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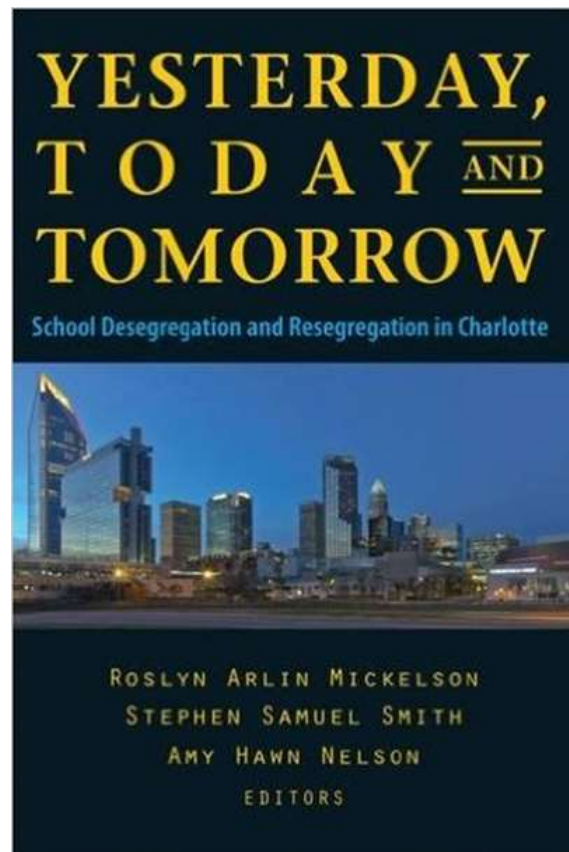
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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) was once recognized as a national model of successful school desegregation; however, over the past four decades, CMS has largely resegregated by race and class. *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: School Desegregation and Resegregation in Charlotte* takes a multidisciplinary approach to analyzing the district's transformation. By assembling scholars of history, sociology, political science, social geography, economics, public policy, law, and education, as well as practicing attorneys and educators, this edited collection provides a cohesive analysis of CMS's complex journey from desegregation to resegregation. In doing so, the authors highlight the way in which "yesterday's agency—both what was done right and what was done poorly—became structures that constrain our choices today and tomorrow" (p. x).

This volume would be useful to a wide range of audiences, including scholars,



policymakers, educators, and concerned citizens who seek to gain a deeper understanding of the structures and choices that shape desegregation efforts and education reform. Most especially, this volume compiles essential knowledge for members of the Charlotte community.

The editors, Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, Stephen Samuel Smith, and Amy Hawn Nelson, are particularly well-positioned to guide the reader through this analysis. Mickelson, a professor of sociology and public policy at University of North Carolina at Charlotte; Smith, a professor of political science at Winthrop University; and Hawn Nelson, the Director of Research for the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and the Director of the Institute for Social Capital, Inc., have deep and long-standing professional and personal ties to CMS. Their prolific research has explored political and economic dimensions of school desegregation, the effects of school desegregation, and the development of second-generation segregation within diverse schools. Their work is also informed by 30 years of life experience as a student, a teacher, and a school leader in CMS (Hawn Nelson) and as parents of CMS students and expert witnesses in the 1999 reopening of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (Mickelson and Smith). It is with this background that the editors express their appreciation for the hard work of many individuals in Charlotte and “deeply regret that CMS is so much an embodiment of the social science record and the judicial principle that separate is not equal” (p. 174).

Throughout the volume, there is a common theme of the relationship between structure—“the conditions that ‘define the range of actions available to actors’”—and agency—“individual or group abilities (intentional or otherwise) to affect their environment” (p. 7). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the authors explore how past actions become structures that either constrain or expand subsequent choices. In particular, they underscore the ways in which the iterative relationship between structure and

agency has shaped desegregation and resegregation in CMS.

In introducing the collection, the editors provide an overview of numerous nested structures that either limit or aid the desegregation efforts of school districts, highlighting the role of these structures in CMS. They include conditions that result from federal, state, and local decisions as well as conditions created by the economy, demography, political and social climate, and philanthropic foundations.

Federal court decisions, such as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), which ruled that segregated schools are unequal, and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), which allowed for busing as a tool for desegregation, facilitated desegregation efforts in the past. Acts of Congress, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also supported desegregation efforts. Yet more recent legal decisions, such as *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007), and federal initiatives, including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Race to the Top, have constrained desegregation efforts. State constitutions and actions of state courts, such as North Carolina’s Supreme Court ruling in *Leandro v. State* (1997) that guaranteed students the right to a sound basic education, offer promise within a more restrictive federal legal framework. State legislatures and governors create structures that then enhance or constrain agency. Past choices about brick-and-mortar structures, such as the location of roads, schools, and residential development, create structures that influence present-day agency. CMS’s political structure as a consolidated, county-wide district also plays a significant role in the district’s desegregation efforts.

The context in which CMS exercises its agency has changed. The economy, particularly the high poverty rate for children and growing economic inequality, impacts decision-making. Demographic changes have created a more multiracial and linguistically diverse population.

There has also been a shift in the normative climate for public policy, from an equity-based approach to a market-based approach. Finally, the increasingly influential role of think tanks and foundations shapes the direction of education policy nationwide and in CMS. The impact of these structural elements is woven throughout the volume, building a complex and comprehensive picture of the interaction between structure and agency in CMS's journey from desegregation to resegregation.

The authors inform our understanding of CMS's transformation by offering various levels of analysis, with chapters focusing on the city of Charlotte, the school district, selected CMS schools, and the state. Chapters 2, 7, and 8 examine changes in Charlotte. In Chapter 2, Smith explores Charlotte's political economy, highlighting the contrasting trends in increasing development and decreasing desegregation. In Chapter 7, Liebowitz and Page analyze families' residential choices, finding that after CMS terminated desegregation efforts, white families chose to move to areas with greater shares of white students than existed surrounding their previous residences. In Chapter 8, Plaisance, Morrell, and McDaniel document demographic shifts toward a more multiracial and multicultural community as well as greater linguistic diversity. In doing so, they emphasize the importance of reconceptualizing the black-white paradigm of diversity and also revising policies for English Language Learners.

Chapters 3, 4, and 9 provide in-depth case studies of CMS schools. In Chapters 3 and 4, Grundy followed by Mickelson, Smith, Southworth, and Trull describe the process of transformation in West Charlotte High School through segregation, desegregation, and resegregation, demonstrating how post-*Swann* programmatic responses have largely ignored the school's hypersegregation. In Chapter 9, Hawn Nelson explores the sustained efforts that led to the successful turnaround of Shamrock Gardens Elementary School over a 10-year time period. Although it remains a high-poverty, racially segregated school,

Shamrock Gardens has improved its academic record, transformed its school climate and school culture, and is beginning to attract more diverse families. Hawn Nelson suggests that because of this school's trajectory, it offers a feasible model for school reform in CMS and perhaps other districts.

Chapters 5, 6, and 10 place CMS's history within a broader legal, political, and demographic context. In Chapter 5, Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor analyze between- and within-school segregation trends at both the district and state level. In Chapter 6, Parcel, Hendrix, and Taylor compare the political, legal, and demographic conditions in CMS with those in Wake County, another large North Carolina school district with a strong record of desegregation history. This useful contrast demonstrates how various differences in structures and agency, including the length of time spent pursuing desegregation, the point at which each district became majority-minority, and the political will of each community, led to divergent student assignment policies. In Chapter 10, Dorosin and Largess trace developments in federal and state law, explaining how the North Carolina constitution and *Leandro* offer some promise for challenging segregation in the state's schools. In fact, in August 2015, since the printing of this volume, a lawsuit invoking *Leandro* was filed against the Board of Commissioners in a different North Carolina county, claiming that the racial segregation of students into three separate school districts violates the students' constitutional right to a sound basic education (*Silver et al. v. Halifax County Board of Commissioners*, 2015).

Prior to offering their recommendations, Smith, Mickelson, and Hawn Nelson succinctly summarize the major causes of resegregation in CMS. *Swann* allowed busing as a tool for desegregation in 1971, but when the case was reopened in 1999, CMS was declared unitary and the court order was lifted. In the relationship between desegregation and development, development was typically victorious, leading to the decline of

desegregation alongside prosperous development. Influential pupil assignment decisions included the 1992 switch from district-wide mandatory busing to voluntary participation in magnets and the 2002 post-*Swann* adoption of a race-neutral student assignment plan that prioritized neighborhood school attendance.

Based on the analysis provided by authors throughout this volume, Smith, Mickelson, and Hawn Nelson identify six “modest” steps that could be taken within the existing structure of CMS’s guiding principles for student assignment: (1) address tracking and second-generation segregation within schools; (2) site new schools in locations that facilitate diversity; (3) draw attendance boundaries in a manner that facilitates diversity; (4) use partial magnet programs to facilitate diversity; (5) reallocate the points given to each element of the current student assignment plan so that diversity is more heavily weighted; and (6) after schools enroll more diverse groups of students, develop opportunities for meaningful social and academic interaction. Although they do not offer specific suggestions for new student assignment guidelines, the editors explain that more ambitious steps would involve substantial changes to CMS’s 2010 guiding principles and the current student assignment plan.

The editors recommend that initial efforts focus on socioeconomic diversity rather than racial diversity. They provide four reasons for their stance: legal constraints, mounting evidence that the income achievement gap is larger than the racial achievement gap, the likelihood that socioeconomic diversity might be more politically acceptable than racial diversity, and the ability to draw upon the experiences of other districts that currently employ socioeconomic-based diversity plans. The editors acknowledge that while race and socioeconomic status are often correlated, creating socioeconomic diversity does not guarantee that racial diversity will be achieved. The editors also identify future barriers to desegregation efforts, which include national

and state hurdles, local demographic considerations, and a lack of political will. Despite these barriers, the editors suggest that there are glimmers of hope, including public opinion in Charlotte, the local electoral structure, and brick-and-mortar structures.

CMS’s prominent role in our nation’s desegregation history makes it a vital topic of examination. Beyond its historical value, this book’s informative presentation of CMS’s transformation makes important contributions to the studies of school desegregation and urban school reform. It extends our understanding of the relationship between structure and agency, and provides numerous carefully chosen and enlightening examples and case studies at various levels of analysis. It reveals what we can learn from the successes and failures of a district that has been attempting to improve educational achievement within a resegregated structure of schools. It identifies important steps that could be taken to increase diversity, steps that are in accord with CMS’s current student assignment guidelines and could potentially be studied and emulated by other similar districts.

One topic that could benefit from additional attention is how and when the editors envision CMS undertaking steps that focus specifically on racial diversity. The justification for initially addressing socioeconomic diversity instead of racial diversity is compelling. Yet, as the original intent behind desegregation was to remove barriers among students of different races and reduce racial isolation, it would be helpful to hear more about when and in what manner, if at all, the editors expect racial diversity to move to the forefront of CMS’s future desegregation efforts.

The editors conclude the volume with the following call to action: “For CMS to swim against the resegregation tide will take courage and political will. But the effort offers the promise of improving educational outcomes and saving money. It could also be an example to other districts, perhaps even allowing CMS to once again be a bellwether” (p. 199). This

volume is particularly timely as the CMS Board of Education announced in August 2015 that it would begin to craft new guiding principles for student assignment and devise a new student assignment plan that will include a focus on addressing segregation of low-income students in schools with high concentrations of poverty. The Board anticipates implementing the new student assignment plan in the 2017-2018

school year (Helms, 2015 August). *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* leaves the reader wondering what will happen in the future and eagerly awaiting the answer to whether or not CMS will once again become a bellwether of desegregation and diversity.

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