I'll walk on to your house." Which was a few blocks away. But her motivation was the pies was supposed to deter me from getting into the car, getting into the front seat, to sit in the back. So, I said, 'No, no, I'll just walk on up there'. And that was the first and last time I went to work at her house there. And that was...probably '65. I think I was a junior in high school.

That had been the way it was. I wasn't involved in any real tensions other than the accepted norm at the time, you know, and it was a normal atmosphere, so to speak. But there were no confrontations that I'm aware, I've heard of some but, I wasn't privy to those.

And there was one section in town where Blacks didn't drive through, which is called 'Mexico,' the Mill Village, across the railroad track, probably anybody can tell you where it is, but Blacks just didn't go into that area…you just didn't travel through there.

Everything was separate, two movies, buses, there was a white bus coming from the county into the City of Winnsboro, and you had the Black kids riding one bus. White kids coming, you going - basically two or three blocks apart, like this school and the school across the railroad track there, basically going to the same area, you're using twice the transportation cost. So, which is just silly, but that's the way it was…

Theodore Manning began teaching math at Fairfield High School during the when Freedom of Choice was available for students to attend any school. No white children came to Fairfield High School but some Blacks chose to attend Winnsboro High School. Jim Crow mentality was subtle in ways such as naming a school for Blacks. He explained that the name change from Fairfield Training School was significant in that Black institutes were called Training schools when white schools were called high schools or institutes.

Theodore Manning: They wouldn't name a Black school a 'high school', it was a 'training school'. Then they changed this to Fairfield High School. I think the name of this Fairfield County Training School was a stigma more than anything else. You couldn't teach Blacks, they just came here to train them, so, Fairfield County Training School. Your white school was called Mt. Zion Institute, so, higher learning. Curriculum might've been the same, but just the name title itself. It was a stigma, you know.

All interactions with white people were not negative. Many Blacks worked for whites in the community and developed positive relationships. Betty Gunthrope was a teacher in Fairfield Public Schools after integration. She attended segregated schools and graduated valedictorian from Fairfield High School. Gunthrope recalls experiences as a child in the segregated community.

> ***Betty Gunthrope: "I had some very pleasant experiences, too, with white people. I'm just 'gonna' be very honest with you; it has a lot to do with character and class. My mother worked for some white people who were well off. In fact, her boss was the manager down at…where…at the United States Rubber Company then–that was the place. Mr. and Mrs. Drurie, (sp.)–they came from New York–and her thing was this–and I'm gonna give this to you–she said, 'Never work for poor white people. They have attitudes.'"***
>
> ***Every afternoon after school I went to their house. They lived right on the corner of High Street, which is an apartment building now, but it was a huge house. They used to have parties there. I went there, and sat in their kitchen, and did my homework while my mother finished supper and stuff, before we went home. And they were extremely kind to me. You know, they were always very kind, and they liked the fact that I could read and do that kind of thing. I had that, that was a good experience.***

School Inequalities

Funding allotted for Black schools was substantially less than the amount designated for white schools. School facilities in Black schools were often old and

rundown. Black students had to use discarded furniture and books from the white schools.

Many participants began their education in two or three room Rosenwald schools that were constructed beginning in the 1920s for Black children. The Nazareth School was a Rosenwald School (Appendix A). There were ten Rosenwald schools constructed in Fairfield and the surrounding communities.

Willie Earl Thompson attended the Nazareth School during the 1950s. He remembers having old furniture that needed repair and outdated books and materials that were given to the Black schools when white students received new materials. One teacher was responsible for teaching multiple grades throughout the day. Many students dropped out when they got older.

> ***Willie Earl Thompson: During that time, we had little country schools. Mine was called Nazareth. It had three rooms. We were in the best two rooms, but they weren't in that good of shape either. See, we really didn't have nothing. We would tell the school board, I guess. Yeah, the school didn't give us nothing like that. So, we did the best we could. I think they would pay the teacher. And every now and then they would come there and talk to the teacher -- every now and then.***
>
> ***With materials in the class – nothing. We had some old desks that some other schools give us, but they were all broken down. We had some straight chairs. When we get ready to write, you had to write on your lap. We had to rent old***

books from the white school. And they were old. Really, what was there (in the school) was old.

During that time, (the teacher) would have to teach fourth grade something, then the fifth grade and sixth grade and seventh grade then start back over again. So, you was on your own most of the day. If you wanted to learn something, you would do better.

(As we got older) students, they started just dropping out because they started working on the farms. And I think during that time World War II was building. A lot of parents left the area and went north to places like Baltimore and New York so they could make a good living. (By the time) I finished grade school, it was just me and one more girl. I decided I wanted to come to school in Winnsboro.

Overcrowding of Black Schools

Overcrowding in the Black schools in comparison to white schools was evident in each of the six areas of the Fairfield School District. In the Annual Report of the County Superintendent for the year ending June 30, 1965, and fled July 20, 1965, schools were designated as Black or white by a notation (W) or (N). Black schools often enrolled multiple levels within the same building. Table 1.4 shows the discrepancy in the number of Black and white students enrolled in each school building.

Table 4.1 Fairfield County Public School Enrollment – June 20, 1965

Fairfield County School District **Public School Enrollment based on 10-day attendance** **Annual Report of the County Superintendent (Year ending June 30, 1965)**		
Area 1	Mount Zion (W)	446
	Everett (W)	352
	Gordon (N)	909
Area 2	Ridgeway (W)	156
	Geiger (N)	474
Area 3	(No Negro Schools)	(District Total 280 pupils)
	Mitford Elementary (W)	143
	Woodward Elementary (W)	137
Area 4	Montecello (W)	100
	McCrory Liston (N)	377 (elementary) 545 (high school) 8 (special education)
Area 5	White Hall Elementary (N)	250
Area 6	Greenbrier Elementary (W)	104
	Kelly Miller (N)	

Staffing Inequality

Margaret Holmes became the first school secretary at Fairfield High School during segregation. She was instrumental in the restoration efforts of the school. She points to pictures of past principals and superintendents throughout the interview. Holmes remembers going to the white school to use equipment necessary to perform her job duties.

> ***Margaret Holmes: Anyway, they must have approved for the principals to get secretaries the year after I graduated, because a girlfriend of mine she became the secretary at the elementary school which was Gordon Elementary. And I became secretary for Fairfield High. Mr. T.E. Greene was my principal over there on that picture. (points to the picture of T.E. Greene) That is the same time, his last name was Williams, (was) the superintendent… I don't remember his first name was. We did have a picture of him somewhere. Oh, there he is right under administration. (points to the picture of W. Williams) He was the superintendent. All principals have to turn in different reports. Anyway, well, I was saying all that to say: if he (the Black principal) had to turn in a report that required filling it out–we didn't have computers then, but we had typewriters—but if it required the long legal sheet… I had to go over to Mt. Zion, to use their long carriage machine because the schools–the Black schools—did not have one. But they were required to complete the form. Me, being the person just under Mr. Greene, he accepted… if you went over there it wasn't like they would say, 'okay, as long as you got over you could.' I had to wait until no one***

was on it, then I was able to complete the form and bring it back, you know, for Mr. Greene to submit it to the superintendent's office.

Bus Transportation

Bus transportation was available only for white students during the 1940s and 1950s. Black students walked long distances to school from an early age. Students walked to segregated schools and understood the inequality shown to African American and privilege of the white children.

White students rode a school bus to Greenbrier, the white school. They would taunt the Black children who had to walk long distances to school. Hattie Brice graduated in 1949. She remembers carrying her little sister on her back on the walk home from school.

Hattie Brice: Yes, and it was pretty hard. Someone would have to carry my books, because I had to carry my little sister on my back. Like I say, the whites was riding by on the bus (going to Greenbrier), hollering obscenities at us and throwing things…On the bus while we were walking.

Thelmer Cook remembers the negative behaviors of white students riding by African American students walking to school. He recalls repercussions of one family because the African American students said something back to them.

Thelmer Cook: And we didn't have any buses. The white kids would ride by you, (as Black students were) walking the road going home, and they would ride

by cursing you and that kind of thing sometime; and calling you 'niggas' and that kind of stuff.

And if you lived on their property, some children–I know one family had to move that afternoon, because the children hollered back at them, and cursed back at them, and the owner of that property heard about it and said, "Well you got to go tonight." They had to move, that afternoon.

During the 1940s Black students attended school in local churches. By the 1950s schools were some Rosenwald schools had been constructed and available for Black students to attend. Transportation was not available for Black children. Jean McCrory remembers walking three miles one way to school from first grade through third grade.

Jean McCrory: We did not have a centralized school where a whole lot of kids went. It was a community school. My oldest brother, he was born in 1940; when he started school, he went to where I went to church. They had a little room in the church where people taught them. Then, by the time I was old enough to go to school, they had a building about three miles from where I lived, and all the grades were taught in that building. So, from the time I started school until I finished third grade I walked to school, three miles one way.

When I look at a six-year-old today it almost seems impossible that we did that. And that was every day, and even in the rain, because my momma didn't drive, and whatever we had, my dad was using it to work. So, we had to walk no matter what the weather was or stay home.

Mary Stark walked a mile and a half, passing the white school every day in rain, sleet or snow as a first grader. Her legs felt weak from the distance.

Mary Stark: "I was born on the other side by Mt. Zion School, which was a white school. We walked a mile and a half every day to get to our school. In the rain, sleet, and snow. If school was going on, we walked to school every day. As a 1st grader, my little legs was very weak but we walked to school."

Nadine Boyd recalls the relief of arriving at a warm school with food, friendship and good teaching after a long cold walk to school. Teachers arrived early to heat the schools and provide breakfast for the students as they arrived.

Nadine Boyd: It was so cold. If you would, you know how when it gets cold, and your tears go down your eyes. It felt like our tears were drying and turn into ice. But we knew when we got to school that there would be heat, food, friendship, teaching, good old teaching.

Willie Earl Thompson recalls his unpleasant experiences walking to school during inclement weather. White children in school busses would laugh at the Black students and sometimes throw things.

Willie Earl Thompson: "I had to walk about 5 miles one way to get to the two rural schools that we had. Buses used to pass us, and we'd be in the rain and sometimes they'd (white children on the bus) be laughing. Sometimes they would throw things out the window. And we would always want to know why we couldn't ride a bus, too."

Equalization Schools

The *Briggs v. Elliott* case, filed in the fall of 1950 prompted South Carolina Governor James F. Byrnes, to initiate legislations to support his idea to equalize and reform education in its Black and white schools. In Fairfield County five equalization schools were constructed or renovated between the years 1951 and 1960.

In 1951, South Carolina passed its first general sales tax to fund African American school construction. Governor James Byrnes developed the equalization legislative package in response to *Briggs v. Elliott* and based on recommendations on the 1947 Peabody survey and a 1950 report from the House of Representatives supporting a sales tax to fund educational improvements following the WWII (National Register of Historic Places, 2009). This attempt was to create "separate but equal" schools to forestall the order by the Supreme Court requiring desegregation of the state's public schools. While this program ultimately was unsuccessful in creating truly "separate but equal" educational facilities for Black students, the program did transform the architecture of education in South Carolina" (Debrasko, 2019). The schools were constructed to represent the modern architectural trends with better lighting, wider halls and open access to classrooms. As part of the school equalization plan, some Black

students living outside of city limits and from surrounding communities were provided buses to bring them to the Black school.

Jerome Boyd attended Fairfield schools during the late 1950s and early 1960s when bus transportation because available for African American students in Fairfield and surrounding communities.

> ***Jerome Boyd: The (segregated) schools we attended during that time were relatively clean, new construction in the late 50s and early 60s. Those schools were built so we didn't attend the one room with the pot belly stove. We didn't, we didn't walk eight miles, ten miles. We were just beyond that generation of school. And so, we had relatively new buildings. Like I said with indoor plumbing, heat and all, we thought, were all the amenities at that time.***
> ***We rode a bus. They had a bus for us that only Black children rode.***
> ***We had a good time.***

Ironies of Free Choice

In 1965, county school leaders proposed the Freedom of Choice plan as the method by which to integrate Fairfield schools. The plan was submitted as an attempt to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to counter the "separate but equal" dual school system. When the Freedom of Choice plan was offered, only a few Blacks chose to attend white schools. No white students chose to attend Black schools. Feelings of apprehension among parents and teachers dominated the Black community. Students who experienced the transition to integrate Fairfield schools had a range of experiences.

Elizabeth Martin taught over thirty years in Fairfield County schools but did not attend as a student. As a high school student in Tennessee, she had attended an integrated school. When she and her husband moved to Fairfield in 1968, they placed their daughter in the predominantly white high school under the Freedom of Choice program.

> ***Elizabeth Martin: They had what they call Freedom of Choice. Many of the progressive Blacks sent their children to the Freedom of Choice – sent their children to the white high school. But they were preaching to the Black kids to stay where they were. Because they were afraid the Black teachers would lose their jobs. They were protecting their own.***
>
> ***I came here in 1968. The parents (here) wanted their children to stay in the Black high school. Some other parents wanted their children to go in the white high school, which is what we did. When we came here, I wanted my daughter to go to the white high school, because she was two years away before going to college.***

Students at McCrory Liston (Black school for grades 7-12) had the choice to attend an integrated Winnsboro High School. Jerome Boyd attended segregated Black schools Kelly Miller Elementary and McCrory Liston High School. When Freedom of Choice program was offered in 1965, his father moved him from McCrory Liston to Winnsboro High School, which was 22 miles closer to his home.

Jerome Boyd: I actually went from Kelly Miller Elementary to McCrory Liston because that was the Black school. So, when they announced that there would be integration (under the Freedom of Choice option) in 1965, my father would not allow us to go back to McCrory Liston because it was thirty miles away, and we were only eight miles from Winnsboro High. So, I came to Winnsboro High School the first year of integration in fall of 1965.

Some students were not given a choice. Easter Samuels was bused from Ridgeway to attend Fairfield High School since there was no Black high school in her community. She completed her senior year at Winnsboro High School when the doors at Fairfield High School closed.

Easter Samuels: And we had to be bused from Ridgeway to Fairfield County to go to school. And I started school here at Fairfield County when I was thirteen, in the eighth grade. Uh-huh, the classes started eighth grade and went through twelfth. And our class didn't get to graduate from this school, we had to graduate from Winnsboro High because the integration had started, demanding integration.

Karen Ross Grant grew up in Winnsboro to a family with several educators. Two grandmothers were teachers and her grandfather had been the principal of a Black school years prior. After graduating from Gordon Elementary School, the segregated Black school in Winnsboro, Grant's parents made the decision for her to attend Winnsboro

High, under the Freedom of Choice option. In 1965, only about 55 African American high school students from all communities in Fairfield County chose to attend Winnsboro High School under Freedom of Choice between 1965 and 1970. Grant attended Winnsboro High School from seventh grade until graduation in 1971. Her mother, Maude Ross, was an English teacher and guidance counselor at the Fairfield County High School that was Black, in the segregated system.

> ***Karen Ross Grant: Around '66, '65-'66, there was some integration of the predominately white school which was Winnsboro High. And my parents were among other parents who had that decision of whether they wanted their children to experience…what was called Freedom of Choice. Prior to then (schools were) totally [segregated].***
>
> ***There were only 14 other Blacks with me in this freedom of choice setting. In the whole school only 55 Blacks from different communities, from Blair, Jenkinsville, Ridgeway and Winnsboro. And the teachers, the difference was I had gone from a setting where teachers cared about my learning to a setting where they really didn't want me there. And I had to prove myself even more. Even from the standpoint of South Carolina history and my teacher deciding that he was going to call us negras, and my having to raise my hand to help him understand that that was not the way you pronounced it, it was Negro. And I pointed to my knee and I said, "I'm here to grow." And he turned very flushed. And said, "We don't tolerate smart alecks in my class." And I said, "I think it's a matter of respect." So. I learned to speak up and stand up when I needed to.***

I'll move forward to my junior year, I had wanted to try for being a cheerleader. They would not have it, Black cheerleaders on the team. I wanted to go to a prom and have that experience. The only prom I could go to was one, if I had a date, from the Black school to go to their prom. And did so.

But whites and Blacks did not do a whole lotta socializing within the school walls.

Teacher Desegregation

The Fairfield school board policy extended the Freedom of Choice option to teachers in 1965. Correspondence related to teacher desegregation spanned over five years (Appendix D).

Teachers were given the choice to work in a Black or white school. Teachers and school employees who worked in the newly integrated schools also experienced a range of changes. Most African American teachers remained in the Black schools until the students were integrated in 1970.

In a letter dated August 3, 1966, Fairfield Superintendent, W. D. Mitchell was requesting reconsideration of the decision to defer federal financial assistance based on non-compliance with federal policy. The letter was addressed to David Seeley of the Federal Equal Opportunities Program at the U. S. Office of Education. He stated that "Teachers signed contracts in March to teach in schools of their choice. School Board Policy, known to all teachers, is that they may request assignments at any school in the district without regard to race or color. None of our teachers requested or signed contracts to cross over color lines." This evident in school board correspondence as they addressed issues of non-compliance with federal desegregation expectations.

Questions regarding job security and local supervisory practices aroused apprehension and skepticism for many. Others welcomed the change as an opportunity to teach all children.

Carl Jackson, Jr. taught at the Black high school, McCrory Liston before being offered a job at Winnsboro High School when schools integrated in 1970. Although he was asked his preference of courses to teach, he was given six classes of the course he did not want to teach.

> ***Carl Jackson, Jr.: So, Mr. Brown, out at McCrory Liston, offered me a high school job, so I went out there. And then the next year, I moved up here with Mr. Green. And then the next year, we integrated. So, we were moved into Winnsboro High School, and I remember that quite well because (they) asked us our preference of courses to teach. And being in social studies, I told them I'd like to have history or government. Well, I didn't want, what I didn't want, I didn't want civics. And I got over to Winnsboro High School, and I had six classes of civics!***

One of ten children born to African American working parents, Jessie Mae McKinstry knew at an early age she wanted to become a teacher. She served as an educator for 34 years. She received her teaching degree from Johnson C. Smith University, which was predominantly Black at the time with a few Caucasian students from other countries. After teaching four years in Chesterfield County, she returned to

Fairfield for the remainder of her career. McKinstry felt prepared for the change from a segregated high school as expressed in her statements:

> ***Jessie Mae McKinstry – The school facilities (in the Black school) were not the best but teachers made do with what they had. When integration started, I had worked three years (teaching) in the all-segregated school. I was one of four faculty members from the old Black school that was sent to Petersburg High School that was formerly an all-white school. I was chosen with three other co-workers to serve on that faculty.***
>
> ***They (Johnson C. Smith University) didn't tell me they were training me to teach Black children or to teach white children. They said that were training me to teach children.***
>
> ***(Integration) was very successful, and it was mainly due to the principal that we had at the school. The superintendent … he wasn't that fond of the integration. But Mr. Wineburg was the first white principal that I had… he wanted to be fair.***

Blending White and Black School Traditions

The first years of integration to Winnsboro High School posed difficulties for the Black students and families. Some chose to move to the white school under the Freedom of Choice program which began in 1965. In 1970, the federal government mandated integration of all schools. Families did what they knew to prepare their children as they entered unchartered territory.

Larry Irby attended Gordon Elementary then moved to Fairfield High School for eighth grade. He was one of about twelve students in his class to attend Winnsboro High School with Freedom of Choice beginning in ninth grade. He describes his eighth grade year at Fairfield High School as a great experience. The transition to Winnsboro High School had some challenges but Irby earned a spot on the football team. His coach was instrumental in ensuring that he and his teammates at Winnsboro worked together.

Larry Irby: I got an opportunity to come here at Fairfield, Fairfield High School and it was a great experience. Met some people that I may not have ordinarily met, you know, cause in the 8th grade students from Ridgeway, they were at Geiger Elementary, they, it would be their first year here and the people from Woodard, they, it would be their first year here, so you get an opportunity to meet a whole new slew of people that you never, you know, you never had met before.

But going to Winnsboro High that first year, you know, that transition was tough. And believe it or not, we had to deal with some teachers who did not have the Black students' interest. And because this was freedom of choice, (the teachers) said that the Black kids would not be able to … do the lessons that were in the white school. So, we were there like the guinea pigs. It was the guinea pig program.

I don't know whether they were using the thought that, "Hey, listen, if it don't work then integration would fail." That's what some were hoping for.

The first year was tough but after that, we began to get it and there were, you know, Black students who … began to make the honor roll. See… most of the kids who left (Fairfield High School) and went to Winnsboro High were honor roll students, and so when you went to Winnsboro High is the only time you …end up (with) Ds.

I believe everybody had a little bit of prejudice. There were some in the Black school that thought that because you went to the white school you thought you may have been better. You know. Then on the other hand you had some in the white school that thought, hey listen, this is a white school, why are you here, you shouldn't be here, you need to go back. And some of them expressed that. But they wasn't privileged, ... so they couldn't run you out.

And I got an opportunity to play football (at Winnsboro High School), you know, and with the team and we won the state championship … that was the bomb! So you know, we had to play together and we played together and we were a team. No one ever did anything to make someone else look bad. That wasn't even an option. Coach told you… you would've got kicked out. So, no one thought like that.

After the mandated integration was implemented, Black teachers and students had to adjust to cultural differences. Fairfield High School closed, forcing Black students to transfer to Winnsboro High School, which was predominantly white. The year of integration was disheartening for many of the African American students. Elementary

Schools remained open, but many whites chose private education for their children rather than integration.

Jerome Boyd went to Winnsboro High School the first year of Freedom of Choice. He had an unpleasant experience and was not accepted by white students or white teachers. He describes having to fight to survive.

> ***Not pleasant. I left McCrory Liston in the eighth grade. I was an honor roll student. When I got to Winnsboro High School in the ninth grade, I failed. Getting off the bus that first day at that school, it wasn't many of us that went during that time. I forget the number of that first year. I think it was in the forties or the sixties number category. But it wasn't a lot of us that went to Winnsboro High School. And getting off that bus and walking down that hall for the first time and people staring at you and rubbing up against you and saying and making comments about "I can't touch you. It might rub off on me." You know, like it was not pleasant. And going into the classrooms, thinking that you're a good student and failing the first year because you got no help from the teachers. Either you knew it or you didn't know it and they didn't offer to assist in any way. So, I wind up going to summer school the first year I went to Winnsboro High just so I could catch my grade back up. And so, it wasn't pleasant. We had to fight--literally--fight to survive in that school.***

Elizabeth Easter Samuels, Charles Belton, Fannie Ford, Nadine Boyd and Edwinda Goodman were in the group of students who attended Fairfield High School and

had to move to Winnsboro High School their senior year. Fairfield High School was closed in 1970 as students were fully integrated.

Elizabeth Samuels was instructed by her mother to pray and avoid participating in any demonstrations or conflicts regarding integration. Samuels felt unwelcome at Winnsboro but managed to stay out of trouble.

> ***Elizabeth Easter Samuels: My momma believed in prayer. And she would tell me, "You say your prayers and you keep your mouth shut. Don't get involved in no kinda demonstrations or no nothing." And that's what I took with me and that kept me. I truly believe that kept me and it brought me through.***
> ***It kept me from getting involved in any kind of trouble: any arguments or whatever was going on around you. Because it was a lot of fights. Fights and name calling, and stuff like that. (We) wasn't welcome.***
> ***They (white students) were home. That was their school.***

One of the more disappointing aspects of the first two years of integration into Winnsboro High School for African American students was the fact that the white students had a separate prom which Black students could attend only if they had a Black date. An integrated prom did not take place until the third year following the mandated desegregation of schools in Fairfield. Ruth Chavis attended Geiger Elementary and Fairfield High School until 1970 when Fairfield schools integrated. She graduated from Winnsboro High School in 1972.

Ruth Chavis: I attended at Geiger Elementary–I believe at Geiger we went to the seventh grade. Once we left seventh grade we came to this school, which was Fairfield (High School).

I graduated in '72. I always wanted to go to the prom, never went to high school prom, never went to the prom in my life. I remember getting my sisters ready for the prom. Looking forward to my day. The schools integrated; we did not have a prom. The white folks had their prom; we didn't have a prom. I guess, you know, we were poor too so we couldn't afford to get together and we didn't get together and have a prom. So, they had their own prom and, you know, of course we couldn't attend their prom, 'cause we'd just integrated. And back then people were coming to integrated schools with whites, a lot of them was leery about you; like they was scared of you. Thought you was gonna–if you touch them, it's going to change their color or whatever.

Charles Belton remembers feeling unwelcomed by the white students at Winnsboro High School. The Black students who attended early under the Freedom of Choice program were more comfortable with their surroundings but still faced difficulties.

Charles Belton: It was obvious that we weren't particularly welcome there. Yeah, and it seemed to be more… well I'd say it was more white students I think than there were Black. But they were in a neutral ground, there were familiar with the grounds. So, coming there was all just strange all together. Some Black

students enrolled in Winnsboro High School under the Freedom of Choice program. (It was a) way bigger campus.

Fannie Ford remembers the frustration of learning her way around the campus, which was much larger than Fairfield High School. She was most frustrated with the lack of acceptance of the Black students and what appeared to be in less tolerance when it came to discipline of Black students. There were fights, primarily with older students. Blacks, in her opinion, received more suspensions and stronger discipline than white students.

Fannie Ford: And the thing about it, there were a few students from here that had gone on before us, before the integration took place . . .there by choice so they were, you know, more accustomed to it than we were. And the thing about it, you had to learn how to get around, maneuver from class to class and know where you were going. That, to me that kind of frustrated me. … I like to say acceptance wasn't that warm in some cases. Not everybody…

There were some fights and some issues, but you found that, that's just my personal opinion, in the numbers of suspensions and dismissals, it fell heavier on the Blacks than it did the white guys because when we went up there it was just kind of, 'you outta here'…

There was a lot of fights. By some of the younger, you know, it wasn't bad. There were issues and I just say I think being into the dominance of the white,

we had to take a lot of slack and we got blamed a lot of times just because we were new there.

I just kind of hung in there. Go home in the afternoon, my mom was kind of quiet, subtle person, she said, you know, "How was your day? What happened today?" I said, "Well, it was okay." She said, "Well, you just gotta hang in there and do what you gotta do…Just do your part and things'll work out."

And in the end, it worked out, it truly worked out. I mean, at the end of the year it was a little bit better, we graduated and, you know, it was pretty good, you know, at the end of the year. But that first part was just the adjustment period we had to go through.

Yeah, we were seniors. Yeah, and so we spent all of our eighth grade through the eleventh grade here, and our senior year that's when we went over to Winnsboro High School. They closed the doors on this school in 1970.

Edwinda Goodman attended Gordon Elementary School from first through seventh grade. She attended Fairfield for one year before the schools were integrated in 1970. She remembers 72 Black students in her grade were involved in integration that year. She tells of her some of the conflicts, especially the first year. Teachers were vigilant in trying to deescalate conflicts.

Edwinda Goodman: We had to do some classes at the middle school and then we had to go over here at the high school.

In the beginning of the segregation, it was kind of rough. I mean we had the white children, they...It was a change for both of us. And as I'm assuming, they didn't want to be around us. And we couldn't talk to them. When we would get on the bus, they didn't want us to sit beside them. And you know, being kids, we did it because we was told not to do it, so we would sit there anyway. And you know what that causes confusion, and a lot of time we had fights. We had fights about not "sitting in." We got off the bus when we got to school.

Even our teachers, then, Miss Davis and Miss Roseberg, Miss Martin--Lord Jesus--she couldn't stand it if she … (if it even) looked like she would detect something that was going to happen. And she was always right there to separate us and pull us to the side and tell us, now that's not right. It was something that you had to do. Well, you didn't come to school to do this. You came to school to learn, and this is what you gonna do. Or I will call your parents. It was all right. It didn't last that long.

We got over to Winnsboro High, and it was always segregation. It was separation. Even today it's like that. But you have to overlook it and go ahead. They didn't want--even in the classrooms--they didn't want us. The teachers had assigned seats, you know, orderly. They had one Black and one white to make us together. But they still didn't want us to do that. We had a couple of they parents come up and question why they had to be organized like that. The parents were told that the teachers did what they wanted to do in their classrooms. It wasn't no option. It was something we had to do. It impacted us real, real bad. Very bad.

Now that was a rough year. Integration as I said, with the kids, we didn't get along in the beginning, but eventually, we got to some of them. You still had some of them that shined. The ones that had money, they didn't want to be around us. And you could tell that it was drilled and taught in them about not being and getting along with the Blacks. And some of them was transferred, and took them other places, and other than that, we had a few white friends that got close to us.

Parent Perspective of Integration

Betty Dorsey witnessed the integration of schools as a parent. She explains that the white schools were by grade level, so her oldest son attended Mount Zion (the white grade school) first when integration was put into place. He then moved to Winnsboro High School. She calls her children being happy about integration. Dorsey recalled some unpleasant incidents.

But there were times when I had to go to the school, if they came home and told me something that happened, that a white child got to do this and they didn't. I would immediately go and get the teacher and him and the white child together and try to find out what happened. And eventually, you know, it got better. But to begin with, it was hard when they started integrating the school.

The Impact of Integration on Teachers

Teachers also had to adjust to situations that they had not encountered in the all-Black school. Queen Davis taught seniors at Winnsboro High School after integration. She recalled a situation in which white parents became upset because of Social Studies

assignment that involved race. For the most part, she had few issues after integration. She later worked at District Office and then became principal at Fairfield Central High School.

> ***Queen Davis: I took a test and got a scholarship and went to Johnson C. Smith University and graduated and became a teacher. I taught at Winnsboro High (after integration), and taught seniors primarily, and was senior sponsor a lot for a lot of years there. Enjoyed it, and then went to District Office. Became an administrator, went back to Fairfield Central as principal for three years, my last three years. You know, so um, as a teacher, I didn't feel any discomfort because of my race.***
>
> ***Now, there may be others who had racist situations develop. I remember one time we'd sent home an assignment when I team teaching at the junior high, I don't remember what the assignment was, but it had to do with discussing the differences in some kind of racial thing. It wasn't an open discussion on racism or anything like that but, whatever the assignment was it involved a Black and white situation. And they were in ninth grade, at the time that you would be reading things that might have been happening. Some Huckleberry Finn things, you know all that.***
>
> ***Oh, we got some nasty letters from parents [Stating…] 'I don't want my child learning any of this.' 'My child is not coming to school to learn anything about what happened with the Black kids, the Black race.' 'That is not supposed to be a part of my child's life.' and that kind of stuff. So, that was the worst - I guess.***

Theodore Manning began his forty-year career as a math teacher at Fairfield High School in 1967. Manning received his undergraduate degree education at Benedict College and his Masters degree in Secondary Education from the then-recently integrated University of South Carolina. Manning worked as a teacher, coach, administrator and transportation supervisor. He was hired during the era between Freedom of Choice and full integration.

Theodore Manning: So, you had freedom of choice, and you had a freedom of choice school bus. This bus picked up the Black students that wanna go to the white school at Winnsboro High. So that's what you had until–you had that all in '67, late '60 all the way through to '71. We were here, we didn't have any white students here, you know, it was all Black here, so you know, so the discipline was tough.

And at that time, we had run two campuses, the campus –which is now the middle school–and this campus. We had so many people. So, part were here and part were there. Yeah, so I had some students in that area, 'cause I was on the firm side and (McClendon) kinda put me almost over the discipline here and the teachers respected that and so I got into administration.

McClendon, who was the white principal at the school, but he was probably one of the fairest persons you could've had at that critical time. Although he was white, he didn't give a blank what color you were when it came to doing what was right.

McClendon was a very, very fair person, became my mentor, helped me, he was very instrumental in receiving my Master's degree and getting me into the University of South Carolina. Cause that time it wasn't easy to get in because of the color of your skin, it was not easy to get into certain programs.

And he (McClendon) gained so much respect because that was–one of the things why we didn't have a whole lot of fights during the total integration, only had a few, other people were having, it was knockdown, drag out. We didn't have it here because of the leadership because he didn't tolerate it from the teachers nor the students. You know what he cared about. Calling a teacher in who might've been against the integration, and laying the law down to them, he got his point over. He did not tolerate that. He did not tolerate practicing segregation activities. Which again, made the school more accessible to the integration process.

Reflections on the Current Impact of Integration

Betty Dorsey shared ideas about the state of the current youth in Fairfield.

It saddens me to see our children, and of course, there are some Caucasian children, also, that are hanging out. They don't want to do nothing. They don't want to work. They want to do drugs. They want to sell drugs to make an easy dollar. But it saddens me to know that so many of our Black heroes fought to get us where we are now, and yet the young people refuse to want to do something. Not all of them, we have some very, very fine Black young people. But when you walk a street here in Zion Hill

and other places, you see these guys – …They are not inspired to do anything. But I'm just happy about the ones that do.

Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter, I begin by setting the context of the Fairfield community. I provide a historical timeline of events based on local school board records and correspondence with federal representatives regarding the integration of Fairfield schools throughout the chapter.

Much of this chapter is divided into six common themes that emerged from interviews. Excerpts from participant interviews are highlighted as their comments relate to the theme. As I analyzed the interview transcripts, the six primary themes that emerged include: "Moral Bonds," "Nurturing Educators and Community," "Jim Crow Influences," "School Inequalities," and "Blending White and Black School Traditions."

In Chapter five, themes are revisited and summarized. Implications for further study are discussed.

Chapter Five: Analysis

> ***Let us be dissatisfied until integration is not seen as a problem but as an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity. Let us be dissatisfied until the dark yesterdays of segregated schools will be transformed into bright tomorrows of quality, integrated education.***
>
> *~Martin Luther King, Jr. – Where Do we Go from Here (1967)*

This chapter presents a summary of the oral history based on the narratives of the participants in this study. I exam the transcribed interviews' consistency with the common themes identified. The purpose for this study was to shed light on the experiences, emotions, stances and beliefs of the African American community involved in the integration process of schools in Fairfield County, South Carolina.

The underlying goal nationwide was to address the issue of segregation in American society. Public reaction to desegregation mandates challenged school leaders in every American community. The participants in this study attended all or part of their education in schools designated for Black students in the Southern rural county of Fairfield, South Carolina. All participants lived in a community in which Jim Crow laws and prejudiced mindsets were an integral part of the community.

I revisit each theme and summarize commonalities as expressed by the participants during their interviews. The themes include Moral Bonds, Nurturing

Community and Educators, Jim Crow Community Influences, Inequalities between Black and White Schools and Blending Black and White Traditions after school integration.

The first research question in this study is addressed through participants' descriptions and recollections of the African American family and community. As participants tell their person stories the reader will identify commonality as they describe moral bonds that strengthened African American families and nurturing educators and community.

Themes Revisited

The Moral Bonds theme focuses primarily on the African American family. Participants indicated that pride and religion was the driving force that strengthened their families. Hard work and discipline helped them deal with the inequalities and superior mindset of the white community.

The Nurturing Community and Educators theme highlights the caring, nurturing educators in the Black schools as well as the close-knit Black community. Participants fondly recall the passion teachers had for their students. The adults in the community shared responsibility for students when they were away from home. Henry Miller compared the African American community and schools in Fairfield to a "village" in which African American adults watched out for each other's children. Participants had fond memories of their teachers and administrators in the segregated school. They described the Black educators as dedicated, caring, helpful and passionate. Teachers were part of the community and communicated with parents.

The theme, Jim Crow Influences, set the stage for the context of the Fairfield community before and after schools were integrated. The narratives provide examples of

the white supremist mindset and degrading laws and practices that infiltrated every aspect of community life. The sentiment to enforce the subordination of African Americans was common among whites. Participants in the study explain the need to avoid social conflicts with whites. There was an understanding among African Americans on how to handle situations where racial lines were drawn separating Blacks and whites.

The Inequality of Schools theme provided a picture in Black schools and the condition of the facilities. Each of the participants completed all or part of their grade school education in Fairfield County segregated schools. Black schools were first held in churches. Rosenwald schools were built in the 1930s. Most of the participants in this study began their education in a Rosenwald school. In 1951, the equalization program provided more modern structures for Black Schools. However, Black schools continued to get discarded books and furniture from the white schools. The most blatant discrepancy between Black and white students was the lack of transportation for Black students. Several participants gave accounts of incidents where white children on buses taunted Black students as they walked long distances to and from school.

The Ironies of Free Choice theme opens the door to individual accounts of how African American teachers and students experienced and adapted to the transition into an integrated school environment. Students who attended white schools under Freedom of Choice experienced the challenge of attending a school where Black students had never gone. They were, in a sense, pioneers who tested the waters before full integration of schools in 1970.

Blending of Black and White Traditions theme presents a collection of personal accounts of what integration meant to those who experienced the transition, either under

Freedom of Choice or full integration. Each person experienced an adjustment from the nurturing environment provided in the Black school to surroundings in which some whites did not welcome the Black students. Although, some participants expressed how they made friends with some of the white students or performed well academically, the question remains. Were white and Black traditions truly blended, as the theme indicates?

Jerome Boyd was in the first group of students to attend a predominantly white school under the Freedom of Choice. The third research question asks how integration affected African American students' attitudes, values and perceptions of student equality? Boyd summarizes the final theme and addresses the third research question in his interpretation of the difference between desegregation and integration.

> ***Jerome Boyd: And I often question desegregation. Which is it? And what's the difference? Because desegregation says to me you have the same opportunity that I have, no matter what you are. Integration means I'm integrated into your society, your experiences. I'm coming into that, I'm being integrated. And we lost. The culture was different. Different cultures. And nobody bothered to teach us about each other's culture.***
>
> *~ Jerome Boyd, Winnsboro Class of 1969. Interview October 26, 2017, Fairfield High School, Fairfield, SC)*

Interpretation

Although this is not a comparative case study in the true sense, I connect my personal experiences from this era in history. Worthy of mention is the fact that between 1971 and 1980 I was a student in Boston, Massachusetts during the highly publicized

busing controversy in this large New England city. My parents enrolled my siblings and me in the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, known as METCO. METCO is the longest running voluntary desegregation initiative.

METCO students attended predominantly white suburban schools at the invitation of the suburban towns. Host families who lived in the suburban town volunteered to sponsor a METCO student. I remember having lunch with my host family on the half days until the bus came to bring me back home.

I formed a close relationship with my host family and other students. Looking back, I believe these white families valued desegregation and wanted their children to feel comfortable interacting with minority students. As I conducted this study, I was enlightened to learn that individuals who were my age in the South, were experiencing desegregation very differently from me. My perception of desegregation was not intertwined with the Jim Crow laws that were very fresh in the minds of the Black community in Fairfield and other Southern communities. At the start of my research, my perception of the purpose of desegregation was to racially balance school populations. I don't remember any conversations from my parents about unequal facilities or lack of transportation for Black students, as the participants described in Fairfield. My experience in Wellesley, the suburban town where I attended school from third grade until graduation, was very positive.

The demographics of many suburban towns in Massachusetts have now changed. Yet, METCO still operates today as a voluntary alternative to attending public school in designated attendance zones in the City of Boston. Some may question why parents till see the need to integrate their children into suburban schools.

Implications for Further Study

The restoration efforts of Fairfield High School provided the opportunity to revisit the history through memorabilia. This study allows others to listen to first-hand experiences of those who lived through integration. I am thankful that the voices of these amazing individuals have been recorded and their stories documented.

Further study can be conduct with younger individuals who were in elementary schools during desegregation. This may present a better understanding of why the population of schools in Fairfield remains predominantly Black.

Chapter Five Summary

Chapter five revisits and summarizes each of the themes gleaned from the narratives and an interpretation of this qualitative research project. I describe my experience as a student in Boston, Massachusetts where I was a participant in a voluntary desegregation program, Metropolitan Council of Educational Opportunity (METCO) in the early 1970s.

This study provides personal accounts to support the literature surrounding desegregation and the integration process in rural Southern cities and towns. The stories shared by the participants in the Fairfield community only provide a small fraction of the many experiences of African Americans who were a part of the integration process in the rural South. Further research will be beneficial in increasing awareness and may provide implications for improvements in the current school systems.

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Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Microfilmed Papers of the NAACP

Appendix A: Rosenwald Schools in Fairfield

Table A.1 Rosenwald Schools in Fairfield, South Carolina

SCHOOL	CONSTRUCTION YEAR(S)	ARCHITECTURAL STYLE
Fairfield County Centerville School	Before 1920	2-teacher
Nazareth School	1925-1926	2-teacher
New Hope School	1924-1925	3-teacher
New Zion School	1924-1925	2-teacher
Rock Hill School	1923-1924	3-teacher (one room addition in 1925)
Shiloh School	1921-1922	2-teacher
St. Peters School	1925-1926	4-teacher
Sweet Prospect School	1924-1925	2-teacher
White Hall School	1921-1922	3-teacher
Winnsboro School	1925-1926	8-teacher

Appendix B: Equalization Schools in Fairfield

Table B.1 Equalization Schools in Fairfield, South Carolina

SCHOOL	CONSTRUCTION YEAR	TOWN
Geiger Elementary School	c. 1954	Ridgeway
Gordon Elementary School	c. 1952	Winnsboro
Fairfield Training School	1952 equalization additions	Winnsboro
McCrorey-Liston High School	c. 1954	Blair
Mitford Elementary School	c. 1953	Mitford
White Hall Elementary School	1954	Jenkinsville
Woodward Elementary School	1952	Woodward

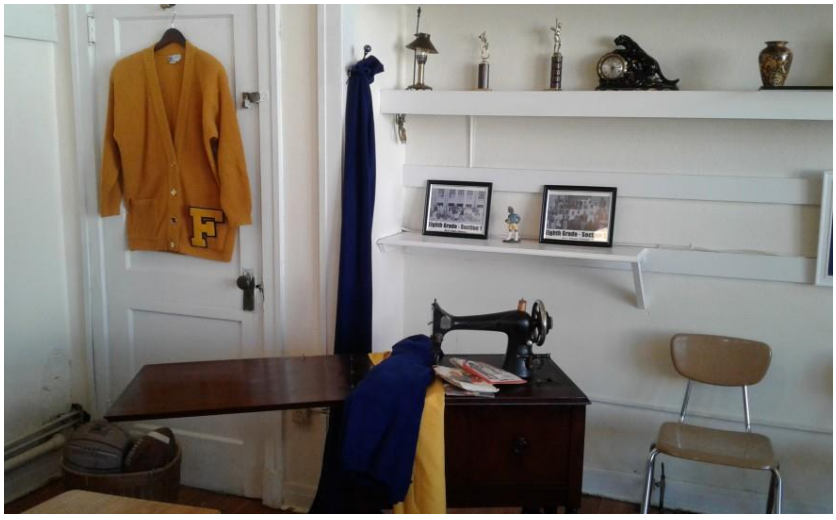
Gordon Elementary School, c. 1954, Winnsboro
Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Archives and History
http://www.scequalizationschools.org/uploads/1/1/7/0/11700188/53gordon_elementary_school_winnsboro.jpg

Appendix C: Interview Site – Fairfield High School

Courtesy of University of South Carolina Oral History Collection
https://digital.library.sc.edu/exhibits/fairfieldhighschool/

Appendix D: Fairfield High School Renovated Classrooms

Picture: Courtesy of Gwendolyn Glenn, WFAE. *A Piece of History Saved by Alumni of Former All-Black High School.* Published November 21, 2017.



Picture: Courtesy of Gwendolyn Glenn, WFAE. *A Piece of History Saved by Alumni of Former All-Black High School.* Published November 21, 2017.

Appendix E: Fairfield High School Before Closing in 1970

Fairfield High School Before Closing in 1970.

Credit Fairfield High School Alumni Association

Picture: Courtesy of Gwendolyn Glenn, WFAE. *A Piece of History Saved by Alumni of Former All-Black High School.* Published November 21, 2017.

The Fairfield High School campus deteriorated over the years leaving one academic building and an unrenovated gym.

Appendix F: Fairfield High School before Renovation

Picture: Courtesy of Gwendolyn Glenn, WFAE. *A Piece of History Saved by Alumni of Former All-Black High School.* Published November 21, 2017.

The only remaining academic building at Fairfield High School before it was renovated.

Appendix G: Winnsboro High School – Former All-White High School

Picture: Courtesy of Gwendolyn Glenn, WFAE. *A Piece of History Saved by Alumni of Former All-Black High School.* Published November 21, 2017.

Appendix H: The Participants

Interviews from 36 participants from the Fairfield community guided the direction of this historical dissertation. Collectively, the participants express the ethos of the Fairfield community. Each interview presented a unique interpretation, based on personal experiences, of the events culminating with the integration of schools. The focus of this study is to illuminate the exceptionality (inimitability) of each experience. The parameter of this project did not lend itself to include every quote recorded in the narratives. Yet, each interview unfolds a matchless revelation of their life during the transition from segregated to integrated public schools.

The complete interview transcripts and recordings were made available online and became a part of the public domain. The participants include Gladys Allen, Eva Armstrong, Charlie Belton, Jerome Boyd, Nadine Boyd, Hattie Brice, Ruth Chavis, Thelmer Cook, Mae Nolia Davis, Robert Davis, Queen Davis, Betty Dorsey, Fannie Ford, Edwinda Goodman, Leola Gripper, Betty Gunthrope, Weldon Haire, Margaret Holmes, Larry Irby, Carl Jackson, Carl Kennedy, Theodore Manning, Elizabeth Martin, Jean McCrory, Jessie McKinstry, Henry Miller, Hazel Pearson, Wade Peay, Jr., Paul Prailleau, Alvin Richmond, Maude Ross, Karen Ross-Grant, Easter Samuels, Mattie Squirewell, Mary Starks, and Willie Thompson shared their stories about family, segregated schools and living with Jim Crow south in Fairfield, South Carolina.

Following is a short biography of each of the participants.

Gladys Allen

Gladys Allen was born in Ridgeway, South Carolina. In 3rd grade she started attending Fairfield schools and graduated from Fairfield High School. Following high school, Allen moved in with her aunt and uncle in Columbia, South Carolina. She attended Benedict College in Columbia for four years.

Eva Armstrong

Eva Armstrong was born in Ridgeway, South Carolina in 1929. She was one of 16 siblings. She attended segregated schools including Fairfield Training School (later Fairfield High School). Armstrong later worked at the Uniroyal Plant in Fairfield.

Charlie Belton

Charlie Belton was born in Fairfield County in 1953. He attended Fairfield High School and Winnsboro High School during the integration of schools. In 1972, Belton joined the United States Navy and was active duty for eleven. While in the Navy, he earned a GED and took college courses through Old Dominion University. He later worked for the Department of the Army at Fort Eustis Aviation Research and Development as a welder. Belton traveled around the world as a Merchant Marine, a civilian and Navy sailor. He served in Desert Storm from 1990 to 1992 before moving back to Fairfield.

Jerome Boyd

Jerome Boyd grew up in Winnsboro. He attended McCrory-Listin Junior High but moved to Winnsboro High School in the ninth grade. Boyd served four years in the United States Air Force. When he returned to Fairfield, he worked at a bank and later

became one of the first African-American licensed real estate brokers in Fairfield in 1978.

Nadine Boyd

Nadine Boyd was born in Ridgeway, South Carolina. She attended Fairfield High School until the doors closed at the end of her junior year. She had to move to Winnsboro High School for her senior year and graduated in 1971. Nadine Boyd worked her way through nursing school and graduated in 1976.

Hattie Brice

Hattie Brice attended Fairfield High School in Winnsboro, South Carolina. Brice attended the University of South Carolina to pursue a career in nursing.

Ruth Chavis

Ruth Chavis was born in Ridgeway, South Carolina. She and her eight siblings were raised by her grandmother after her mother's death. Chavis attended Fairfield High School and college, majoring in secretarial science. She worked for the Veterans Administration Hospital in Columbia, South Carolina and later worked in the district office of Fairfield County School system.

Thelmer Cook

Thelmer Cook attended Fairfield High School in Winnsboro, South Carolina. He served as Principal of Geiger Elementary School in Ridgeway, South Carolina. Cook later became the first Black magistrate in Fairfield since Reconstruction.

Mae Nolia Davis

Mae Nolia Davis was born in Blair, South Carolina. She attended Fairfield High School, but left school at fourteen to get married. While raising seven sons, she earned

her high school diploma and later an associates' degree. Davis worked as a teacher's aid in the Fairfield school system for twenty-two years.

Robert Davis

Robert Davis was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina. He attended Fairfield Training School (later to become Fairfield High School). He was drafted in the 1960s and returned to South Carolina, received a college degree, worked, and ran for political office, winning a seat on the Fairfield County Council for eighteen years.

Queen Davis

Queen Ann Butler Roseborough Davis was born in Ridgeway, South Carolina in 1938. Her family moved to Springfield, Massachusetts when she was a toddler. She attended non-segregated schools in Massachusetts until fifth grade, when her family moved back to Fairfield where she attended segregated schools. She graduated from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina and began her teaching career in Fairfield and moved to Winnsboro High School after integration. In her years as an educator, Davis taught ninth grade, served as senior advisor, became an administrator and worked at Fairfield Central (district office) until retirement.

Betty Dorsey

Betty McDowell Dorsey attended Fairfield High School. She was closely involved with integration of schools as parent. Her children attended integrated schools in Fairfield.

Fannie Ford

Fannie Ford was born in Fairfield, South Carolina in 1953. She attended Fairfield High School and Winnsboro High School during the full integration of schools. Ford

received a four-year scholarship to Benedict College. She was the first person in her family to go to college.

Edwinda Goodman

Edwinda Goodman was born in Fairfield County in 1953. She attended Gordon Elementary School first through seventh grade. She then attended Fairfield one year before the schools were integrated and graduated from Winnsboro High School. Goodman was 18 when her mother passed away. She worked two part-time jobs to support younger siblings. She credited her minister for helping her secure resources to raise her younger siblings. Her siblings and their children had successful lives.

Leola Gripper

Leola (Ashford) Gripper was born in Simpson, South Carolina in June 1935. Her father was a sharecropper, and her mother was a homemaker and seamstress. She received her early education in church schools, and later at Fairfield County Training School (later Fairfield High School), in Winnsboro, South Carolina. After marrying, she and her family moved to Illinois, where she attended nursing school and worked as a nurse for 30-plus years. After retirement, she and her husband moved back to Fairfield County, South Carolina.

Betty Gunthrope

Betty Gunthrope attended Fairfield High School and was valedictorian of her class. She was a teacher in Fairfield Public Schools after integration. Her son attended Fairfield Schools during integration. After retiring, she worked with at-risk students.

Weldon Haire

Weldon Haire was born in 1935 in Shady Grove Community, five miles outside of Winnsboro, South Carolina. He was the fifth child among 10 siblings. Hard work, pride and religion played a large role in his upbringing. Haire received his early education in church schools, and later Fairfield County Training School (later Fairfield High School). After graduation he joined the military, then became a woodworker and electrician. Haire later became a minister in the Fairfield community.

Margaret Holmes

Margaret Holmes was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina, but her family moved to Maryland. Her family returned to Fairfield when Margaret was seven years old. Holmes attended segregated schools in Fairfield. She graduated from Fairfield High School in 1956. In 1959, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she worked in a department store. She and her husband moved back to Fairfield after retiring. Holmes was instrumental in the preservation efforts for the building that housed her former high school as well as other community programs.

Larry Irby

Larry Irby was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina. He was one of ten siblings. Irby attended Fairfield segregated schools until integration. He graduated from Winnsboro High school and went on to start his own accounting business. He had been an accountant for over 35 years.

Carl Jackson

Carl Jackson graduated from to Winnsboro High school when the schools completed integrated. Jackson served in the United States Air Force and then finished his

education degree at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. He taught Social Studies classes at McCrory-Liston High School, Fairfield High School and Winnsboro High school. Jackson later served as principal at the Elementary and High School levels in the Fairfield School District.

Carl Kennedy

Carl Kennedy was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina. He attended Gordon Elementary School and Fairfield High School until eighth grade. He moved to Winnsboro and graduation. Kennedy then attended Belmont Abby College in Charlotte, North Carolina on football scholarship. He completed his degree at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. After college Kennedy worked for Bosch for 17 years. He look time to travel to Indonesia and then came back to start a new company, Edison

Theodore Manning

Theodore Manning was born in Blythewood, South Carolina in 1945. He was one of nine siblings. Manning earned his degree from Benedict College in 1967. In 1977 he received his master's degree from the University of South Carolina. Manning taught and coached at Fairfield High School for forty years.

Elizabeth Martin

Elizabeth Martin was born in Tennessee in 1926. As a high school student in Tennessee, she had attended an integrated school. When she and her husband moved to Fairfield in 1968, they enrolled their daughter at Winnsboro High School under the Freedom of Choice program. Martin was an educator in Fairfield County Schools for over 30 years. She remained active in the Fairfield community after retirement.

Jean McCrory

Jean McCrory was born in Fairfield County. McCrory contracted polio as a ninth grader in 1960. With the help of her parents and teachers, she graduated from Fairfield High School in 1964. McKinstry was one of the first African Americans to work in the Bank of Fairfield, where she formed many lifelong friendships.

Jessie McKinstry

Jessie May McKinstry was born in Fairfield, South Carolina. She was the oldest of six siblings. She attended elementary, middle and high school on the site of Fairfield High School. McKinstry taught Language Arts and Social Studies in Fairfield. She later became an administrator at Fairfield County Career Center. Her time as an educator spanned 34 years.

Henry Miller

Henry Miller was born in 1956 in Fairfield, South Carolina. He was the great great nephew of Kelly Miller, mathematician and the first African American to attend John Hopkins University. Henry Miller served on the Fairfield County School Board.

Hazel Pearson

Hazel Pearson was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina in the early 1950s. She attended Gordon Elementary School and Fairfield High School. After graduating from high school, Pearson attended technical college. She performed clerical work for the school district for three years. Pearson then went to work for the Town of Winnsboro where she served as the Director of Business Licenses and Utilities . She worked for the Town of Winnsboro for 36 years.

Wade Peay, Jr.

Wade Peay was born near Monticello, on the western part of Fairfield, South Carolina in. His parents were sharecroppers. Peay graduated from Fairfield High School in 1965. He credits his parents for his work ethic. Peay did not miss a schedule workday for forty-six years until his retirement in 2012.

Paul Prailleau

Paul Prailleu was born Fairfield County, South Carolina. He attended segregated schools including Fairfield County Training School (later Fairfield High School). Prailleau enlisted in the United States Army. He was stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and then Fort Benning, Georgia before serving in Vietnam. Prailleau served in the United States Army for over six years.

Alvin Richmond

Alvin Richmond was born in Simpson, South Carolina. He became Reverend at St. Mark Baptist Church in Simpson, South Carolina.

Maude Nealie Ford Ross

Maude Ross was born in 1924. She attended segregated school in Fairfield, South Carolina. Ross completed Fairfield County Training School in Winnsboro and continued her education with a Bachelors of Art Degree from Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. She went on to earn a Masters of Art degree in Guidance and Personnel Administration from Columbia University in New York, New York. She worked as a teacher and guidance counselor in Fairfield Schools for 35 years. After retirement Ross continued to counsel individuals in her church and community.

Karen Ross-Grant

Karen Ross Grant is the 'middle' of the four children of Maude Ross and Julius Ross, Sr. She grew up in Winnsboro and attended Winnsboro High School, right after 'freedom of choice' and the end of segregation. She went on to further her education at Winthrop University, and later, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She worked for the State of South Carolina, and resides in Winnsboro.

Easter Samuels

Easter Samuels was born in Fairfield, South Carolina in 1953. She attended Fairfield High School and moved to Winnsboro High School for her senior year when Fairfield High School closed. She graduated from Winnsboro in 1971. Samuels received a business degree from Columbia Commercial College and took course at USC banking school. She worked in banking for 40 years before retiring.

Mattie Squirewell

Mattie Squirewell attended Fairfield High School in Winnsboro, South Carolina. She worked as a school dietician in Fairfield Public Schools.

Mary Starks

Mary Starks was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina in 1944. Her parents highly valued education. Mary and her siblings attended segregated schools in Fairfield. She earned an education degree at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. Her career as an educator lasted 44 years.

Willie Thompson.

Willie Thompson was born in the Winnsboro, South Carolina. He attended the Nazareth School until moving to Fairfield Training School (later Fairfield High School). Thompson was going to start college in Virginia but was drafted into the Vietnam war, where served five years. He then worked at Fort Jackson military facility for another 30 years**.**

Full interviews can be accessed on the South Caroliniana Library webpage at https://digital.library.sc.edu/exhibits/fairfieldhighschool/home2/?fbclid=IwAR2GTj3ReL8m1rsMu2XOnuCdUNLktv_BxFrtwE4ChOuvHnK50hTflVklIbc