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How Brentwood Academy Can Fulfill the School’s Mission for Its Minority Students

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This ministry focus paper entitled

HOW BRENTWOOD ACADEMY CAN FULFILL THE SCHOOL’S MISSION FOR ITS MINORITY STUDENTS

Written by

STEVEN WIDMAIER

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

Chap Clark

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HOW BRENTWOOD ACADEMY CAN FULFILL THE SCHOOL’S MISSION FOR ITS MINORITY STUDENTS

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUMBITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

STEVEN WIDMAIER
OCTOBER 2017
ABSTRACT

How Brentwood Academy Can Fulfill the School’s Mission for Its Minority Students
Steven Widmaier
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2017

The goal of this study is to determine how Brentwood Academy can care for minority students in ways defined by the school’s mission statement. This study argues that the school needs to be more intentional about the way it serves students of color. This can be done by rejecting a colorblind model and adopting one that treats people equally while celebrating differences. This thesis has been tested against current scholarship and in Scripture.

Through careful examination of Scripture, God’s heart for the disenfranchised is clear. It is clear in the Old Testament, Jesus’ teachings, and Paul’s writings that Christians should be active in their care for minorities. This hypothesis is tested through exploring passages from multiple biblical authors to reveal that the Bible is not silent on this issue. Care is also given not to proof text or to interpret the Bible in a way that was not intended. Clearly diversity is a part of God’s design for creation, so the differences that God created should not be ignored as in a colorblind ideology. Modern scholarship also rejects the notion of ascribing to a colorblind worldview. A critique of the practices of Brentwood Academy in regard to race are compared with the literature on diversity in schools and in Scripture to determine best practices moving forward.

The findings of this study reveal that Brentwood Academy needs to move away from a colorblind ideology in order to care for minority students at an institutional level. However, no actual research was conducted among students, parents, or faculty to ascertain how effective the school is in fulfilling its mission among minorities. This project would benefit from research done on campus but is beneficial for all independent schools that desire to care for the minorities who attend their schools.

Content Reader: Chap Clark

Words: 297
To my wife, Katie Widmaier, who has faithfully allowed me to pursue this degree.
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INTRODUCTION

Brentwood Academy is a co-educational, independent college preparatory school dedicated to nurturing and challenging each whole person – body, mind and spirit – to the glory of God.¹

Brentwood Academy (BA) is an independent faith based school located in Brentwood, Tennessee that educates male and female adolescents in grades six through twelve. The mission of the school, as stated above, defines what the school is about. The mission drives all the programs and policies of this academic institution. The nine-member board of trustees developed the school’s mission during a contentious time in the fall of 1974.² This was five years after the school’s inception in 1969. This study is for faculty and staff of Brentwood Academy who strive to fulfill this mission. The men and women who teach, coach, and come in daily contact with the adolescents enrolled at Brentwood Academy need to understand the distinct challenges that face minority students who attend this predominantly white, affluent school. There are unique challenges for minorities attending BA that the majority white population may not struggle with or consider.³ Most of the minority students at Brentwood Academy are of African American descent, so the research presented in this paper will be focused


² Melinda Franklin Speece, Brentwood Academy: At Forty Years (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2010), 16.

predominantly on the issues that are relevant to that particular group. Further research can be done among the other minority populations which include students of Asian and Hispanic descent. They face challenges that are similar to the African American students. There are also a growing number of students who are members of minority groups but have been adopted by white parents. They face distinct challenges that would warrant further exploration, but is beyond the scope of this project. The percentage of minority students attending the school has been gradually increasing since the first African American student graduated in 1980. In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the percentage of minority students enrolled at BA. The former director of admissions Hunt Atkins reports that the school is currently 15 percent non-white and of that group, 11 percent are African American.\(^4\)

The city of Brentwood, where the school is located, is a suburban city situated on the border between metro Nashville, Tennessee in Davidson County and Williamson County. It is an affluent area with a median income of $133,443.00 as compared to the state of Tennessee’s median income of $44,298.00.\(^5\) The median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in the city of Brentwood is $487,100.00 in contrast with Nashville-Davidson County, which is $165,200.00. Brentwood, which is situated in Williamson county, has a racial composition of 90 percent white and 4.6 percent black or African American.\(^6\) Nashville-Davidson consists of 60 percent white and 28.4 percent black or

\(^4\) Hunt Atkins, e-mail message to author, February 19, 2015.


\(^6\) Ibid.
African American. This points to the reality that most of the minority students who attend Brentwood Academy do not live in Brentwood. It also indicates that many of their families have less financial means than the predominantly white students who reside in Brentwood. The school gives need-based financial aid to 25 percent of its students.

Many of the school’s African American students must drive in from Davidson and other surrounding counties. These statistics also reveal that the school’s racial make-up is more diverse than the community’s racial composition.

While the school’s handbook does not have a clearly defined goal for diversity, it does state that the admissions policy is open to all. The handbook states:

Brentwood Academy shall admit students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Brentwood Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, national, or ethnic origin in administration of the educational policies, admission policies, financial aid program, athletic, or other school-administered student programs.

People of all racial and religious backgrounds are welcome to apply to this academic institution. However, the school openly and actively promotes a Christian worldview, as defined in the Nicene Creed which “functions as a list of key Christian doctrines” for the school. One does not need to be a Christian to attend the school, but it is made clear through the admissions process that students will be instructed under the premise that the Christian faith is true. The admissions policy clearly states that it does not discriminate

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7 Ibid.
8 Atkins, e-mail.
based on race. The only limitation placed on admissions stated in the handbook involves academic proficiency. Even though the admissions policy is open, the racial make-up of the school is still relatively homogenous. The second point in the Board of Directors’ strategic plan for the future is to “provide for diversity that reflects the body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{11}

In order for this to happen in Brentwood, economic diversity also needs to be a part of the school’s makeup. This is one of the reasons that 25 percent of the student body is on financial aid.

These statistics reveal the demographics at Brentwood Academy. The school is made up of predominantly white students from upper and upper-middle class families. The school strives to be diverse but does not have a policy of actively seek minority students to attend. The focus of this paper is to explore best practices in order to fulfill the school’s mission among its minority population. In light of this, the next topic of discussion will be the specific ministry need that this presents.

As a Christian school seeking to fulfill its mission “to the glory of God,” it is imperative that every member of the student body be considered when shaping policy and practices.\textsuperscript{12} In 1 Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul highlights the diversity that exists in the church and how each part is essential. As a school that claims to glorify God, BA must honor each of its various parts. The mission statement in the Brentwood Academy handbook reads, “nurturing and challenging the whole person,” but in the fall of 2014 the Board of Trustees officially voted to change the mission to read, “nurturing and

\textsuperscript{11} Brentwood Academy Strategic Plan, 2015.

\textsuperscript{12} Brentwood Academy, 2014-15 Handbook.
challenging each whole person.” The word “each” gives further emphasis to the importance of striving to meet the unique needs of every individual student. In order to do this, there must be a discussion about the best way to do that for members of the school’s minority populations.

There is much research dedicated to race and ethnicity in education. However, there is little research done on independent faith based schools in regard to racial diversity, so it will be necessary to integrate data from other sources. Independent schools are similar to universities in the following ways: they can use discretion about who they allow to attend their school, students pay tuition in order to attend, and they can establish their own mission. Both universities and private secondary schools are allowed to have some selectivity in regard to whom they admit to their institution. Brentwood Academy does not discriminate in its admissions policies based on race nor do universities. Due to these similarities, this paper will draw from research done at the collegiate level. There are also more diversity studies conducted in the public school system than in private schools, so that data will be used where it is relevant.

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Private schools prior to 1960 were reserved for the male white elite in society.\(^{17}\) After that time, there was a move towards both racial and gender integration in private schools.\(^{18}\) Today, many of the nation’s private schools are more representative of the nation’s racial make-up than public schools.\(^ {19}\) Public schools in the United States are becoming increasingly segregated.\(^ {20}\) This paper is written to examine the experience of adolescents of color that enroll at Brentwood Academy. Students of color need to learn how to navigate the social, academic, and economic world they enter. They also need to learn how to negotiate their identity formation both as an adolescent and a minority. This paper will examine how private academic institutions can help in the process of physical, intellectual, and for faith-based schools like Brentwood Academy, spiritual development. All of these are goals stated in the Brentwood Academy mission statement.

The focus of this paper will be to reveal how Brentwood Academy can fulfill its mission to “nurture and challenge each whole person-body, mind, and spirit-to the glory of God” among its minority students.\(^ {21}\) As a school striving to meet the needs of each whole person, it is crucial for Brentwood Academy to consider the unique challenges


\(^ {18}\) Ibid.


faced by its minority students. Adolescents face many obstacles in the process of identity development. For African American adolescents in the United States, those challenges are compounded due to their minority status. During this transitional phase of life, young people go through many changes. This includes biological changes, physical changes, and social changes. Many of the difficulties that teenagers face have to do with forming their identity. This paper will examine how Brentwood Academy, a faith based Christian school, can aid adolescents in the developmental process through fulfilling its mission among minority students “to the glory of God.”

Chapter 1 will explore the mission and culture of BA in regards to race. Chapter 2 will give a rationale for diversity in education based on academic benefits, social benefits, and a biblical mandate that are all consistent with BA’s mission. In Chapter 3, theories of racial identity development for minorities and the importance of fostering racial identity will be examined. Chapter 4 will explore theories of racial integration and what course Brentwood Academy should pursue. Chapter 5 gives perspectives on areas that the Brentwood Academy can improve. Chapter 6 investigates a biblical perspective on race and exposes the call in Scripture to care for minorities. The seventh chapter will address how the Bible informs adolescents in the process of identity formation and


specifically as a minority. Finally, in the conclusion, recommendations will be made for BA to fulfill its mission among its minority population.
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1
THE MISSION AND CULTURE OF BRENTWOOD ACADEMY

There are many different opinions about the value and importance of mission statements. Many people view them with a great deal of skepticism. At worst, a mission statement is what Scott Adams describes as “a long awkward sentence that demonstrates management’s inability to think clearly.”\(^1\) At best, mission statements give direction and purpose to an organization. If the mission is not known and promoted, it will be rendered impotent and useless.\(^2\) At BA, the mission is continually before the students, faculty, and parents. It is printed on all official publications, letterhead, and electronic media. It is visible in all classrooms and throughout the school either in part or in whole. However, having it posted does not make it relevant. What is more significant than the mission’s visibility around campus is that school leadership, starting with the headmaster, constantly reminds everybody associated with the school of the mission. It is so often communicated that most faculty, students and parents can recite the mission statement. It

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2 Ibid.
is also continually explained throughout the admissions process, so that parents and students are very clear about the mission before entering the school community.

The Mission

The mission statement of Brentwood Academy was conceived in the fall of 1974 in the wake of the firing, and then two weeks later rehiring, of the school founder and Headmaster Bill Brown. The mission has remained unchanged in form until the fall of 2014 when the board of trustees voted to officially change the wording from “the whole-person” to “each whole person.” The current head master, Curt Masters, began using the new wording many years before it was officially changed. Even though the words have remained basically unchanged, Curt Masters believes the application and meaning of the mission statement has been evolving since its inception. 3 According to Masters, the mission when first implemented was very legalistic. “To the glory of God” was interpreted to mean patriotism, respect for authority, cleanliness, and obeying the rules. Today the headmaster and board of trustees interpret the last phrase in the mission statement to imply a personal relationship with God.

In the past the phrase “nurturing and challenging each whole person – body, mind, and spirit” pertained to individual parts of the school. 4 There was very little integration between these aspects of the school’s mission. The triangle philosophy was developed to illustrate these three parts. Each side of the triangle represented a different part of the school’s focus and was in many ways isolated from the other parts. 5 The sides

3 Masters, interview.

of the triangle are labeled spiritual, academic, and athletic to coincide with body, mind, and spirit in the mission statement that is intended to represent the whole person. All sides of the triangle are of equal length, with the spiritual side being on the bottom as the foundation. Each of these three aspects of the school had its own faculty head to lobby for that part of the school’s focus and to have a voice in the admissions process. At times there was even a sense of competition between each part of the mission instead of integration. Today, the school seeks to assimilate all three parts, but there is still competition for the time and attention of students.

The next section of this paper will examine each part of the school’s mission, how it shapes the culture and climate of the school, and how it affects minority students at BA. Special attention will be given to the impact each part of the mission has on minorities at the school.

Coeducational, Independent, College Preparatory School

Brentwood Academy is a “co-educational, independent, college preparatory school.” From its inception, diversity in gender was a part of the fabric of the school as evidenced in the choice to be co-educational. However, diversity in race did not begin

7 Masters, interview.
9 Ibid.
until 1974 when the first African American enrolled at the school. The choice to be independent allows BA to make its own decisions about who is admitted to the school and what the mission will be. The school does not receive any federal tax dollars and thus is free to make certain decisions about what it chooses to teach and whom it chooses to teach. Since the school was founded, it has been dedicated to promoting the Christian faith among the students who choose to attend.\textsuperscript{11} As an independent faith-based school, BA offers courses that teach the Christian faith and also strives to teach all courses from a Christian worldview. Unfortunately, faith-based private schools had been a place where white evangelicals could escape from the desegregation process that was happening in the public school system.\textsuperscript{12} Brentwood Academy was not created for this purpose, but it took many years for any significant racial integration to take place.

The choice to be a college preparatory school addresses primarily the academic rigor of the school curriculum, but it also implies preparing students socially for the challenges that come with being away at college. Research shows that one of the many benefits of a racially diverse high school is the way it prepares students for a racially diverse college experience.\textsuperscript{13} BA offers honors and AP classes to its students. The academic workload, even in regular classes, is designed to equip graduates with the tools they need to succeed in college. However, for BA to adequately prepare students for a

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\textsuperscript{11} Speece, \textit{Brentwood Academy: At Forty Years}, xv.
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\textsuperscript{13} Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, \textit{A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools}.
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diverse college experience, it needs to provide a school climate that promotes racial diversity.\textsuperscript{14}

Bill Brown and the first Board of Trustees at Brentwood Academy decided the school would be a “co-educational, independent, college preparatory school.”\textsuperscript{15} As such, the school would be committed to educating both boys and girls. It would also provide those who attend the school the resources needed to succeed in college. Finally, the school would strive to do this in an environment that promotes faith in Jesus Christ. The next section will explore the part of the mission that states BA is “dedicated to nurturing and challenging each whole person.”

Nurturing and Challenging Each Whole Person

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians gives instruction to fathers on how to raise their children when he says, “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6: 4).\textsuperscript{16} The King James Version of the Bible renders this passage “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” These may not be equivalent ideas to what BA strives for in the process of nurturing and challenging. Charles Hodge says, “παιδεία is a comprehensive word; it means the training or education of a child, including the whole process of instruction and discipline.”\textsuperscript{17} The ideas of training and discipline are implicit in the word

\textsuperscript{14} Ryan, \textit{Five Miles Away, A World Apart}.

\textsuperscript{15} Brentwood Academy, 2014-15 Handbook.

\textsuperscript{16} All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

\textsuperscript{17} Charles Hodge, \textit{A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 359.
παιδεία.¹⁸ These concepts are central to the education of young people. The word νουθεσία which is translated by the King James Version of the bible as “admonition” means to gently instruct or correct.¹⁹ This is the same idea that is being communicated with the word challenge in the mission statement. This is what BA is striving to do.

Brentwood Academy is educating students during the mid-adolescent stage of development. It can be a trying time as students move through puberty and transition from concrete to abstract thought.²⁰ For a school to provide Christian nurture through this difficult stage of life, there must be relationships.²¹ Curt Masters comments that one of the ways the school has changed over the years is in its movement from a legalistic interpretation of the mission to a much more relational one.²² One of the selling points for a private school education is smaller class sizes and more opportunity for personal interaction with teachers and coaches. At BA, teachers and coaches are expected to attend sporting events, spiritual life trips, and fine arts performances in addition to their teaching duties.²³ Upper school faculty are also expected to lead an advisory group and plan a winter break trip.²⁴ Middle school faculty are expected to attend the middle school retreat

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¹⁹ Ibid.


²² Masters, interview.


²⁴ Advisory groups are grade and gender specific groups of eight to ten students that meet weekly to have a Bible study and discuss issues going on in the lives of the students. Winterim trips take place
and one of the class trips that are offered. All of these practices are intended to foster relationships between students and faculty. These are a few of the ways that the school tries to nurture the children in its care in a broad sense. As the school tries to care for each whole person, there also needs to be intentional care for minorities. An example of this would be to intentionally recruit African American teachers so black students can have mentors that can more easily identify with their situation.  

Challenging students comes in the form of holding them accountable in all spheres of the school. Coaches, teachers, and administrators push students to perform to the best of their ability. The school strives to be athletically competitive and academically challenging. From very early on, the school has been known in the community as a football school. Carlton Flatt was made the head football coach and athletic director in 1971 and became a 2014 Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame inductee because of the winning tradition he established. Students are expected to perform at the highest levels in all that they endeavor to do. There is also an expectation that students will contribute to all aspects of student life. Students are under tremendous pressure to participate in many of activities.

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For many minority students entering Brentwood Academy, the athletic program provides a way of connecting, but the academic side is often a challenge.27 Many minority students come from metro Nashville public schools and have academic deficiencies compared to some of their white classmates who come from private schools.28 Due to this reality African American students often struggle to succeed in the classroom at BA. The BA handbook states that, “the admission committee occasionally accepts students who are considered academic risks but whose families desire our mission.”29 This is not extended exclusively to minority students, but white students make up the vast majority of those placed in honors and Advanced Placement classes. This is an issue for schools nationwide.30

As a school committed to each whole person, it is necessary to engage students on multiple levels. “Each whole person” has several implications. Since the mission states that each whole person will be nurtured and challenged, the special needs of individuals must be considered. However, BA does not have the resources to tailor a personal education plan for each of its students as some other schools do. Instead of having individual education plans, the school tries to provide multiple points of connection for the students. This is done through participation in multiple activities like sports, advisory


groups, retreats, and winterim in addition to daily class interactions. The rationale for these relational opportunities is that when faculty members know students well, their needs can be identified and addressed. For minority students, though, it must mean more than just these activities. Creating a racially diverse faculty is one way to care for minorities in the school.\textsuperscript{31} Through its hiring practices the administration can communicate its desire to foster diversity.\textsuperscript{32} Enrollment of students of color in independent schools is increasing but the hiring of faculty of color is lagging behind.\textsuperscript{33}

The school strives to hire faculty that are a “diverse group who teach here because they embrace and carry out the school’s mission.”\textsuperscript{34} It is not completely clear if the word “diverse” is meant to include racial diversity. It could be referring to the fact that among Christians, there are many types of people and ideas as communicated in I Corinthians 12. However, for minorities to feel welcomed and valued in the school, they must be represented among the faculty and staff.\textsuperscript{35} At the beginning of the 2014-15 school year, there were 133 faculty and staff at BA. Of those, nine are African American.\textsuperscript{36} This means that there is currently a smaller percentage of black faculty and staff than that of


\textsuperscript{33} Sherry Coleman and Howard C. Stevenson, "The Racial Stress of Membership: Development of the Faculty Inventory of Racialized Experiences in Schools," \textit{Psychology in the Schools} 50, no. 6 (2013): 548-566.

\textsuperscript{34} Brentwood Academy, 2014-15 Handbook, 9.

\textsuperscript{35} Flores and Smith, “Teachers' Characteristics and Attitudinal Beliefs about Linguistic and Cultural Diversity.”

\textsuperscript{36} Brentwood Academy, 2014-15 Handbook.
the student body. This is consistent with national trends for private schools in the United States.\(^{37}\)

The school is striving to nurture and challenge each whole person, but the institution needs to do that in an intentional way among its minority students. The mission defines the whole person as consisting of “body, mind and spirit” but these three aspects may not truly explain the whole of a person. The statement “to the Glory of God” highlights the desire to educate in a way that both recognizes God and places the school under the authority of God. The next section will explore the ways that BA takes on this task and whether the mission statement is based on biblical principles.

Body, Mind, and Spirit – To the Glory of God

Brentwood Academy has adopted the “triangle philosophy” in order to flesh out what it means by “body, mind, and spirit – to the glory of God.” This is represented by an equilateral triangle. Two legs of the triangle are symbolic of academic and athletic pursuits. The base of the triangle represents the spiritual aspects of the school. The importance of this philosophy is symbolically demonstrated throughout the school on floors, ceilings, and various signs around the school to remind people of the triangle philosophy. This section of the paper will examine each aspect of the whole person and what it means to do this to the glory of God.

\(^{37}\) Coleman and Stevenson, “The Racial Stress of Membership.”
The school handbook lists 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 and Philippians 3:13-14 as verses that give a biblical rationale for bodily development in a Christian school context. The apostle Paul often used athletic metaphors as a means of communicating spiritual truths (Gal 2:2; 5:7, Phil 2:16, 2 Tim 4:7), but whether or not this is an exhortation toward athletic participation and physical activity needs to be examined. It was in Corinth that the Isthmian games were held. The Isthmian games was an athletic event that was second in importance only to the Olympic games. In I Corinthians 9 Paul speaks of the discipline necessary for winning a perishable prize and how much more important it is to strive for eternal rewards that are imperishable. While this certainly is speaking of spiritual discipline, some commentators believe that physical discipline is one aspect of spiritual discipline, but this is not a clearly developed theology of athletic participation. In I Timothy 4: 8 Paul says that “physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” In the Greek world, physical training and activity were highly valued, but Paul is revealing the limited value of such activity because it is temporal as opposed to eternal. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a carefully developed theology of athletics, however, it appears that Paul and Scripture in general do not prohibit athletic


40 Ibid.


participation. In fact, based on the volume of sports related metaphors used in his writings, it seems that Paul enjoyed competition and athletics and may even have endorsed such activity.\footnote{Robinson, \textit{Opening Up 1 Timothy}.}

At Brentwood Academy every student is required to be in a PE class. For many students, their PE is the sport they are participating in. Students are strongly encouraged to be involved in a team sport. Masters says “The purpose of the athletic program at Brentwood Academy is to foster physical development and athletic skills while teaching the value of personal discipline, character, commitment, and the subordination of self-interest to the higher goal of team achievement.”\footnote{Barclay, \textit{The Letters to the Corinthians}, 30.} For those not participating in a sport, there are a few other class options like martial arts or weight training in order to satisfy the PE requirement. If their sport is not in season, student athletes are usually enrolled in sport specific, off-season strength and conditioning. However, the vast majority of students participate in a team sport. Nearly 100 percent of the African American students participate in at least one team sport. This has led to the criticism that BA recruits black students in order to build its athletic program.\footnote{Jung-ah Choi, "Unlearning Colorblind Ideologies in Education Class," \textit{The Journal of Educational Foundations} 22, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 53-71.} According to Curt Masters, there are some parents of African American students that are offended by this idea and others that embrace the idea and are proud that their son or daughter is a part of building state championship teams.\footnote{Masters, interview.} Dismantling the stereotype that all black students at BA are
athletes is important. In order to educate each whole person, these students need to be challenged to excel in other areas like academics and the arts.  

**Mind**

The next side of the triangle is academics, which is linked to the mission statement with the word “mind.” The theological underpinnings for BA’s academic goals are based on Colossians 3:2 which states “Set your minds on things above and not on earthly things” and Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The school’s motto is “Vivat Veritas” or “Let Truth Prevail.” All academic pursuits at Brentwood Academy are intended to be under the authority of God and his word. The Christian faith is to be promoted throughout the various academic disciplines and not relegated to spiritual life courses. At the same time, the school seeks to provide a rigorous, college-preparatory education. Each student is pushed to achieve his or her potential academically. It is possible, though, that the bar is set lower for some students.

The headmaster says “Brentwood Academy is a college preparatory school for students with average and above-average academic ability.” The school purposefully does not pursue the academically and financially elite exclusively, however, academic standards required for admissions do exist. Instead, the school seeks to foster a “strong

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.
academic work ethic to develop life-long learners.” Students at BA are expected to do homework every night. The workload is challenging and time consuming. Students are encouraged to register for classes that will stretch them intellectually. The school provides many opportunities for honors and Advanced Placement classes; however, African American students are underrepresented in these classes. Among minority groups in the United States, Asian students are more often placed in these advanced courses, but blacks and Hispanics still struggle to attain this level of academic achievement. This is often a byproduct of the education they received in elementary schools prior to enrolling at BA.

The school does provide academic assistance to students who are struggling. Two full time staff positions are for helping to meet the needs of students who either have academic deficiencies or some forms of learning disabilities. Many of the students taking advantage of these services are African American. The school needs to raise its expectations for these students and instill confidence in them that they can succeed in honors and Advanced Placement courses. Brentwood Academy has begun an evening tutoring program, under the leadership of Dr. Rene Rochester, to assist struggling students. It is also important for minority students to have same race mentors at the


52 Ndura, Robinson, and Ochs, Minority Students in High School Advanced Placement Courses.


54 Ndura, Robinson, and Ochs, Minority Students in High School Advanced Placement Courses, 34.

55 Ibid. 34.
school to encourage them academically. This evening program is one way that is being done.

**Spirit**

The Brentwood Academy student handbook lists three passages of Scripture to “illustrate our school’s foundation for unity – past, present, and future.” These verses are Matthew 6:33, Psalm 46:10, and Micah 6:8. Aside from being in the student handbook, these verses are seldom discussed or presented in school literature. This portion of the school handbook places an emphasis on relationship with God through Christ and says, “at Brentwood Academy we are more concerned with the quality and depth of our relationships than the outcome of our efforts.” In a school context it is challenging to apply this ideology consistently. Much of what a school does day in and day out is to evaluate students in a manner that is based on outcomes that are not always directly linked to effort. This is true in the classroom, on athletic fields, and even in artistic endeavors.

The school acknowledges that “programs and religions talk do not produce the power that exists when individuals are truly seeking to follow Christ” but still has many programs to help foster a relationship with God. There are many programs like weekly chapels, retreats, and Bible studies as well as daily in-class Bible reading that is

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58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.
organized through the Spiritual Life Department. There are Bible readings during weekly advisory group meetings, many teams have pre-game devotions, and every other day students are given time in their first period class to write down prayers and thoughts in journals that the school purchases for them. In addition to these activities, during two school days every year, the entire student body goes into the community to serve. One of these days is during the annual spiritual emphasis week in which chapel times are extended and guest speakers are brought in. Even though the school has instituted programs to help promote a relationship with God, the student handbook acknowledges that it is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ through which God brings about salvation and sanctification.

The school desires to hire and retain a faculty that is committed to following Christ. This has not always been the case. Under Bill Brown’s term as headmaster, the school employed non-Christian teachers. The school had more of an evangelistic focus, and several teachers became Christians through teaching at BA. The current school administration has made a conscious decision to have a faculty dedicated to serving God in order to pass their faith on to the students. The idea that one cannot give what one does not have has been an emphasis in the school’s hiring practices. This idea of mentorship and reproduction in others is conveyed in passages like 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul says, “follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

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61 Masters, interview.
During chapel and other times when the Bible is taught publicly, the doctrine and liturgy most often resembles white reformed evangelicalism. The majority of students at BA come from Protestant backgrounds. For African American students, who often come from more Pentecostal/charismatic traditions, there is very little representation of their faith practices in any of these public manifestations of the Spiritual Life Department. Occasionally a person of color will be invited to speak in chapel and will deliver their message in a style that is more similar to what black students are accustomed to. This is rare, though. In a similar fashion to many white churches in America, the worship and preaching style is representative of white culture. The school needs to find ways to engage more faith traditions if it is to provide for the spiritual needs of each whole person. The issue of diversity in worship is a struggle that the church in America faces as well.

To the Glory of God

The mission statement concludes with “to the glory of God.” All aspects of the school should point people to the reality that there is a divine being that has made us all, and thus we are under God’s rule. I Corinthians 10:31 says, “whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” R.E. Nixon points out that “In certain places in the NT doxa refers to human honor (Mt 4:8; 6:29), but its chief use is to describe the revelation of the

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character and the presence of God in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.”

To glorify God is to proclaim the name of Christ. Christians receive freedom through Christ to glorify God in all that we do. Colossians 3:21 says, “whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The exhortation in this passage is for Christians to make all of life an expression of worship. It is in this spirit that the school strives to make all activities glorifying to God. During a teacher in-service, the spiritual life director, Rian Berger, said to the faculty, “we are all in the spiritual life department.” This phrase is often quoted among the faculty, and it is meant to convey the idea that every aspect of school life should be spiritual.

While not affiliated with any particular denomination, the school adheres to the basic tenants of the Christian faith as defined in the Nicene Creed. Many denominational perspectives are represented among the faculty, staff, and student body. Some core values and beliefs that the school officially endorses are:

1.) The Bible is the inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16)
2.) All humanity is born sinners and need a Savior (Romans 3:23; 5:12)
3.) Jesus Christ is the Savior (Colossians 1:15-20; John 14:6)
4.) The continued work of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20)
4.) The second coming of Christ (Acts 1:11)

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67 Peter Thomas O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 211.
68 Maxwell, ”The Nicene Creed in the Church.”
69 Rian Berger, Spiritual Life Director at Brentwood Academy, email message to author.
The handbook states “While the religious beliefs of each individual will be respected, the school will continuously seek to encourage a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Students at BA do not have to sign a document declaring their allegiance to the Christian faith, as some faith-based schools require. However, it is made very clear throughout the admissions process that the school will unapologetically teach and promote Christian ideologies.

Since the school mission statement was drafted in 1974, the wording was unchanged until the fall of 2014 when the word “the” was replaced with “each.” Even though this has been the only change to the wording, the interpretation has evolved over the years. Today the emphasis is much more on relationships than the legalistic interpretation of the past. Students are nurtured and challenged by a faculty that is committed to a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. “Each whole person” is encouraged to develop “body, mind, and spirit—to the glory of God” by participation in various school activities that foster interpersonal connections between students and faculty members and thus developing a sense of community within the school.

This concludes an overview of the mission and culture at Brentwood Academy. There have also been brief summaries of how the mission affects the school’s minority students. The next chapter will discuss the issue of diversity in the student body and faculty at BA. Topics to be addressed in the next section include goals for racial

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diversity, the benefits of having a diverse student body and faculty, and what it might look like for BA to have diversity that represents the body of Christ.
CHAPTER 2
GOALS FOR RACIAL DIVERSITY

It was not until the civil rights movement that the American educational system began to integrate in any meaningful way.\(^1\) One result of this movement and specifically the Supreme Court ruling on Brown v. Board of Education was the idea that everyone should have equal access to a quality education regardless of race. That ruling also established that separate but equal is not equal. This lead to the desegregation of schools that were once strictly divided on racial lines in the hopes that all children would receive a quality education regardless of the color of their skin.\(^2\) This policy eventually resulted in many students being bussed from their neighborhood, which was predominantly one race, to a school in a neighborhood of a different racial makeup from their own in the name of racial diversity and equality of education. Like many well-intentioned government policies, it was not without negative consequences. Bussing was problematic for many families. This lead to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in July of 2007 that “the

\(^1\) Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools.

\(^2\) Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart.*
practice of assigning students to K-12 schools based on their race” was unconstitutional.³

In the wake of this ruling, many public schools are becoming increasingly segregated again. Throughout this time and even today the church has remained one of the most segregated places in American society.⁴ As a Christian school dedicated to glorifying God, BA can be an agent for change in the culture. As the country’s public schools become increasingly segregated by race, it is important for BA to be diverse racially.⁵ This chapter will explore the benefits of having a racially diverse student body and potential challenges therein.

The Board of Trustees along with the headmaster at Brentwood Academy has established seven priorities that, along with the mission, help to guide the school’s policies and practices. The second of these seven priorities is to have a racially diverse school that represents the diversity that is found in the body of Christ.⁶ John records in Revelation 7:9 that "after this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” John is revealing that in heaven there will be representatives from every race and ethnicity on the planet. By this definition, BA would be striving to have a student body that represents all of the people that God has created. Of course, this is not possible, but it is an important goal to strive for in order to push back the effects of


⁴ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith.*

⁵ Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, *A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools.*

⁶ Masters, interview.
the fall that divided people. As a school dedicated to educating adolescents to the glory of God and trying to represent the body of Christ among its student body, there are many benefits of having a racially diverse school.

**Benefits of Racial Diversity in School**

There is an increasing amount of research that points towards diversity as a key component in an adolescent’s education and showing that it is an important factor for achievement in school. Research also points to the importance of secondary schools in preparing students to engage in interracial relationships in college because it has been found that “diversity is a critical component of educating college students.” As a college preparatory school, BA needs to have a diverse student body in order to equip students for their transition to a university. Studies have found that integrated classrooms aid students in the areas of “enhanced learning, higher educational and occupational aspirations, and positive social interaction among members of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.” Brentwood Academy needs to pursue racial and ethnic diversity for academic, social, and theological reasons.

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Academic Benefits

Most research on diversity in education is conducted at the collegiate level, but there is also data to support the benefits of integration at the high school level.\textsuperscript{10} The introduction of multiethnic and racial classrooms has been found to provide increased intellectual stimulation and improved cognitive thinking skills. Socializing with members of various ethnic and racial groups has been found to positively affect academic self-confidence among both majority and minority group members.\textsuperscript{11} Through cross-racial interactions, students can benefit from both diverse social and educational perspectives that each person contributes. Classroom learning is enhanced when both faculty and students value each of these perspectives.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to an enhanced learning environment, there are also educational achievement gains for students in racially diverse schools; however, these are most often realized among black students.\textsuperscript{13} For African American students in majority black schools, graduation rates tend to be lower than those who attend majority white schools.\textsuperscript{14} Admittedly this is connected to the socioeconomic conditions of those attending predominately black schools, but academic benefits have been found even when adjusting

\textsuperscript{10} Hedwig, “The Effects of School Racial and Ethnic Composition on Academic Achievement During Adolescence,” 169.

\textsuperscript{11} Laird, “College Students' Experiences with Diversity and Their Effects on Academic Self-Confidence, Social Agency, and Disposition Toward Critical Thinking,” 367.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.


for the reality that many black schools are located in urban lower-class neighborhoods where education is often not valued as highly.\textsuperscript{15} For students at Brentwood Academy, the expectation is not only that students will graduate, but also that they will attend college after graduation. There is often positive peer pressure to achieve academically at predominantly white, college preparatory schools, and African American students can benefit from the school culture.\textsuperscript{16} This positive peer pressure is a benefit to students, but it can also add stress to students.

There are benefits of a racially diverse campus for white students as well. One of the main benefits for all students enrolled at a racially diverse academic institution is the development of critical thinking skills.\textsuperscript{17} This is especially true if the school openly addresses racial issues or offers classes that deal with minority issues.\textsuperscript{18} For adolescents who are in the process of moving from concrete thought to abstract thought, critical thinking is an important skill to build. Mid-adolescence is such a formative time physically, emotionally, and cognitively that it provides a tremendous opportunity to teach students about race and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{19} Educators who work with this age group can help students to begin challenging presuppositions and stereotypes that they may have


\textsuperscript{17} Laird, “College Students' Experiences with Diversity and Their Effects on Academic Self-Confidence, Social Agency, and Disposition Toward Critical Thinking,” 384.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 370.

\textsuperscript{19} Arnett, \textit{Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood}.
grown up with. Research points to the reality that “integrated classrooms may also provide intellectual stimulation and improve cognitive thinking skills that a White student would not be able to get in a completely homogenous (all-White) environment.” This is especially true at a Christian school like BA that is dedicated to each whole person’s development.

In America’s not so distant past, African Americans were not considered whole people. When diversity is present in the classroom, many different perspectives on a given subject can be heard and everyone benefits. However, it is important to not make minority students in the class speak for their entire race. A negative consequence resulting from limited desegregation is when minorities become mere symbols of the school’s efforts to be diverse. To have a “token” minority in a class can be harmful to both white perspectives on diversity and harmful to the minority student. This is another reason BA needs to continually strive for a more diverse student body.

There are educational benefits to having a diverse student body. There are both moral and intellectual advantages to having students of different backgrounds and experiences together in a classroom. It will profit all when multiple perspectives are present. Gurin explains that “In a hierarchical environment in which young people are not


23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
obliged to discuss and argue with others on an equal basis, they are not likely to do the
cognitive and emotional work that is required to understand how other people think and
feel."  

In a homogenous classroom students are much more likely to adhere to just one
perspective that has been given to them by an authority figure. However, the minority
voice needs to be heard and valued. In order for all to benefit, and for BA to full its
mission with the people of color on its campus, it needs to ensure their opinions are
valued.

For BA to nurture and challenge students to the glory of God, young people need
to learn how to appropriately challenge their notions of basic concepts like church, Jesus
Christ and God, which have so often been viewed through white European lenses.

Students at BA rarely find it necessary to think about racial issues because most of their
life is free from having to confront racial issues. Most pupils live in all white
neighborhoods, attend all white churches, and go to predominantly white schools. They
live in what Emerson and Smith call a “racialized society.”  

In order to have a kingdom perspective, white students will benefit greatly by having opportunities to build
friendships with peers from racial and ethnic minorities.

Racial diversity has academic benefits for both minorities and the majority white
students, but there are also social benefits to integrating schools. Integrating schools can
create problems, but the benefits far outweigh any of the negative aspects. The next

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26 Emerson and Smith, Divided by Faith, 7.
section will focus on the social aspects of school integration and how BA can fulfill its mission among its minority students through those aspects.

Social Benefits of School Integration

A racially diverse campus offers social benefits for both white and black students alike. One such benefit is promoting social agency. Social agency occurs when students become involved in the community and help to correct social injustice. Another way to state this is that it prepares them to be active members in a diverse democracy. Through interracial interactions, both black and white students can learn about the needs of other racial and ethnic groups. Research indicates that through intergroup contact, knowledge is gained, anxiety is reduced, and empathy can occur. When groups interact in positive ways, it has also been revealed that racial prejudice is reduced. This has been found to be true even if students do not have a lot of personal cross-racial interactions. Just being in an environment that is diverse can help to promote acceptance of people who are ethnically or racially different. If diversity classes are included in the school curriculum,


30 Ibid., 922.

it has been found that these outcomes can last for years after graduation, thus shaping students into adults who are able to contribute to a democratic society.32

Citizens in a Diverse Democracy

Gordon Allport in the 1950s argued for the benefits of bringing people together.33 He posited that when people of various races are brought together on equal footing with common goals, prejudice will be reduced and benefits will be realized. One such benefit in American society is to prepare young people to be active participants in a diverse democracy. The American landscape is multiracial and multiethnic. Graduates need to be able to interact with people of different origins and backgrounds in order to contribute to the world they live in. In addition to the larger American culture, universities have recognized the benefits of racial diversity, and college campuses are actively recruiting minority students. For BA to be a true college preparatory school, it needs to follow this practice. There is some evidence that structural diversity, defined as simply having minorities on campus, is beneficial in and of itself. But most evidence points to the reality that schools need to be intentional about promoting diversity.34 In order to prepare students for a diverse college experience and to be able to contribute to society in a meaningful way, BA needs to find avenues for students to integrate into the life of the school while also keeping their racial identity.


Diversity issues cannot be ignored. The school needs to provide a culture of openness. Providing avenues to discuss issues relevant to minorities is one way to validate their cultures and heritages. Research points to the reality that optimal conditions bring about optimal benefits. One way to provide for optimal conditions is through integrated friendships. These can be fostered through participation in campus activities. At BA students are expected to participate in extracurricular activities. Nearly all African American students participate in sports. This is an excellent way to build interracial friendships.

In addition to just bringing groups into contact with each other through activities, creating avenues for open dialogue about race can bring about meaningful change in students’ presuppositions about race. The frequency of interaction brings some benefit, but the quality of those interactions is important as well. This can be done through diversity classes, mentoring programs, panel discussions or any other means that promote open dialogue. This is part of creating a culture in the school that is open to dealing with hard issues. Pretending that race is no longer an issue in society does a disservice to minority groups. By not ignoring race the school honors each whole person.

These are a couple of ways the social benefit of preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy can be realized at BA. In order for the school to provide a climate

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that is welcoming to all people, it cannot pretend that race is no longer an issue in modern society. The next social benefit of an integrated school pertains to positive peer pressure.

**Benefits of Integrated Friendships**

For minority students enrolled at BA, the academic workload can be challenging. However, there are also some real benefits. As mentioned previously, many black students at BA come from schools that have not prepared them for the rigorous academic demands of a college preparatory school. In order to both nurture and challenge the minds of these students, the school needs to provide help, but also hold them to high academic standards. Some African American students face the struggle of dual citizenship and double marginalization.\(^{38}\) At home in a predominantly black neighborhood, academic success may not be valued as highly as it is in their mostly white school. This means they have to navigate two cultures every day and might feel like they do not exactly fit in either. At home they may be accused of being too white and at school they may feel too black.\(^{39}\) Parents of African American students view this struggle as part of the price to pay for gaining admittance into top schools that will guarantee a better education and future for their children.\(^{40}\) The challenges of integration are viewed as being worth the price both socially and financially. The positive peer pressure to perform well academically is thus a benefit.

\(^{38}\) Cookson, Jr. and Persell, "Race and Class in America's Elite Preparatory Boarding Schools,” 220.

\(^{39}\) Datnow and Cooper, “Peer Networks of African American Students in Independent Schools,” 67.

\(^{40}\) Cookson, Jr. and Persell, "Race and Class in America's Elite Preparatory Boarding Schools,” 223.
Having white friends can prove beneficial not just for students but for their families as well. Research indicates that African American parents of independent school students have lower and fewer degrees than those of white parents.\textsuperscript{41} When friendships are created between families of diverse racial backgrounds, black families can benefit in a couple of ways. One benefit is that parents can receive help navigating an educational system that is created and controlled by the white majority, and thus can be confusing to those who are not members of that group. Cross race relationships among parents can also produce business contacts that they may not have had access to apart from the school.

This is true for white families as well as for minorities. BA strives to be a community. If it is to achieve this goal, then all members of the community should have equal status and be seen as equally contributing members. Even though there are social benefits realized by black families, it is imperative that white families do not have a paternalistic view of them. It is detrimental to cross race relations if the people in power see their minority friends as beneficiaries of their friendship and not equally contributing members of the community.\textsuperscript{42}

Brentwood Academy needs to continually strive for diversity in its student body racially and ethnically in order to reap the educational and social benefits discussed previously. Adolescence can be a turbulent time as young people strive to form their identity, navigate the process of puberty, and strive for individuation. Schools serve the

\textsuperscript{41} Cookson, Jr. and Persell, "Race and Class in America's Elite Preparatory Boarding Schools," 221.

purpose of educating and one piece of that task is aiding students in the process of maturation. Part Two will investigate some of the unique challenges African American students face and ways that Brentwood Academy can assist them as they are involved in the life of the school. There will also be discussion about the process of racial identity development that takes place during the adolescent stage of life.
PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS
CHAPTER 3

JESUS’ TEACHING ON RACE AND IDENTITY

This chapter will look at what Jesus has to say about race and caring for minorities. Determining a biblical perspective on race and ethnicity is imperative when trying to determine best practices in this area for a faith-based school like Brentwood Academy. Some people try to read race into the Bible where it does not exist and others ignore race where it is present. For example, some Christian groups claim Jesus as the white messiah while other groups claim him as the black messiah.\(^1\) Therefore, it is imperative to take a proper look at the Bible in context. The first issue this chapter will address is what Jesus teaches about racial issues. There will also be an examination of Christ’s life and teachings about how Christians need to love the disadvantaged in society. Finally, the principles that were taught by Christ during his earthly ministry will be applied to the mission of Brentwood Academy.

The Bible records many instances of people from varying races and ethnicities interacting with one another. In the Old Testament, the Jews rarely find themselves in a

position of power, but are far more often living in exile or under the control of a foreign power (see Deuteronomy, Ezra, Ruth, and Nehemiah for examples). In the New Testament as well, there are ample passages that give guidance to Christians about how groups should interact with one another. This section will give a biblical perspective on assimilation, evaluate the biblical mandate to care for the oppressed, and examine the example that Christ gave as he intentionally sought out ministering to those at the margins of society.²

Jesus and Diversity

When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 which says “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” He followed this by saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39). Jesus continues the idea of neighborly love that was taught to the Jews and extends it to the Gentiles. This is clearly illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The story is set up by an exchange between Jesus and a Jewish lawyer who seeks to put Jesus on trial. Much has been made of this story, but at its core it is the message of showing love for all people. N.T. Wright points out that the heart of this confrontation is “two different visions of what it means to be Israel, God’s people.”³ August Van Ryn suggests that Jesus is the Samaritan in the story and thus points the lawyer to Christ as the one who can save.⁴ While there is definitely truth to this, it seems

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too coincidental that Jesus chose a people group that were not only hated by the Jews at
that time, but are still hated by them today.\(^5\) During his earthly ministry, Christ constantly
associated with Gentiles and those that the religious elite did not think he should be with. Jesus
interacts with these different racial and ethnic groups to show that God’s love is for all peoples and that all who are in him can now be considered a part of Israel or God’s chosen people. God desires all to come to him. Jesus reveals this just prior to telling the story of the Good Samaritan by instructing his disciples not to destroy the Samaritan village that did not receive him.\(^6\) Some may think that the Bible promotes a colorblind perspective where all races are irrelevant and only our identity in Christ matters. This is not the case though, and will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

Before Jesus began his earthly ministry, his cousin John the Baptist was proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. Many people would journey to the desert to hear him preach and to be baptized. People asked, “then who are you?” (Jn 1: 21). This question is at the heart of our identity. John’s answer is that he is one who points others to the Messiah. His identity is wrapped up in Christ. This is the same for all Christians, but it does not negate racial distinctions. Later when Jesus appears, John proclaims, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1: 29). If he said Jesus came to take away the sins of the Israelites, the Jewish people would not have been shocked. However, John says Jesus will take away the sins of the world and this does surprise the Jews. Christians are united in Christ and salvation is for all the nations of the


Christ came that “whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16b). This is a promise from God extended to whoever believes, not just the nation of Israel.

**Jesus and Outsiders**

Throughout Jesus’ life he consistently goes out of his way to care for those that are on the margins of society. Bob Ekblad states that “Jesus’ highest priority is ministry to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed.” Jesus quotes the prophecy in Isaiah 61 and reveals that it refers to him when he says in Luke 14:8, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” Jesus is often accused of being the friend of sinners and tax collectors; he speaks with a Samaritan woman at a well (Jn 4) and heals the daughter of a Syrophoenician women (Mk 7). These are just a couple of the ways that Christ cares for those that have been ostracized by society. These biblical accounts will be used to show the manner in which Jesus intentionally cared for those on the margins of society.

While traveling from Judea to Galilee, Jesus chose to take the most direct route, through Samaria (Jn 4: 4). There was much animosity between Jews and Samaritans because of the Jews’ refusal to allow the Samaritans to participate in the rebuilding of the

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7 David Cassidy, sermon at Christ Community Church, March 23, 2014.

8 Ekblad, “Reading Scripture for Good News that Crosses Barriers of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Culture,” 235.

9 Ibid.
temple and the walls of Jerusalem after their return from exile.\textsuperscript{10} The Jews also considered the Samaritans to be half-breeds and contact with them could make you ritually unclean.\textsuperscript{11} Jesus comes in contact with a woman at a well during the noon hour. This reveals that the women of her town ostracized her because the custom was for women to journey to the well in a group during the cool of the morning. The fact that she is alone reveals that the other women did not want her around.\textsuperscript{12} Through engaging this woman in conversation and asking her for a drink, as the gospel of John records, Jesus is breaking at least two social norms of the times. First, he is speaking to a woman who is alone and he desires to drink after a Samaritan who was considered by the Jews to be unclean.\textsuperscript{13} It is assumed that Jesus would have known these customs and intentionally violated them in order to bring the good news of salvation to her and eventually to her whole town. Jesus was not afraid of breaking the racial, gender, or religious norms in order to show the love of his father to this woman who the religious elite would have never approached. This is one example of Christ very deliberately crossing racial and social lines in order to break down walls of hostility that existed during his time and among his people. Another very similar example is found in the account of Christ healing the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman.

\textsuperscript{10} F. F. Bruce, \textit{The Gospel and Epistles of John} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 103.


\textsuperscript{13} Bruce, \textit{The Gospel and Epistles of John}, 103.
In Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28, the story of Jesus healing the daughter of a Canaanite or Syrophoenician woman is recorded. In this story Jesus has traveled to the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. Once people find out he is there, they start to bring to him their sick friends and relatives. Both Mark and Matthew place this story after the account of Jesus removing the distinction between clean and unclean foods. It is not coincidental that both authors place this story directly after Jesus abrogates the dietary laws.\(^{14}\) Jesus in this encounter is wiping away the distinctions between race and ethnicities. Just as he declared unclean food to be clean, he is now declaring all people to be clean and this begins a breakthrough in his mission to Gentiles.\(^{15}\) He is revealing what Paul will later write about in Galatians 3:28, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female.” All people have access to God and should be treated with equal respect. Christ once again is destroying commonly held notions of race, gender, and social status in order to demonstrate the love people should have for one another. David Rhoads sees Marks account of this story as Jesus’ “onslaught upon boundaries, because he sees holiness as a reality which spreads cleanness.”\(^{16}\) The Pharisees wanted cleanness first, which meant not associating with those that were unclean. In modern society, people create their own definitions of clean and unclean and thus create artificial boundaries. Christ rejects all divisions that would prevent the spread of the gospel to all people.


\(^{16}\) Ibid, 363-364.
Jesus reveals to us God’s heart for those that have been marginalized by society.\textsuperscript{17} Ekblad writes that “Jesus’ highest priority is ministry to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed.”\textsuperscript{18} He pushes his followers to love not just those who love them but to love their enemies (Mt 5:43, 44). He makes a Samaritan, a people group despised by the Jews, the hero of a story (Lk 10:25-37). In these ways and many others there is a clear call to bring about a unity that can still celebrate diversity.\textsuperscript{19} There is great diversity in creation and yet it all proclaims God’s glory with one voice (Ps 66:4, Ps 19:1, Rv 5:13). The Bible does not promote a view of race that ignores the differences and variety that appears in creation. Instead there are clear distinctions made between people groups that should be celebrated and still promote unity within the body of Christ. God’s heart is for all of his people, as evidenced by his mandates to care for foreigners, the oppressed and those marginalized by society. Brentwood Academy needs to intentionally seek out ways to fulfill this mandate.

Christ as Brentwood Academy’s Model

The book of Revelation reveals a picture of heaven that is multi-racial. In Revelation 5:9, it says that in heaven there will be “persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Robert Wall explains that “The true Israel of God is

\textsuperscript{17} Ekblad, “Reading Scripture for Good News that Crosses Barriers of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Culture,” 235.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

not defined by an election theology that tends to exclude or demote ‘outsiders.’”

If race has no value, then racial identity would not need to last for eternity. If race exists in heaven it must be important on earth as well. To glorify and represent the body of Christ among the student body, BA needs to strive for racial diversity.

Christ went out of his way to break down racial and social barriers. There are numerous examples of this in the gospels such as traveling through Samaria to speak with the women at the well (Jn 4), touching lepers (Lk 5), healing the son of a Roman official (Jn 4), and caring for the Syrophoenician women. Jesus does not just demonstrate a radically inclusive love, but commands it by telling his followers to love their neighbors. Robert Stein explains, “Jesus removes any and all limitations to the term ‘neighbor.’”

Neighbor was so narrowly defined at Qumran that only people in their particular sect of Judaism were considered neighbors, which meant certain other Jews were to be hated. Jesus destroys any of these notions of exclusivity in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus gives the instruction to love not just those who love you but to love your enemies. The Greek word agapē is used here to show that it is not a call to the type of love for those we naturally love like a spouse, family member, or close friend, but instead this type of love takes an act of the will. People who follow Jesus are to love their enemies in an active, willful way. This must be intentional and takes effort. Christ

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22 Ibid.

goes on to ask the question in verse 47, “And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” The love of neighbor that Jesus is describing requires moving beyond the comfort of familiarity in certain social groups and caring for those that are not similar to us. It is only the power of Christ that makes this possible.

The faculty and administration at Brentwood Academy should examine ways to aid students in building empathy for others and to see the need to care for those that may not care for them. During the adolescent stage of life, it is difficult for young people to move into uncomfortable relationships because there are so many uncertainties and changes that are taking place within them. They are basically narcissistic and it is a challenge to see the needs of others sometimes. It will take purposeful measures for BA to encourage students to move across racial lines and to build friendships. Some means that are more natural to the flow of the school day are sharing classes, sports teams, and other extracurricular activities among diverse groups. But for actual caring and love to take place, there needs to be deeper connections. Jesus did things to show God’s love to others that were so counter-cultural that both his closest friends and his enemies were shocked by his actions. As the school strives to fulfill its mission to the glory of God, it will be important to think through how to be faithful to its mission as it pertains to African American students.

The school needs to be conspicuously in support of minority students and black students in particular. Incorporating African American authors, historical figures, and

24 Nakkula and Toshalis, Understanding Youth, 24.
artists into the curriculum is one way to do so. Jesus was not afraid to offend the religious elite when he spent time with tax collectors, Samaritans, and Gentiles. The school needs to not fear what people think when striving to provide an environment that is not just welcoming to all, but goes out of the way to make students of color feel loved and accepted.

Jesus, who is perfect in every way, is our ultimate example of how we are to live our lives. He demonstrates a love that crosses all social barriers that people construct, including race. He does this in a very intentional way in order to demonstrate how we are to love. BA needs to learn from Christ’s example. The next chapter will take a theological look at identity development and racial identity. Looking through the Old Testament, the New Testament, and specifically at some of the apostle Paul’s writings, the issue of race will also be explored.
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The Bible informs people about all aspects of life. Who we are, what God expects from us, and our significance are all topics addressed in Scripture. God’s creation is extremely diverse and so racial identity is addressed in Scripture as well. Much of the Old Testament is focused on God’s people the Israelites and their relationships with God and with other nations. In Genesis, the creation narrative describes a God who creates the universe and everything that is in it. When God makes humans, there is something special unique about them. People are to bear his image (Gn 1:26-27). Adam and Eve, the first of these people, are set above the rest of creation. Genesis 12 describes God calling Abraham and telling him that he “will make you into a great nation” (Gn 12:2). There is clearly a special relationship between God and Abraham’s descendants. They are to be a blessing to all the people on the earth (Gn 12:2). God cares about individual people groups. Abraham was not to be the father of an elitist nation that kept their relationship with God a secret. Instead, they were to be a blessing and a “light to the Gentiles” (Is 49:6).
In the New Testament, race is no less prevalent. Jesus extends the family of God to the Gentiles. The nation of Israel is redefined as all of those who believe in Christ (I Pt 2:10). The Great Command given by Jesus along with the parable of the Good Samaritan is not just to love God, but also to love neighbors. These are two examples of the extension of the kingdom of God to all people. Paul also addresses the issue of race and identity in his letters.

Biblical Identity

The Bible is clear about who people are and that they have unique value. Genesis 2:7 says, “the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.” So, at our core, we are created beings with life breathed into us by the creator and thus people possess part of God within them. Humans are more than just another part of the created order.1 In this passage, Moses uses the word “formed” instead of “created” as he does for the rest of creation.2 Kissling points out that this word “is used of a potter or woodcarver forming their medium into something.”3 God made humans differently than the animals. Only humans are formed in the “likeness of God” (Gn 5:1). Being created in the likeness of God sets humans apart from the rest of the creation.


3 Ibid., 152.
As image bearers of God and those that are specially formed by God’s hand, our identity and value becomes intrinsic. Humans are worth much more than anything they might do, possess, or control.\(^4\) The creator bestows worth upon humans as the crowning achievement of that which has been made. Therefore, all humans are equal in value to one another. Since the Bible advocates for the notion that all people are equal regardless of race or ethnicity, it may confuse some readers that the Bible also seems to condone hierarchal relationships in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

After the failure in the Garden, Adam and Eve are cast out and begin procreating. Soon there is significant conflict between humans. Cain and Abel, the first siblings, have a dispute. This could symbolize a culture war between those who farm and those who hunt. From the moment sin entered the world, blame shifting begins, and male and female relations are strained just as the relationship between creator and creation is strained (Gn 3:12). No longer can humans walk with God in the garden. It is, therefore, not surprising that the history of the world is filled with conflict and division. However, God does not give up on his creation. He calls Abraham to show the world who the one true God is so “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gn 12). Some might see this as God setting the descendants of Abraham above other peoples or God establishing an elite group or race.

James Coffman comments “there was never anything purely racial in God’s election of the Chosen People.”\(^5\) Abraham was chosen so that his descendants would one

\(^4\) Chapman R. Clark, class notes, October 28-November 1, 2013.

day be “a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Is 49:6b). “The tradents of the Hebrew Bible were very much concerned with the classification and ordering of people groups, ‘biologically’ and otherwise,” but not for the purpose of advancing one race over another.⁶

Dexter Callender uses the account recorded in Genesis 20 to reveal the Bible’s clear distinction of race while not promoting a hierarchal status of one race over another. In this story Abraham tells his wife Sarah to lie to King Abimelek by saying she is his sister and not his wife. This happens several times in the story of Genesis. She obeys Abraham, and so the King takes Sarah to be his wife. Before he consummates this marriage, God appears to the Philistine King and tells him of Abraham’s deception. When God appears to King Abimelek in this story, it reveals God’s concern for those who are not part of his chosen people. Abraham and Abimelek are clearly from two different people groups, and yet God shows mercy to both. This story also reveals that when two different races come together, there is often fear from both parties.⁷ In this situation, God intervenes to bring about peace.

The Levitical law instructed the Jews to live in peace with other nations and thus implies that the chosen people are not better than other groups. God commands in Leviticus 19:34, “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” This passage refers to strangers who have come into the land of Israel for one reason or

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⁷ Ibid.
another. Israel is to extend the love of God to those who would enter their land as a way of showing them the one true God, just as Christians are called to do today from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.8

**Diversity in the Bible**

The apostle Paul coined the phrase “body of Christ” in his New Testament writings. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 he says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” This phrase is also used in Romans 12:5 where he says, “so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” In these passages Paul is referring to the diversity of gifts that are given to Christians in order to serve the church.9 Some people question whether this includes racial differences or just spiritual gifts. J. A. Harrill argues that, “the deutropauline letter ‘to the Ephesians’ celebrates its most important ecclesiological concept, that of the ‘body of Christ,’ in the language of ethnicity and racial difference.”10 Paul’s writings and biblical ideas about racial identity will be explored below.

**Paul and Racial/Ethnic Identity**

Paul was a Jew and considered to be the foremost apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2). In Galatians 3:28 he says, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is

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there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” John Stott suggests that Paul is providing three categories in society that are erased through Christ. They are “race, rank and sex.”\textsuperscript{11} In all these areas, we are made one and equal through the saving and unifying power of the cross. This is further explained in Ephesians 2:14 where Paul states that “dividing wall of hostility” has been torn down.\textsuperscript{12} This, however, does not mean that race and gender are insignificant in our identity. Stott goes on to say:

\begin{quote}
Of course every person belongs to a certain race and nation, has been nurtured in a particular culture, and is either male or female. When we say that Christ has abolished these distinctions, we mean not that they do not exist, but that they do not matter. They are still there, but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship. We recognize each other as equals, brothers and sisters in Christ. By the grace of God we would resist temptation to despise one another or patronize one another, for we know ourselves to be ‘all one person in Christ Jesus (NEB)."
\end{quote}

So we can rejoice and celebrate that each person is uniquely made without valuing one race or gender over another. As heirs of Abraham, our identity is grounded in being God’s people who have all the rights and privileges of natural born children (Gal 3:29). One question that is raised through this discourse has to do with social ranking; Paul might appear to be placing Jews above the Gentiles in a hierarchal structure in his letter to the Romans.

Buell and Hodge use a dynamic model of ethnicity when interpreting Paul’s letters that helps this misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{13} Part of the problem with modern criticism of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} F. F. Bruce, \textit{The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text} (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982).
\end{itemize}
Paul using a hierarchal structure is that today’s readers of the Bible are using modern conceptions of race and ethnicity. It is often an imperialistic lens that is used to classify people and that is incorrectly used in many biblical interpretations.\textsuperscript{14} Paul was an \textit{Ioudaios} (a Jew) that helped to transform Jewish notions of Gentiles. He was an advocate for the Gentiles.

Peter helps clarify this point as well. In I Peter 2:10, followers of Christ are described as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.” This is the same language that is used in Hosea 1 and 2, where God tells the Israelites through the prophet Hosea, “You are my people, and they will say, ‘You are my God’” (Hos 2:22). Through Christ, all can be identified as “an elect race, the people of God’s own possession.”\textsuperscript{15} This does not, however, indicate an elitist group. Clowney points out that they are a “chosen” people but not a “choice” people, which would give them a superior position above others and may have in turn led to racism. The word \textit{bahir} is not used of Israel, which would mean choice, as in “soldiers in their prime.”\textsuperscript{16} Instead, the word bahur is in its place when referring to Israel as God’s chosen people. The people of God, the new Israel, should not boast in their being chosen, for it is all Christ’s work. Our becoming the “people of God” and receiving all of God’s mercy is due to Christ’s work (I Pt 2:10). The Bible does not set one race above another, but instead shows how God loves all of his creation.

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\textsuperscript{14} Buell and Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation.”
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Some interpret Paul’s letters to be a de-ethnicized Christianity. Those who see the category of Gentile as racially and ethnically neutral cause this confusion.\(^{17}\) People often mislabel whites as being racially neutral. It is important that those of European ancestry see the significance of their racial heritage. While the label Gentile is a generic term referring to non-Jews, it does consist of many distinct racial and ethnic groups. Each group is unique and makes its own contribution to the body of Christ. To be one in Christ does not negate the value of being uniquely and wonderfully made. It is important to recognize that God is the one who makes people unique (Ps 139:13-14).

Paul says that all Christians are part of one body (1 Cor 12, Eph 4, Rom 12, Col 3:15). As members of one body, each part of the body should rejoice in the role that it plays as part of the whole. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says “Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.” The apostle tells the church, “some parts that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary” thus revealing there is not a hierarchy among those in the church (1 Cor 12:22). No one race or social status is to be elevated above another. After a detailed explanation of how each member of the body should be proud of its role and not try to be something else, he moves into a discussion of how love is the most important thing (1 Cor 13). The emphasis in this passage is spiritual giftedness and unity in worship, not race; however, it does discredit the notion of a hierarchal relationship with God and others. All members of the body are important and one way BA can show it values all members of the body equally is through

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
providing a racially diverse student body and faculty. The school also needs to celebrate this diversity and the unique contribution that each member can make to the whole community.

**Colorblind Ideology and the Bible**

Colorblind ideology is prevalent in American churches today.\(^1\) It espouses the idea that race is not an issue anymore in society, so people should be judged based on merit and not the color of their skin.\(^2\) As a result of ignoring race, this ideology blames individuals for their shortcomings in society rather than blaming institutions. It assumes that in society today there is a level playing field.\(^3\) Some call it the new racism because it does not recognize that the playing field is not level and ignores much of the structural inequality that still exists in society.\(^4\) While well intentioned, this ideological viewpoint fights against reverse discrimination rather than for the equality of all people.\(^5\) It is the position of this paper that it also goes against what the Bible would have Christians do.

Many of the apostle Paul’s writings focus on the need for Christian unity. In the books of Romans, I Corinthians, Colossians, and Ephesians, Paul very strongly promotes the idea of unity within the early church. Romans 12:5 says, “so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Some interpret this


\(^{19}\) Katherine Tarca, "Colorblind in Control: The Risks of Resisting Difference Amid Demographic Change," *Educational Studies* 38, no. 2 (October 2005): 100.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*. 
call to Christian unity as a justification for the denial of diversity, but this should not be the case. Paul continues to declare the diverse ways that God created each individual. This passage is not speaking of the issue of racial or ethnic diversity, but rather of the diverse ways in which God has gifted all of his people. However, it is not a stretch to apply these principles to issues of race when the text says in verse 10, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves” and then in verse 16, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” Clearly this type of unity would not place one people group in a dominant position above another. In an attempt to promote Christian unity, white evangelicals sometimes deny the significance of God creating a world full of people that not only have various gifts and abilities, but also look different (Rom 12:6-9).

Within the Godhead there is both unity and diversity. One is not to be emphasized over the other. The church should be unified and yet diverse just as God is. In John 1:1 the Bible says, “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This reveals that Jesus, the second member of the trinity, shares both the nature and the being of God and

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26 Callender Jr., "Fear and Foreign Bodies," 559.
at the same time remains distinct. There is unity within the community of the Holy Trinity and yet there is also diversity. Christian unity should be no less than this.

The Trinity is an example of how Christians should interact with one another. The Imago Dei is another reason diversity should be celebrated and not ignored. In Genesis 1:26 God says, “Let us make mankind in our image.” Mankind must refer to all of humanity and not a specific race or ethnicity. Mark Hearn says, “as humans are created with bodies, including physical traits such as skin color, all are to value and celebrate this because all have been created in God’s image and thus have worth.” He goes on to state that the church today is challenged with intentionally celebrating the diversity that is represented in the diversity of God’s creation. If God truly created all of humanity in his image, then all of creation has intrinsic value that is based on being an image bearer of God. It would be arrogant and wrong for one race to claim the status of God’s image to the exclusion of other races and ethnicities.

Some theologians argue that once conversion to Christianity takes place, believers become part of a new race that will transcend racial and ethnic lines. This line of reasoning argues that identifying with Christ allows one to move beyond racial, ethnic, or national boundaries. Proof texts for this type of reasoning are 1 Peter 2:9-10 and Galatians 3:28. Denise Buell argues that, “conversion can be imagined in terms of change

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from one *ethnos/genos/laos* to another, effected through a change in one’s religious beliefs and practices, which may also entail the acquisition of new ancestors (such as Abraham)." Buell defines Christians in “ethno-racial” terms. She sees race and ethnicity as being fluid and not fixed.

Critics of Buell’s ideas point out that defining Christians in this way both assumes that those terms are equivalent to modern terms of race and ethnicity and negates the possibility that those terms are being used metaphorically. Even today race and ethnicity are not clearly defined, so caution must be taken when trying to apply a modern understanding of these concepts to their use in antiquity. The danger of adopting Buell’s approach is that it seems to negate the value of diversity that exists in the kingdom of God, and ignores the fact that the early church was characterized by economic, gender, and racial diversity. The first century church was able to grow, in no small part, due to their willingness to see differences among their group and accept them. People within the Christian community were treated as equals regardless of their status in the larger culture. 1 Peter 2:9-10 says, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.” This passage is referring to the prophet Hosea and how

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32 Ibid., 141.

33 Ibid.


36 Ibid.
God was going to be faithful to Israel in spite of their unfaithfulness.\(^37\) It is an extension of the Old Testament notion of Jew and Gentile believers and nonbelievers.\(^38\) It is not declaring Christians to be a new type of race or ethnicity.

In a similar fashion, Galatians 3:28 speaks of the removal of divisions in Christ but not in order to make social and racial distinctions irrelevant.\(^39\) This passage refers to social preference being given, not to becoming a homogenous racial/ethnic group. The barrier to Christ is being removed. No longer will the Judaizers be able to look down on and exclude others from becoming Christians.\(^40\) The text is not about creating a new type of people nor about creating a new race that is united in Christ. If so, they would seem to ignore racial, social, and gender differences that God created. In that case, the text would be advocating a colorblind or assimilationist ideology, but Scripture does not do so. At the heart of racism is the devaluing of a minority group and overvaluing a dominant or majority group.\(^41\) In promoting a colorblind ideology, racism will inevitably exist. While the colorblind ideology is well intentioned, the Bible calls us to something more. The next section will address the guidance the Bible gives to Christians in regard to caring for minorities and oppressed people living in among them.

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.

\(^{39}\) Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 149.


\(^{41}\) Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, 55.
Caring for Minorities in Scripture

The Bible does not identify race in the same way people do today, but there are still many principles that can be drawn from Scripture that inform Christians about how individuals should treat each other. In fact, some would classify racism as a sin and not just a social or cultural problem. In Matthew 22:39 Jesus tells people to love God and neighbor. Racist attitudes and actions go against Christ’s mandate to love not just our neighbor but our enemies as well (Mt 5:44). Racist attitudes are formed out of many contributing factors, one of which is pride, and this also is condemned by the Bible. The Bible gives clear direction about how all of God’s people should treat those that are different from them and it is with love and respect. Scripture condemns judgmental attitudes and harsh words.

Throughout Scripture people are being ordered and separated by God. Canaan’s curse (Gn 9:25), Abraham’s call to leave his people and become a nation (Gn 12), and Jacob’s blessing (Gn 49) are a few examples of how people are classified and ordered both biologically and in other ways. The nation of Israel, which was formed out of the line of Abraham, has been a minority group throughout its history. In Genesis 20 Abraham is referred to as a ger or foreigner. This people group is very similar to modern day minorities in that it was vulnerable to exploitation and oppression. Even though the

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43 Ibid.

44 Callender Jr., "Fear and Foreign Bodies," 549.

Jews were often displaced and minorities themselves, God instructs them in Leviticus 19:33-34 to treat the *ger* in their land as if they were native born citizens and to “love them as yourself.” The same word *ger* is used in Zechariah 7:9-10 where it is recorded, "This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigners or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’" The *ger* were the outsider, minority, and vulnerable people living among them.

For those that are in Christ, it is an obligation to love and care for all people because of God’s love for us. Romans 13:8 says to “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” Verses 9 and 10 are reminders to Christians of the need to love your neighbor as yourself and says, “love does no harm to a neighbor.” The minimum requirement is to care as much about others as we do for ourselves. This reveals how to love, but it does not specify who is included in the term neighbor. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shockingly identifies one’s neighbor as anyone in need, even if it is an enemy (Mt 5). The Bible gives clear direction in regards to loving others. Deuteronomy 6, Matthew 22, and Galatians 5 are but a few examples. The Bible also gives a clear directive to care for the marginalized and oppressed in society.

Proverbs 3:34 says that God “shows favor to the humble and oppressed.” Throughout Scripture it is evident that God cares for those that are marginalized,

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46 Callender Jr., "Fear and Foreign Bodies," 549.

oppressed, or in positions of weakness. The Israelites are consistently in a position of weakness and yet God provides for them. The stories of God’s deliverance through individuals like Moses, Esther, and many of the judges of Israel are evidence of God’s concern and provision for his people. The Bible also reveals God’s love for people other than just the Israelites. Through examples like sending the prophet Jonah to the Ninevites (Jon), Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), or Jesus caring for the servant of a Roman centurion (Lk 7), the love of God for all nations is made evident. Even in the picture of heaven given in Revelation 7, John says that he saw “there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” If the picture of our eternal dwelling is multiracial, multilingual, and diverse, then we should be working towards that goal today as we are called to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth. This is especially true at a place like Brentwood Academy that strives to represent the diversity that is present in the body of Christ.48

Clearly, God cares about all of his creation and desires people to treat other humans well, especially those that are in positions of vulnerability. People that are disenfranchised, foreigners, or minorities should be given special care. Leviticus 19:15 says, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.” Both the Old Testament and the New Testament affirm the importance of being impartial and not showing favoritism.49

48 Brentwood Academy Strategic Plan, 2015.

Through Christ, all people are given equal access to God. In this sense all are equal, but that does not mean that all are the same. People can celebrate diversity and unity at the same time. The body of Christ is diverse in race, culture, and giftedness. God made all and thus all have intrinsic value. An academic institution striving to represent this body to the glory of God needs to have representation from various racial groups and find meaningful ways to honor those people. The next section of this paper will explore ways in which Brentwood Academy can aid African American students as they struggle with identity formation. The adolescent stage of life is very difficult as young people struggle to find who they are, and racial issues can make this even more complex. There are various ways that Brentwood Academy can aid in the process of identity formation.
PART THREE

MINISTRY STRATEGY
CHAPTER 5

AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Adolescents face many challenges in the process of identity development. For African American adolescents in the United States, those challenges are compounded due to their minority status. During this transitional phase of life, young people go through many changes. This includes biological, physical, and social changes. Many of the difficulties that teenagers face have to do with forming their identity. This chapter will explore how African American adolescents can maintain their racial identity in an upper class, independent, college preparatory school. It will also focus on identity development among adolescents. In addition, it will include an emphasis on identity development that is unique to African American students in predominantly white private schools. Some research indicates that many African American adolescents experience what has been called dual citizenship from living in predominantly black neighborhoods while attending majority white schools. This aspect of development for Brentwood Academy minority students will be examined in this section as well.
Identity formation is a large part of being an adolescent. As Jeffrey Arnett states, “One of the most distinctive features of adolescence is that it is a time of thinking about who you are, where your life is going, what you believe in, and how your life fits into the world around you.”\(^1\) For most of human history, cultures have divided life into two stages: childhood and adulthood. Around 1900, a third stage emerged.\(^2\) At that time, this third stage was labeled adolescence by Stanley Hall and lasted from approximately age fourteen (the average age of girls’ first menarche) until age sixteen (when boys would enter the work force). Over time, this stage has lengthened. Menarche has been considered the primary indicator of the beginning of adolescence, and the age of first occurrence has been decreasing. The average age of first menarche used to be fourteen and is now eleven.

The end of adolescence has been difficult to identify because adolescents have been delaying the process of individuation. More and more college graduates are moving back in with their parents and thus delaying individuation into their twenties and sometimes thirties. This has the effect of prolonging the time until they enter the work force and take on the roles that come with adulthood.

The gap between childhood and adulthood has expanded to such a degree that many now divide adolescence into three sub groups.\(^3\) From fourteen to eighteen is termed

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\(^1\) Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 158.


\(^3\) Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 17-20.
mid-adolescence and will be the focus group for this paper. In this section, the terms youth, teenagers, middle adolescents and mid-adolescent will be used interchangeably and refer to adolescents from fourteen to eighteen years old. This age demographic is the focus of this paper.

This section will explore how a predominantly white independent school can aid African American students in the process of racial identity formation. The first topic is the process of identity development that is shared by all racial and ethnic groups. This topic includes an investigation of some of the dominant theories of adolescent development. Second, there will be a discussion of circumstances that are unique to African American adolescents, along with common theories of racial identity development. In this section, challenges for black students in predominantly white independent schools will also be addressed.

**Adolescent Identity Development**

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the present, an increasing amount of research has been concerned with adolescent development and identity formation. The life stage known as adolescence begins with the onset of menarche for girls and puberty for boys, thus acknowledging the important biological changes that take place within this age group. In addition to changing bodies, teenagers are beginning to move from concrete into abstract modes of thinking, a transition that reveals the cognitive development taking place. While these changes occur, society in recent decades
continues to give youth more independence and decision-making opportunities. Adolescents are forming their own identity, a process influenced by parents and environment. External factors come in to play on a micro and a macro scale. All of these factors combine to make this age a turbulent time for many young people.

Erik Erikson has added much to the study of adolescent development. He recognized that this stage of life is very influential in identity formation. Erikson saw each stage of life as a series of crisis that people need to navigate. In the adolescent stage, the crisis is “identity versus identity confusion.” In this stage of life moral convictions, religious convictions, relational skills, and basic ideas about what type of person one wants to become will be developed. Through the adolescent years, people move from concrete assumptions and thoughts about the world into more abstract ideas.

James Marcia expands on Erikson’s identity versus identity confusion model of crisis by including the idea of commitment. In Marcia’s model, adolescence is not simply moving through a stage of identity exploration and then the task is complete. Instead, it is a process. The process of discovering identity is not a task that can be completed, and so stage models will always be incomplete. Marcia proposed four identity statuses. These

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5 Bronfenbrenner, The Ecology of Human Development.
7 Nakkula and Toshalis, Understanding Youth, 26.
are foreclosed identity, diffuse identity, moratorium, and achieved identity. Throughout life, people move in and out of each stage on their way to achieving their identity. Nakkula and Toshalis state that “In short, adolescents are in a near-constant state of constructing their lives.”

In addition to biological factors, many societal factors influence identity formation among adolescents. Parents have the greatest influence on identity development for adolescents. This is true of religious identity as well as racial identity. Even though teens often pull away from parents during their teenage years, they still value the opinion of their parents and want their parents as a presence in their lives. It is important for parents to stay involved in the lives of their teenage children even though their children may be searching for more independence.

Friends are another important part of youth identity formation. Peer pressure is a powerful force in the lives of young people. This is especially true when considering some of the risky behaviors that adolescents choose to engage in. Sexual activity, drug use, alcohol consumption, and reckless driving all increase when youth are around friends

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9 Nakkula and Toshalis, *Understanding Youth*, 5.


who encourage those types of behavior.\textsuperscript{14} As relational beings, the interaction between friends can be a powerful force in shaping the identity of young people. What to wear, how to act, what bands to listen to or shows to watch can all be part of developing the identity of youth, and peer relationships are a part of shaping these outcomes. The pull to belong is powerful during this stage of life. For African American young people attending predominantly white schools, this can lead to identity confusion as they will often times have friends at school that are very different from their friends at home.\textsuperscript{15}

All youth struggle with identity. Adolescence is a formative stage of life that is full of biological, cognitive, and social transitions that make it challenging for teenagers to navigate. The next section of this paper will discuss challenges that are unique for African American young people and in particular those that are enrolled at predominantly white independent schools.

\textbf{Identity Formation among African American Youth}

Identity formation is a major aspect of adolescent growth and development. In this section of the paper, the aspects of identity formation that are unique to African American youth will be explored. Included in this discussion will be the formation of an ethnic identity and racial identity that black teenagers go through. It will first be important to differentiate between these two similar but different forms of identity and


how they relate to African American identity formation. A discussion of racial identity theory will be discussed in this section. Finally, an analysis of the factors that lead to racial and ethnic identity formation will be examined, such as group versus individual identity formation, self-esteem, and variables contributing to a positive self-esteem.

Identity formation is a process that does not end after achieving adulthood but can be intensified during the adolescent period of life. This is true of ethnic and racial identity as well. Race and ethnicity are genetic and not things that can be determined by an individual; however, racial and ethnic identities are defined by the way people respond to their particular race or ethnicity. Beverly Tatum states that around the seventh and eighth grade is the time when cafeteria tables begin to segregate by race. She sees this as evidence for the development of a racial identity. She also observes that before this time, school lunch tables are much more integrated. While many white students do not think of themselves as being white, black students must identify themselves by race because the rest of society does. Jean Phinney describes ethnic identity as being “dynamic” and multifaceted. Ethnic identity is similar to, but not the same as, racial identity.

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18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 52-53.

20 Ibid., 271.
In research on ethnic and racial identity, it is sometimes difficult to categorize people because the researcher often has to rely on self-categorization of those participating in the study, which can lead to inconsistencies. The problem of self-categorization arises because many labels describe the same thing, yet they can have different connotations. For example, someone from China can use the label Chinese or Chinese American.\textsuperscript{21} There is also the problem of those who are racially mixed yet use only one label to identify themselves. Research has shown, however, that “the category or label itself is of less importance psychologically than the meaning of the category for the individual.”\textsuperscript{22} In other words, how much the adolescent identifies with the label they place on themselves both racially and ethnically matters most.

The difference between racial and ethnic identity is subtle but important. Tatum observes, “Both racial and ethnic identities involve a sense of belonging to a group and a process of learning about one’s group.”\textsuperscript{23} Racial identity is more about possessing biological characteristics, and ethnic identity refers more to internalized values, behaviors and cultural practices.\textsuperscript{24} When studying racial identity, the emphasis is most often on racism and how racial groups interact with each other. Research on ethnic identity deals more with how the rituals and practices lead to a sense of belonging within a particular group. An ethnic identity is formed on both the individual level and at the group level,

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 272.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 274.

which is true of racial identity as well. The emphasis for the present discussion will be on racial identity.

It is paramount for schools to understand the importance of racial identity development due to the significant part it can play in academic success or failure. Ford and Harris note, “Racial identity has a significant impact on achievement and attitudes toward school.”25 In coming to terms with what it means to be black, some students may equate that identity with low academic achievement and thus intentionally do poorly in school. This will be discussed in more detail later, but it helps illustrate the need for independent schools to engage their minority students in dialogue about their racial identity.

Racial and ethnic identity is as meaningful for adolescent development as individual identity. The paper will now explore a couple of the models developed to help understand racial and ethnic identity development. Specifically, Phinney’s three-stage model and Cross’s five-stage model will be discussed in the next section.

Racial and Ethnic Identity Models

Jean Phinney developed a three-stage model for studying ethnic identity.26 In the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, people have not been exposed to any ethnic identity issues. Thus, they have not explored the meaning and significance of their


particular ethnicity, and so their own ethnicity goes unexamined. In the second stage of ethnic identity, the exploration stage, individuals begins to encounter more of their ethnicity through various experiences and encounters with some of the cultural norms particular to their ethnicity. The final stage is achieved ethnic identity. This can mean different things for different individuals. For some, they can be aware of and comfortable with their ethnicity and yet still not partake in all of the practices and social norms of that particular ethnic group. It is also important to remember that it is a process. People who have an achieved ethnic identity may still go back to an exploration or unexamined status later in their lives. Most adolescents, however, are in the unexamined or exploration stages. This model is very helpful in a general sense but may be too simplistic for such a complex issue.

In studying racial identity, William Cross proposed a five-stage model. It is called the psychology of nigrescence or psychology of becoming black model. His five stages are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. The most salient stages for youth are in the pre-encounter and encounter stages. Tatum comments that during this stage, “the [Bl]ack child absorbs many of the beliefs and values of the dominant [W]hite culture including ideas that it is better to be White.” In the pre-encounter stage, the child is often unaware of his or her race. Most of

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
30 Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids, 55.
what one knows about race comes from ideas communicated by the dominant culture in which the child lives.

As the child grows and moves into adolescence, he or she becomes more aware of his or her race. This is especially true as he or she comes in contact with people of other races. People often become aware of their race because of some experience with racism. It is also common for race to be viewed in opposition to some other race. For blacks in America, in the encounter stage children usually become aware of their racial identity as they interact with the majority white culture at school, in malls, on television or possibly in their neighborhoods. Many of the encounters that African American youth have during this stage are based on stereotypes that are placed on them by society.

Both of the models discussed are helpful in understanding issues of identity development that are unique to African American teens. Understanding the specific issues that black students are dealing with during this transitional time of life can aid a school in knowing how to promote identity exploration in a setting that is conducive to racial identity formation. The timing of racial identity achievement will vary from one individual to another just as the timing of sexual maturation can vary among teens.\(^{31}\) This can create problems for the African American teen. If the formation of a racial identity is delayed, it can create a situation of isolation from peers of the same group. When the timing is out of synchronization with classmates, teens can feel disconnected and isolated. They find themselves not a part of their racial group and often not a part of the

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\(^{31}\) Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids*, 67.
majority group either. Another important part of the process of identity formation is self-esteem, which will be discussed next.

**Self-Esteem**

Based on their minority status in America and many of the negative stereotypes attributed to African American teens, people often assume that they would have a low self-esteem. However, research has not supported that assumption. In fact, data consistently reveals that black individuals’ self-esteem is higher than that of white individuals. It does not appear that being part of a minority group has a negative effect on self-perception among the African American community. According to Hughes and Demo, the systemic racial inequality that exists in America does not translate into low self-esteem. However, their findings indicate low self-efficacy among blacks due to limitations placed on them by the society. As Hughes and Demo assert, “Discrimination in institutional life has largely relegated blacks to subordinate positions and excluded them from positions of power, resources, and contexts of action that afford individuals the best opportunities to experience themselves as powerful and autonomous.” This leads to a low self-efficacy yet does not appear to impact self-esteem. When black

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34 Ibid., 153.
students receive positive counter messages from parents and teachers, it can bolster self-esteem among black adolescents.\textsuperscript{35}

Research also shows that blaming systems is not a significant part of developing a positive self-esteem. This means an adolescent can experience racism from teachers and coaches, be educated from a predominantly European perspective, and get stopped while traveling through predominantly white neighborhoods yet not have a negative view of themselves. David Miller argues, “Racial socialization and racial identity protect urban African American adolescents against some of the harmful effects of a discriminatory environment.”\textsuperscript{36} His research attributes this to the resiliency of adolescents and minority groups. However, negative experiences can shape how youth perceive their ability to effect change in their own lives and among the lives of others. Self-esteem plays a part in self-perception as well.

Self-esteem is impacted by relationships, grades, and in some cases, ethnic identity. The way that friends, teachers, and parents reflect their own identity to the adolescent can have a significant impact on their self-esteem.\textsuperscript{37} This is important for educators who seek to positively impact the racial identity development of their minority students. Research has found that the effect of relationships on self-esteem has a greater


\textsuperscript{36} David B. Miller, "Racial Socialization and Racial Identity: Can They Promote Resiliency for…” \textit{Adolescence} 34, no. 135 (1999): 493.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 134.
influence on blacks than it does on whites. Teachers and coaches in the school must be aware of the sway they can have on the identity formation of all students but especially of black students that are under their care. It is also important for schools to see themselves as co-laborers with parents who have the greatest impact on identity formation for their children. The role of parents in racial identity development will be explored in depth later. Phinney found that high academic achievement positively affects self-esteem among African American youth.

Racial identity development is an important part of identity formation for African American adolescents. It can add stress to an already turbulent time in the life of young people. The development of self-esteem is another important part of identity formation among mid-adolescents. For black youth, race can have a positive effect on self-esteem. In addition to self-esteem, relationships that reflect their intrinsic value will have a positive impact on this process.

High academic achievement is another contributor to positive self-esteem among African American youth. It has been found that for African American students, “the significance and meaning of race in their lives was informed by their school experiences.” In the next section of this paper, academic achievement among black adolescents and its impact on racial identity will be investigated.


High Academic Achievement and Racial Identity

In some instances African American students can have vastly different experiences attending a public school versus a predominantly white independent college preparatory school. This can be caused by a different set of expectations. These expectations are transmitted through teachers, parents, and peers. These expectations have an impact on the identity formation of African American students. A general introduction to the public school experience will be explored first in order to compare it to the world of private schools. A more in-depth look at the private school experience will be examined next.

Public School Setting

In her study of a predominantly black high school in Washington D.C., Signithia Fordham discusses the “burden of ‘acting white’” among students who have achieved academic success.41 This study revealed a culture among the black students that associated academic success with rejection of African American heritage and racial identity. As a result, the expectation among the black population of the school was to do poorly in school and possess an indifferent attitude toward academics. Those youth who did well in their classes were accused of being “too white.” Along with good grades, listening to classical music, going to the library, camping, hiking, and reading poetry were also labeled as “white” activities.42 These expectations can create a problem for


42 Ibid.
black youth who desire to do well in school but know their good grades could be seen as a denial of their African American racial identity.

Fordham discusses the role of “fictive kinship” in this process. Fictive kinship is defined as “the specific world view of those persons who are appropriately labeled ‘black.’” In this fictive kinship model, being black has as much to do with social norms as it does with skin color. She asserts that being black does not automatically make you a member in good standing of a particular fictive kinship. In this way, high achieving black students can be excluded from their own group. Obtaining the label “braniac” (which means performing well in school academically) in this particular school puts the student outside the “cool” group.

This situation of having to choose racial identity over academic success can create tension for high-achieving African American students. Not only do they face the discrimination associated with being part of a minority group, but they then also find themselves as a minority within a minority. They risk being a social outcast among the fictive kinship or racial group. In some cases, adolescents will intentionally do poorly on tests and schoolwork in order to avoid being outside their group. This tension can escalate at an independent college preparatory school where high academic achievement is not only approved of but expected by teachers and other students.

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43 Ibid., 9.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Private School Setting

Private schools have always been a part of the American educational system. In the past, they were places for the social and economic elite to send their boys. Upper class families would send their male children to these schools so they might be given the skills and knowledge that would allow them to lead this country. These schools were almost exclusively white and male. Through the social revolutions that took place in the 1960s, many of these private schools sought diversification. These changes brought about a movement toward coeducation as well as racial and economic diversity in these schools. Today, many private schools are more racially diverse than public schools.

Adolescents of color who choose to attend a private school face some unique challenges. These challenges have a significant impact on the racial identity of African American students. One situation that occurs is that of dual citizenship. This is a situation in which the student acts one way in the school setting and another way at home. They adapt to one way of living at school among their mostly white classmates and then change into another way of talking and acting when at home and among their African American friends.

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47 Ibid., 753.


49 Fordham, “Black Students’ School Success.”
When black students enter an independent school, they are often entering into a predominantly white culture, and so they become a citizen of that place. They often have to adopt the many social norms and customs of that world in order to succeed. Many private schools have dress codes and rules that reflect stereotypical white social norms. This is the situation at Brentwood Academy.\textsuperscript{50} Because most of these students live in predominantly black neighborhoods, they are now forced to navigate two different worlds. At school they are expected to act and talk one way, while at home and in their neighborhoods they are expected to conduct themselves in a different manner. In trying to form an identity, this experience can cause confusion and create the feeling that they do not fit in either place. They are not fully accepted at school because of their race, nor fully accepted at home because of their perceived connection to the white world at school. Many of their friends in the neighborhood attend public schools where the perception is that academic success equals “selling out” to the white culture and rejecting their black heritage.\textsuperscript{51}

Research shows that African American students in private schools are often from a lower social class than their white peers. This can further marginalize them. Cookson and Persell note, “African American prep school students are caught between two cultures and, in this sense, doubly marginalized.”\textsuperscript{52} In their research, they found that in

\textsuperscript{50} Brentwood Academy, 2014-15 Handbook.

\textsuperscript{51} Vershawn Ashanti Young, "Your Average Nigga," \textit{College Composition and Communication} 55, no. 4 (June 2004): 693.

\textsuperscript{52} Cookson, Jr., and Persell, "Race and Class in America's Elite Preparatory Boarding Schools," 220.
private schools, the parents of white students work in predominantly managerial and financial fields while the parents of black students are employed in the fields of education and blue-collar jobs. However, many of the black students’ fathers had graduate degrees (40 percent) and a majority of mothers had graduate degrees (33 percent) or bachelor’s degrees (22 percent). These numbers show that many parents of black students value education highly but are still in a lower social class. The black students find themselves in an upper class world at school and often middle to lower-middle class culture at home. This compounds the identity confusion and discrimination faced by African Americans attending private schools. They are in the position of being a minority economically and racially.

For a school trying to integrate and aid its minority populations in their racial identity development, class discrimination must be addressed as well as racial discrimination. The challenge comes in trying to identify class discrimination. Cookson and Persell write that “Racial differences at prep schools are apparent and discussed, while class differences are subtle and seldom part of the schools’ public discourse.” Many students are accustomed to the opulent lifestyle and luxury that many who attend private schools are used to. Nice cars, expensive clothes, electronic devices, and lavish vacations are the norm for numerous independent school students, but for many minority students, these things are not possible financially. Schneider and Shouse point out that, “it is thus clear that African American students are least likely to fit the mold of the stereotypical NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) student with respect to

family composition, income and parent education.”\textsuperscript{54} This can be problematic for minority students and creates temptations for these young people who want to be a part of that world. A young black man in a private school describes his experience by stating, “I stole from my peers—things like electronic games and portable audio devices, not for the enjoyment of the goods themselves, but to wield some social clout.”\textsuperscript{55} The identity issue being confronted by this young man does not excuse his actions, but should help school administrators see the need for open discussion about the issue of class. Some schools have allowed student organizations exclusively for African Americans to form on the campus as a vehicle for discussions of this type.

In the midst of these social barriers for black students, the education provided by private schools is seen by those who attend as a way to a “better life” for black students.\textsuperscript{56} Graduating from a college preparatory school and attending a reputable college is a means of advancing into a higher social class. Due to this fact, private independent schools, unlike the public school, have become identified with academic success even among African American students. However, it is not uncommon for them to feel like outsiders. Datnow and Cooper found that minorities in elite independent schools encouraged each other to achieve academically.\textsuperscript{57} Those who did well academically were

\textsuperscript{54} Schneider and Shouse, “Children of Color in Independent Schools,” 226.

\textsuperscript{55} Andrew Garrod et. al., \textit{Adolescent Portraits: Identity, Relationships, and Challenges} (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992), 87.

\textsuperscript{56} Datnow and Cooper, “Peer Networks of African American Students in Independent Schools,” 62.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
held in high esteem as role models for younger students. This is in opposition to Fordham and Ogbu’s findings that academic success was likened to “acting white” and turning their backs on their racial heritage. Datnow and Cooper state that this finding can be a product of high expectations in the private school or possibly parental involvement being greater among those who choose to send their children to these schools. They suggest it is the active choice of the students to invest in their own academic success. Datnow and Cooper found that the “study participants were active agents who challenged the social order through their success-oriented behaviors.”

Instead of being a product of environmental factors or the various ecosystems they inhabit, adolescents are working towards a goal in order to challenge the social norms within the school.

Traversing the landscape of private school causes double marginalization for African American adolescents. They find themselves marginalized by their race and now by their social class. Students seeking to find their identity are part of the minority race in their school and also a minority socioeconomically. In a public school setting, blacks are encouraged by peers to do poorly in school as resistance to the white culture, and those who do well are accused of “acting white.” This is seen as an act of resistance to an educational system that is predominantly white and that has measures of achievement that are based on white presuppositions about education. However, in private schools there is positive peer pressure for black students to achieve academically.

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58 Ibid., 70.

The above section explores the private school and public school settings and how they affect the process of identity development. The next section will move to the issue of how black students should be socialized in predominantly white independent schools. Black students can be discouraged from sitting together at the lunch table and pressed to assimilate to a predominantly Eurocentric culture in the school. It stands to reason that the majority (white community) should find ways to better accommodate the minority students it has courted to their school. The next chapter will look at how assimilation impacts the growth and development of identity among African American students. African American adolescents need to discern what approach to take toward race relations in their school environment. Four racial integration theories that will be examined in the next chapter are assimilation/colorblind, biculturalism, multiculturalism, and separation.

A significant issue for all peoples that immigrate to foreign lands is the question of how to retain a distinct culture while living within the majority culture and being a part of its customs and practices. For black youth in predominately white private schools, this is also true. Jill Hamm states that for African American students, there are four choices. She calls the first choice a “colorblind” view “in which individuality rather than ethnic group membership is emphasized.”\(^1\) The second view is assimilation and acculturation in which both perspectives will “encourage relationships with cross-ethnic peers to the exclusion of same-ethnic peers.”\(^2\) Biculturalism is the third option in which cross-ethnic relationships are encouraged but not to the exclusion of same-ethnic relationships. Some researchers label this view as multiculturalism or pluralism. In this paper, the terms bicultural, pluralism, and multicultural will be used interchangeably. Finally, complete separation is an option for the black student. For African American students taking this


\(^2\) Ibid.
approach, there is a complete retreat from the dominant culture. In forming an identity, youth will embrace one of these four positions, and parents will play a big role in what direction they take.

**Colorblind View**

Many people today subscribe to the colorblind view. This view asserts that color does not matter. This is similar to an assimilationist view in that individuality is emphasized over being a part of any particular ethnic group. According to the colorblind model, race should not be considered when awards or benefits are given. Any special consideration that is given is seen as prejudiced and biased. For those subscribing to this viewpoint, ethnicity should not be considered as a dominant factor in identity formation. Those who take this position claim that society has moved beyond racism and people should be only seen as individuals regardless of race. Some see the colorblind view as racist because it can “disguise the racial privilege embedded in educational institutions.”

The stance of those adhering to this particular view is that we should move away from racial distinctions and simply treat everyone equally.

This is good in theory but does not work in practice. It is more common for white adolescents to take the colorblind view of race because they are often less aware of their racial and ethnic background. It is less common for whites in America to have felt the effects of racism and thus they might be less sympathetic to racial issues. Assimilation

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3 Choi, "Unlearning Colorblind Ideologies in Education Class," 53-71.

4 Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids*, 53.
allows the majority race to ignore many of the racial issues present in the world. This position is difficult for black youth to adopt because of their experiences of feeling different from the dominant culture. They think of themselves racially because the rest of the world sees them that way.

When schools subscribe to this perspective, it usually means a continuation of promoting European views on education and a continued promotion of white culture over all others. There needs to be a way for the independent school to place value on the unique way all of its students are made. This requires intentionality in programing and curriculum choice. The colorblind perspective seems to be the dominant view at Brentwood Academy among the administration, faculty and students.

Assimilation

Another course for black adolescents in a predominantly white private school would be to assimilate. For assimilationists, “the end point of the homogenizing process is the fusion of formerly distinct groups into an ethnically undifferentiated society.” This would be a beneficial position for a private school as it would maintain the status quo. Curriculum could remain unchanged along with all other school programing. The student population would be encouraged to be homogenous in regards to social norms and customs. Breaking the Eurocentric rules could result in being asked to separate from the

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5 Choi, Unlearning Colorblind Ideologies in Education Class, 59.

school. However, the problem lies in the reality that assimilation does not mean a blending of cultures such as a melting pot. Often it means the dominant culture forces all others into its mold. In America, this translates into what George Yancey and others call Anglo-Conformity. Proponents of this view tend to focus more on class issues than race issues, blaming the inequity that exists between racial groups more on economics and societal factors than on race. In one sense, this empowers minority groups to achieve more through hard work but it also ignores structural racism that exists and places the blame for short comings on the African American culture.

Milton Gordon describes the process of all minority group members leaving the racial and ethnic identity of their birth in order to become part of the majority Anglo-American culture. A melting pot or true assimilation would require equal contributions to the new society that is formed. In most schools this does not happen. Based on this reality, African American students would thus surrender their black identity for an Anglo identity. According to Cross’ model of nigrescence, an adolescent taking the assimilationist view would be in the pre-encounter stage of their racial identity development. They have not yet developed their own identity as a person of color and are still in the beginning stages of identity formation.

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8 Ibid., 43.

9 Ibid., 44.

LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton found three additional dangers with the assimilationist view. The first is that the adolescent who assimilates will be rejected by the culture of origin. The second is that they will not properly assimilate and thus be rejected by the dominant culture. Finally, the authors state that “The third is the likelihood of experiencing excessive stress as one attempts to learn the new behaviors associated with the assimilative culture and to shed the inoperable behaviors associated with the culture of origin.”

Assimilation is a worthy goal but has seldom occurred. It usually translates into all minority groups taking on the social norms and customs of the majority. Independent schools seeking to aid in the racial identity development of its minority populations need to find an alternative to the assimilation theory. Assimilation usually causes these young people to reject their racial identity in favor of a more Eurocentric identity.

**Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is the view promoted by most modern research. This view asserts that assimilation should be rejected because it promotes a Euro-centric view. It was in the field of education that this theory developed, so it should be considered by all involved in education. African American students need to explore the significance of being black. In the bicultural or multicultural view, adolescents do not deny their race nor

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do they isolate themselves from other races. In the process of identity formation, teens must engage who they are while at the same time being able to see themselves in the context of the broader society. It is important for black youth to have peers of the same ethnicity that can understand their particular struggles as well as having contact with peers of the majority race.

Tatum found that the grouping of African American students in school is a healthy coping strategy but can often promote negative stereotypes. The negative stereotype is that black students do not want to be a part of the school. The white teachers, administrators, and students interpret this as a separationist stance and as problematic. However, black adolescents face unique challenges through this stage of life that only other black students will be able to fully understand. White students are not prepared to give the council and support that their black friends need in certain situations. For those reasons, it is important for African American youth to have peers of the same race/ethnicity to help them in their identity development. Time spent among exclusively black peers in the cafeteria or in the halls can be a positive coping strategy for these students. Independent school administrations should not suppress this type of activity. Through the admissions process, the student population at Brentwood Academy is more racially diverse than many of the public schools in Williamson County where BA is located.

\[14\] Tatum, Why Are All the Black Kids, 62.

\[15\] Ibid.
Living in a multicultural society, however, necessitates interaction with and education about those from other races and ethnicities. The school is often deferred to by parents in this matter. Many parents look to the school to as a socializing agent for their children. It is expected that school provides a multicultural atmosphere for their child. This is problematic because there are many different perceptions on how this should be obtained and what it should look like. Many white parents want their children to have friends of racially diverse backgrounds at school, but seldom have them over to their house. This is what Tatum calls the “birthday party effect.” In elementary school, birthday parties include many different races, but as they develop into adolescents, parties become increasingly more homogenized racially and ethnically.

It is a difficult task for schools to create space for adolescents to explore their own racial identity while at the same time encouraging them to interact with the majority culture. It is not necessary to push black students into interactions with the majority culture because it will happen regardless. What schools do want to discourage is a complete separation of students along racial lines. This has often led to conflict and even violence in schools. It is also difficult if not impossible to mandate or even programmatically force these types of interactions. The school faces a tremendous challenge in trying to create organic, meaningful relationships that cross racial lines.

16 Hamm, “Barriers and Bridges to Positive Cross-Ethnic Relations,” 82.

17 Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids.*
Separation

A final alternative for African American youth is to isolate themselves from the dominant culture. This is often how school administrations perceive black adolescents in their schools. When black students congregate in the halls and cafeteria, there is a perception that they are segregating themselves from the Anglo students. However, this is not always the case. Isolation or separation is not a viable or healthy alternative for black youth over time. There may be times when it is therapeutic for African American young people to congregate to feel supported in their racial identity, but it is important for them to engage the majority culture as well. The separationist perspective promotes the idea that racial/ethnic groups are incompatible and thus people different than oneself should be avoided. It is the separationist ideology that can lead to hate groups. Whether white supremacist groups or ethnic gangs, it is most often unhealthy for any group to completely isolate itself from other people groups. A non-violent form of separation is exhibited in the Hasidic Jewish communities of New York City. This form of separation is not violent but can breed controversy.

Through exploring these four coping strategies, schools can find the proper lens in which to help minority students develop their own identity. The colorblind view ignores any differences, which denigrates all people and races by denying the uniqueness of each individual. The assimilationist view tries to blend all cultures into one melting pot. This theory is rejected because in America the melting pot too closely resembles Anglo-centric

\[18\] Ibid., 52.

customs to the exclusion of the minority cultures. If groups segregate themselves, it often leads to violence and hatred. Of course, these models are not mutually exclusive, and adolescents will take different stances at different stages in their racial identity development. Schools will also adopt different models. The multicultural view is, however, preferable because it promotes both individual racial identity developments as well as interracial interactions. In the next section, the topic of how to bring about racial socialization will be discussed.

Socialization

The racial socialization process is a significant part of adolescent development. “Racial socialization refers to the explicit and implicit messages communicated about race.” For black parents it is an especially important topic since their children are constantly made aware of their minority status. It is also important for white parents to engage their children about racial issues and encourage them to explore their own racial identity. In school settings, there must be collaboration between families and educational institutions to aid students in the socialization process. For African American students to achieve academically, it “is dependent upon cooperative relations between families and schools.” Private schools have an advantage over public schools in this regard. Parents

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20 LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton, *Psychological Impact of Biculturalism.*


of private schools students are often more involved in the educational process because they are investing financially in the education of their children.

The family relationships (i.e. siblings and parents) and educational relationships (i.e. peers, faculty, and staff) that black students are a part of are called microsystems by Urie Bronfenbrenner, and both play a significant part in the socialization process. At home there may be one set of messages being conveyed to the young person about their racial identity, while at school there may be a completely different or even opposite set. In the home, race and ethnicity can be seen as positive attributes, but then at school the young person might feel that their color of skin is a detriment to academic and social success. When two or more microsystems come together, they form a mesosystem. These are much more difficult to study, and thus little research exists on how the mesosystem impacts both racial identity formation and the socialization process. There is, however, evidence that by working together, the family and school can help shape the racial identity of its minority students.

In the family microsystem, parents play the most significant role in the identity formation and socialization of adolescents. This is true of racial identity formation as well. However, many white families abrogate this task to the educational system.

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23 Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development*.

24 Ibid.


26 Hamm, “Barriers and Bridges to Positive Cross-Ethnic Relations,” 82.
Hamm’s interviews with parents found that in most white families the only intentional racial socialization that took place was sending their children to integrated schools. Her research revealed that most white students mirrored their parents in regard to diversity in social patterns. Therefore, the outcome practically is that they live mostly segregated lives. In fact, many parents discouraged their children from actively pursuing relationships with other races. At the same time, these parents said they believed their segregated lives had more to do with socioeconomic differences than it did with racial differences.27

African American parents have a different perspective on racial socialization. Due to the systematic racism that remains in society, it is necessary for black parents to discuss racial socialization with their children. Research reveals that many black parents are intentional about the process of racial socialization.28 For African Americans living in racially diverse neighborhoods, there is even more sensitivity to this process. For black parents that have placed their children in a majority white independent school, racial identity development is important.

In the process of racial socialization and racial identity development, some of the fears faced by African American parents are discriminatory social barriers, disenfranchisement as a minority group, and discouragement from black peers.29 The way

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
parents raise their children will impact how teens respond to these potential stressors. Adolescents also need to internalize the messages that are communicated by their parents. The “adolescents’ adoption of their parent’s racial/ethnic admonitions and encouragements play a role in the influence of perceived racism on their racial identity development.”30 Parents need to be aware of the significant role they play in the lives of their children. This is especially true in the area of racial identity development and socialization. The school can aid by helping to educate its white population about unique challenges faced by the minority populations. Recognizing Black History Month and the contributions of blacks in American history are small ways to do this. They can also create a dialogue with minority parents about other avenues to help promote identity formation among its minority students. Too often, it is left up to minorities to bring these issues into the public realm, and then they are accused of playing the race card.31 The majority culture should take the lead in the process of promoting all races as being equal.

In addition to racial identity formation, there are also challenges unique to male and female African American students. There seems to be inequality in how black male and female students are perceived in the school. The role of gender will be discussed in the next section.


Identity Development and Gender among Black Adolescents

Research is not conclusive about the extent to which gender either aids or impairs racial identity development.\textsuperscript{32} There is also little difference between male and female self-esteem among African American youth.\textsuperscript{33} However, research reveals certain situations that are unique for boys and girls of color in the school setting. This is especially true for African American boys and girls in predominantly white private schools. For boys, the socialization process can be mediated through athletic prowess, the increasing popularity of rap music, and the hip hop culture that is often associated with black males. Black females do not achieve social status through the same means as their male counterparts.

\textbf{Blau’s Theory of Social Interactions}

In 1960, Peter Blau introduced his Theory of Social Integration in which he helps to define how groups form.\textsuperscript{34} Blau distinguishes a group “from an aggregate of individuals by the social bonds that unite the members into a more or less cohesive social structure.”\textsuperscript{35} Male and female students interact and gain acceptance by the majority group at their school in different ways.

\textsuperscript{32} Phinney, “Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults.”

\textsuperscript{33} Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz, \textit{Ethnic and American Identity as Predictors of Self-Esteem Among African American, Latino and White Adolescents}.

\textsuperscript{34} Peter M. Blau, "A Theory of Social Integration," \textit{American Journal of Sociology} 65 (1960): 545-556.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 546.
The Theory of Social Integration postulates that groups form based on the attractiveness of its individual members. In essence, it depends on what each individual member contributes to the whole. There is a hierarchal structure to group dynamics as well. Some members are seen as superior based on things like intellect, humor, or athleticism. This can lead to competition among those who want to be in the group and for those who want to remain in the group. If this competition continues to grow, it can eventually break up the group. People already in the group want to elevate their status by associating with those of a superior status. At the same time, they are asserting their own attributes to show why they should remain in the group. If this competition were to be the only factor in group dynamics, then groups would dissolve. However, Blau states that this is averted because members also feel the need to be approachable in order to remain in the group.

New members of a group are usually welcomed in because of some superior quality. Over time they need to reveal their approachability or they risk being put out of the group again. This can be done through self-deprecating jokes or the willful surrender of their superior social status. As one member yields his or her status, it will then lead others to follow and thus the unity of the group is maintained. This is what many black male athletes have done to enter into relationships with students of the majority race at their schools.
Male and Female Integration

In recent years, it has been easier for black males to integrate into the life of the majority culture at school than black females. One reason is the elevation of athletics and the athlete in schools. Signithia Fordham observes that “black males, particularly the star athletes, are ‘it,’ the cool males. . .and the ultimate signifiers of what it means to be masculine.” Through athletics, male students gain superior status in the school that also grants them admittance into groups of white students. Research indicates that this is not the same for African American girls.

Megan Holland conducted research in a public school located in an affluent white neighborhood that engaged in a desegregation program that bussed minority students from an urban area to the school. The economic and racial demographic of the school was very similar to most private schools. In her research, she found that athletics provided opportunities for the male students that were not afforded to the black female students. For instance, black male students were often connected to host families that allowed them to stay at their houses after practices or games because the black students often did not have transportation home. This personal contact allowed deeper relationships to develop between the black athletes and the white families that hosted

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37 Holland, "Only Here for the Day,” 101-120.

38 Ibid., 110.

39 Ibid.
them. In some cases, the coaches helped to facilitate these arrangements. Girls at the school did not share in these experiences and thus were less connected with white girls. They were also less likely to be involved in sports at the school. For girls, cheerleading is a major avenue to gaining status in the school, but it has often been reserved for the white girls.

There is evidence that being a part of other extracurricular activities besides sports can provide more opportunity for students to form cross-racial friendships. Through participation on sports teams, closer bonds are formed between teammates. For males, this has proven to be helpful. However, according to Blau’s theory of social integration, if these black athletes cannot become approachable, they will not be accepted into the group or they will be accepted but later dismissed. Due to this fact, black males have adapted and have worked to downplay the stereotype of African American males being aggressive or even violent. Males have done a better job at adapting in this way then black females have.41

African American males in many cases have developed a school persona and a home persona. For those living in predominantly black neighborhoods, it is important that they be seen as strong and aggressive in order to fit into the black culture which places a high value on those traits. At school among white classmates, this same attitude can cause exclusion from social groups. Often the black males in white private schools have developed two identities as a coping mechanism. They are able to maintain credibility at

40 Fordham, “Black Students’ School Success.”

41 Holland, "Only Here for the Day,” 103.
home by acting tough and fit in at school by making themselves more approachable. Research is not clear on why, but female African Americans have found it harder to navigate these two separate worlds. One possible reason is that black females at home are expected to be assertive and self-reliant. At school when they express themselves in these ways, they are seen as being defiant.

Another way African American boys have been incorporated in the dominant culture at predominantly white schools is through the growth of rap music and the hip-hop culture. Many white students see the culture of rap music as being cool and want to imitate it. Black performers dominate the rap world which can help elevate the status of black students. Talking, dressing, and acting “black” has become cool as a result. When black boys experience an elevated status, they become desirable to the white students, according to Blau’s theory. Again, black girls do not reap the same benefit in the schools. According to Fordham, it is better for girls to act white in order to be accepted by white girls. In particular, their speech is one way of finding acceptance. If they continue to use slang like at home, they are often seen as unapproachable and thus excluded from the majority group of white girls. In addition to this, female African Americans are more often disciplined for being out of dress code than their white peers.

Finally, interracial dating is another way that male black students become a part of the majority culture at school and another way that girls are often excluded. In the

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43 Ibid.
process of identity formation, dating has become increasingly important. Youth are going through many changes as they enter and move through puberty during these years. For African American students in a private school that is predominantly white, it can be a complicated and confusing time.

For those who promote an assimilationist model, interracial marriage is a barometer of how close to assimilation a society has come.\textsuperscript{44} Over 40 years ago, the formal barriers that restricted interracial marriages were lifted, but social acceptance has been following slowly. Teens, however, seem to be leading in this regard:

Teens surveyed in Gallup's periodic youth polls are remarkably more approving of interracial marriage than adults are. When adult approval stood at 64\% in 1997, approval among 13- to 17-year-olds was at 83\%. In this same teen survey, 17\% of white teens said they had dated a black person and 44\% of black teens said they had dated a white person. When those who had not had an interracial dating experience were asked whether they would ever consider interracial dating, 55\% of white teens said they would consider dating a black person, and 61\% of black teens said they would consider dating a white person.\textsuperscript{45}

Even though attitudes about interracial dating are becoming more permissive, racial homophily still dominates within schools.\textsuperscript{46} There is disparity between white and black attitudes towards dating as well as differences between males and females on the topic. More blacks have dated interracially than whites. African American males are also more


\textsuperscript{46} Kreager, “Guarded Borders,” 890.
likely to have dated interracially than African American females.\textsuperscript{47} This is another way that black boys can achieve status in the school that females seem to be denied.

Derek Kreager’s research, gathered from the first two waves of data taken from the Add Health survey, reveals that 20 percent of male African American relationships are interracial while just 10 percent of female African Americans date interracially.\textsuperscript{48} George Yancey also found evidence that black males are more likely to have an interracial relationship than other groups.\textsuperscript{49} One possible reason for this is that black women see cross race dating as a denial of black beauty.\textsuperscript{50} Another reason could be the status gained by boys through hip-hop culture and athletics makes them more attractive to white girls in the school.\textsuperscript{51}

While self-esteem and racial identity development do not appear to be significantly impacted by gender among African Americans, their experience at school can be dramatically different. According to Blau’s Theory of Social Integration, black male students are more easily overcoming obstacles to integration within private schools. They have been able to achieve a higher status in the school than females due to their ability to become attractive and approachable to the majority culture. Schools, therefore,

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\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 897. \\
\textsuperscript{50} Holland, "Only Here for the Day,” 101-120. \\
\textsuperscript{51} Fordham, “Beyond Capital High,” 234.
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need to be more intentional about providing opportunities for female minority students to overcome these obstacles.

There are many theories of racial integration and interactions. Black adolescents may struggle while trying to form their identity both socially and racially. Schools like Brentwood Academy can either ease this tension or add to it. The school, families, and students all play a role in trying to make this life stage less stressful. For BA to truly fulfill its mission to nurture and challenge each whole person there must be intentional steps to aid in this process. To adopt an assimilationist or colorblind stance has some benefits but ultimately leads to devaluing the differences that each race and ethnicity contributes to the community. If God created such diversity, his creation should not try to ignore that reality. The next chapter will look at ways Brentwood Academy can educate the school community to the unique needs of African American students in order to live out the mission among all students.
CHAPTER 7
EDUCATING THE BRENTWOOD ACADEMY COMMUNITY

As an academic institution dedicated to proclaiming Christ, it is imperative that all parts of the community are treated with equal respect and care. However, equal consideration does not mean viewing everybody as the same. A colorblind ideology would promote the idea of ignoring race and constructing an atmosphere that does not see race. The benefits of this ideological perspective are that it is a worthy goal and it will help prevent reverse racism.\(^1\) It can prevent individuals from looking for racism where it does not exist, but it is also naïve.\(^2\) Some have gone so far as to call the colorblind ideology a laissez-faire type of racism because it refuses to acknowledge how a group is being disadvantaged.\(^3\) It fails to acknowledge institutional racists policies and places the blame for failures of a particular racial or ethnic group on the shortcomings of individuals within that group.\(^4\) It fails to acknowledge the societal bias towards those with light skin

\(^1\) Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, 32.


\(^3\) Tarca, “Colorblind in Control,” 107.
that is often referred to as “white privilege.” Dinesh D’Souza argues that American slavery was not a racist institution and race should no longer be an issue in modern society. His view represents an extreme colorblind perspective that is popular in America today, especially among both political and religious conservatives. Many have described this idea as the new racism.

This chapter will focus on how Brentwood Academy needs to fight against a colorblind ideology and intentionally educate the faculty and students about the lingering effects of racism in both the BA community and larger American culture. Insight into the racial climate at BA has been gathered through student interviews as well as looking at data collected across the nation. The names of interviewees have been coded in order to protect them and to assure the honesty and integrity of the interview.

**Educating the Faculty**

Russell Moy clearly articulates the need for education about race when he states that if “religious educators are to break out of their Western ideological captivity, they must confront the painful issue of racism, move beyond their guilt, and educate their students about the social and legal constructions of race and the dangers of assimilationist

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ideology.”⁸ In order for this to happen, the faculty must first acknowledge that race is still an issue in the school and see that colorblind or assimilationist ideologies will not alleviate the problem. One obstacle for the school to overcome is the reality that white faculty are often resistant to any discussion of racial issues.⁹ In fact, some white faculty will even deny the existence of any form of racism that might exist in the predominantly white institution for which they work.¹⁰ The beginning of faculty training must then be to identify the areas in the school where there are racial problems.

The faculty at Brentwood Academy is comprised of primarily white evangelicals. While officially non-denominational, the school requires faculty to sign a statement of faith that affirms both the Nicene Creed and a conservative Christian view on religious and political issues.¹¹ Through obligating employees to sign this statement, the school has created a relatively homogenous group of teachers in regards to social issues. Statistics bear out the reality that white evangelicals are the most likely to hold “anti-black sentiments and stereotypes.”¹² White evangelicals give more credence to individual effort and self-help and thus are far more likely than other groups to view historical marginalization of African Americans as something that does not need special

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¹⁰ Ibid.


consideration today.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore it is essential for the faculty at BA to become aware of the feelings of marginalization that many African American students experience at school each day. In the interview with S4, the individual commented that the white faculty cares for him well and he is able to receive the help he needs on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{14} However, a parent of a BA student expressed an example of the type of marginalization that white teachers might not consider. Her daughter’s class was asked to bring in pictures from their childhood and the class would try to identify individuals based on these pictures. As the only African American student in the class, it made the student feel very uncomfortable as her picture was the only picture of a dark skinned baby.\textsuperscript{15} No harm was intended by this exercise, but it would be helpful to think through the damaging effects of that type of experience.

The story above is an example of a racial micro-aggression. Stephen Brookfield defines micro-aggressions as “the small acts of exclusion and marginalization committed by a dominant group toward a minority.”\textsuperscript{16} Another form of micro-aggression is looking to black students to speak for all blacks as representatives of their race. S1 said that she has been the recipient of racially insensitive comments from teachers. She has also felt pressured to educate her classmates about African American culture.\textsuperscript{17} Brookfield argues that everyone has racist attitudes that are acquired during their life and it is far better to

\textsuperscript{13} Paredes-Collins and Collins, “The Intersection of Race and Spirituality,” 91.

\textsuperscript{14} Interview with author, Brentwood, TN, January 5, 2017.

\textsuperscript{15} Interview with author, Brentwood, TN, October 14, 2016.

\textsuperscript{16} Stephen Brookfield, “Teaching Our Own Racism,” \textit{Adult Learning} 25, no. 3 (August 2014): 93.

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with author, Brentwood, TN, October 28, 2016.
acknowledge and discuss them instead of pretending they are not there.\textsuperscript{18} This reality includes minorities’ attitudes towards the majority group. BA would benefit from open dialogue about racial issues. Only through bringing issues into the light can they be dealt with in an open and honest manner.\textsuperscript{19}

Overt racism is seldom encountered among the staff at Brentwood Academy either. However, there are many who adhere to an assimilationist/colorblind ideology that supports the “new racism” that exists today.\textsuperscript{20} This school of thought can be harmful because it denies that there is a problem.\textsuperscript{21} For students of color, race is something they are cognizant of every day, but for the majority group race does not have to be an issue.\textsuperscript{22} Faculty must be aware that race is extremely salient for these students and purposeful care must be given to them. This is especially true at a Christian school.

Research shows that religious belief is something that can give strength to African Americans against racism.\textsuperscript{23} This places BA in a unique position to affirm its minority students on both a humanistic and spiritual level as they develop their identity during the formative years of adolescence.\textsuperscript{24} It is imperative that teachers make the most vulnerable

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 89.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 249.

\textsuperscript{22} Hearn, "Color-Blind Racism, Color-Blind Theology, and Church Practices," 283.

\textsuperscript{23} Paredes-Collins and Collins, “The Intersection of Race and Spirituality,” 81.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
students in their class feel safe to share their perspectives through their own openness and humility. This can require special training for those that are not equipped to mediate discussions about racially charged material.

The faculty needs to be educated about micro-aggressions that might be communicated through their teaching and the special needs of minorities in their classes. The teaching faculty must be cognizant of the racial tension minority students face every day in order to “nurture and challenge each whole person to the glory of God.” Minority and majority group students alike need to grow in their awareness of the unique gifts that they all contribute. Students also need to be aware of the distinct challenges facing students of color at school and the danger of preconceived notions that can turn into dangerous stereotypes.

**Educating Students about Racial Issues**

The student body at Brentwood Academy is more racially diverse today than it has been at any other time in the school’s history. Through the school’s admissions policy and efforts to create a racially and economically diverse school, the percentage of minorities enrolled at BA is significantly higher than the city of Brentwood in which the school is located. This provides a tremendous opportunity for students, faculty, and parents to benefit from the broad range of cultural and racial differences that are coming together in the classroom and at various school activities. However, students must be

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25 Ekblad, “Reading Scripture for Good News that Crosses Barriers of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Culture,” 231.

educated about the unique contribution that each member can make to the whole, so that the school is not being diverse just for its own sake, which would lead to tokenism.\(^\text{27}\)

The student body needs to be educated about the harmful results of attributing stereotypes to their classmates. Negative stereotypes can affect both intellectual functions and identity development, so it is important for students and faculty alike to understand the damaging effects.\(^\text{28}\) At Brentwood Academy there is a perception that all black students are at the school to play sports, are receiving financial aid, and are academically deficient. Only one interviewee (S4) did not mention that African Americans at BA were perceived to be there for athletics. There was not as much agreement about economic and academic stereotypes among interviewees, but these stereotypes are typical at predominantly white independent schools across the nation.\(^\text{29}\)

Research indicates that blacks are over-represented in sports while often under-represented in the larger student body, and this is true at BA.\(^\text{30}\) However, for African American students that do not excel at or are not interested in sports, this adds another layer of marginalization. Brentwood Academy has a long tradition of athletic excellence. A perception of BA in the community is that it gives athletic scholarships to predominantly black students who excel in various sports. The school does not give


\(^{29}\) Slaughter and Johnson, \textit{Visible Now}, 75.

scholarships, but students can apply for need based financial aid. The student handbook states that “each student is encouraged and expected to be involved in school life and activities to the fullest extent.” For those on financial aid, this is emphasized even more. There is an expectation that students pay back this money through participation, which can reinforce previously held assumptions. White students need to see more of their African American peers involved in activities outside of athletics in order to recognize the contributions that they can make to other parts of the BA community. While interviewing S2, the student said that the school needs to “reach out to different kinds of African Americans” in order to demonstrate proficiencies in areas other than sports.

Another stereotype of black students at BA is that they are all on financial aid. Approximately 25 percent of the student body receives some form of need based financial aid each year. The school does not track financial aid by race, but the perception is that many of those benefiting from money are African American. The assumption is that blacks in the larger American culture are often financially disadvantaged and thus those attending BA are also in a lower socioeconomic class. This is not an entirely inaccurate assumption, but it can lead to negative opinions of African American students by their white peers. One BA alumnus who received financial assistance recalls feelings of inferiority while visiting a white friend’s large house,

31 Brentwood Academy, 2016-17 Handbook (Brentwood, TN: Brentwood Academy, 2017), 19.
32 Ibid., 18.
33 Student interview with author, November 7, 2016.
34 Atkins, e-mail.
because he knew he would be going home to a crowded apartment that evening.\textsuperscript{36} Negative stereotypes can reinforce these feelings of inferiority and be harmful for black students whether or not they are on financial aid.

Finally, there is a perception that African American students will struggle academically. All students that were interviewed for this paper indicated that teachers are more than willing to help struggling students regardless of race. However it is possible that teachers view African American students as less capable than their white classmates. If teachers see black students as low achieving, it may cause them to lower their expectations. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these possibilities adequately, but teachers at BA need to recognize the unique challenges that some students of color face while holding them to the same standard as all other learners in the class.\textsuperscript{37} Through the admissions process, the school does appear to accept many black students that are academically at risk. One junior girl (S1) expressed her concern over the lack of African Americans in her honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. This is consistent with research done around the country.\textsuperscript{38} One consequence of having few students of color in higher-level classes is that stereotypes will be formed that can result in students writing scripts of underachievement for themselves.\textsuperscript{39} Often times African Americans students coming from city schools have deficiencies in learning that have resulted from their...

\textsuperscript{36} Interview with author, February 16, 2017.

\textsuperscript{37} Choi, "Unlearning Colorblind Ideologies in Education Class," 61.

\textsuperscript{38} Ndura, Robinson, and Ochs, \textit{Minority Students in High School Advanced Placement Courses}, 33.

\textsuperscript{39} Steele, “A Threat in the Air,” 613.
previous education and not from lack of ability. But students can start to blame their race for their low achievement and thus develop a negative self-image.40

White students at BA are more likely to live in two parent families, have college educated parents, and have attended higher achieving elementary schools than their black peers.41 Understanding this reality can aid students and faculty to value the academic ability of African American students.42 The interviewee S5 revealed that the students of color he knew came from very diverse backgrounds and many of them faced issues each day that many white classmates do not.43

Some of the societal issues that need to be dealt with by Brentwood Academy have been addressed in this part of the paper. The next section will summarize the information presented thus far and some conclusions will be drawn. Recommendations will also be made to about how to change the culture at BA so that it will be more welcoming for minority students.

40 Ibid., 615.


43 Interview with author, Brentwood, TN, February 16, 2017.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Brentwood Academy is defined and guided by its mission. The mission statement declares that each whole person will be cared for to the glory of God. This is a challenge for any institution, but it is a worthy goal. Part of caring for each individual in the organization is understanding the needs of its constituents. For African American students at BA, there are some unique challenges with which the school needs to help. The Board of Trustees has made it a part of the school’s purpose to provide a diverse student body. This includes both racial and economic diversity. Through providing financial aid and having an open admissions policy, the school is trying to create variety among the student population. In fact, Brentwood Academy and other local private schools are often more diverse racially than the public schools in surrounding counties. However, creating a racially diverse student body does not mean that those minorities are being “nurtured and challenged to the glory of God.”¹

One of the criticisms leveled against the school is that the diversity they strive for is self-serving because they only allow black students in that can help the athletic programs.² This is harmful to the students of color at BA. This accusation props up the stereotypes that all African American students are on financial aid and that they are not as academically gifted.³ Finally, the school has adopted a colorblind mentality that tries to

³ Ibid., 125.
ignore racial differences. This is well intended in that it strives for equality but it also ignores the differences that have been created by God. The idea of a post-racial America is a fallacy.\(^4\) This view is harmful because it allows for certain types of racism.

For African American students attending predominantly white independent schools, there are many challenges. This is compounded by the turbulent nature of the adolescent stage of life that they are moving through. Brentwood Academy needs to be aware of the issues that are faced by their minority students in order to aid in the process of identity formation and to help incorporate them into the life of the school.

Incorporation and assimilation are not the same. To assimilate would cause minority students to lose part of their racial and ethnic identity that makes them unique. Incorporation would encourage them to contribute in order to enrich the whole school while allowing the black students to learn from the white students as well. This can begin with an evaluation of the curriculum. Moving away from a Eurocentric view of history and teaching a more balanced, global perspective will help in this process. Schools can also reach out to parents of black students to help in the process of socialization. Instead of putting the burden on the parents to engage the school, the educational institution can reach out to its minority parents. Providing a forum for parents to discuss issues specific to their children can show the school’s commitment to them and demonstrate concern. It is a way for the school to exhibit the kind of neighborly love that Jesus taught.

For many minority students in predominantly white schools, the pressure to navigate two separate cultures compounds the struggles of adolescent identity

development. These students feel the need to act one way at school and another at home. This can be very confusing and make more difficult an already strenuous phase of life. BA can help by providing opportunities for the African American culture to be promoted in the same way the Eurocentric culture is.\(^5\) This takes deliberate planning and a commitment to diversity. This is difficult to do without creating events that feel like tokenism, but is a challenge the school needs to embrace.\(^6\)

As an academic institution that promotes Christ, Brentwood Academy needs to exhibit the kind of love that Christ did. The early church founded on Christ was one without walls. Race, gender, economics, or any other social constructs were not to be barriers to forming community. However, without intentionally striving for that type of community, people will continually look to homogenize their social groups and divisions will be created. BA is doing a good job of creating a diverse student body through the admissions process, so there is tremendous opportunity for true biblical community to exist.

The school needs to continue working towards a more diverse student body. Racial diversity is important, but so is economic, political, and cultural diversity. The number of minorities in the school has been increasing among the student body and to a lesser degree among the faculty. This creates a better educational environment for everybody.\(^7\) It is also important for minorities to be given positions of leadership among


\(^7\) Paredes-Collins and Collins, "The Intersection of Race and Spirituality," 79.
the faculty, staff, and administration. In addition to having a multiracial community, there needs to be a climate of inclusion that values all people groups equally. Colorblind ideologies and the structural racism that often comes with them will not produce this type of environment and needs to be rejected. This can be accomplished through open dialogue and education. The process of education should begin with the educators. Teachers should be trained in how to teach across racial lines and the importance of avoiding micro-aggressions that can be harmful to African American students. There needs to be an intentional emphasis on fulfilling the school’s mission for each student and not just the majority group students.

One of the limitations of this study is in its scope. If more interviews could be conducted with students, faculty, and parents, a more complete picture of what is actually happening at the school could be ascertained. Providing more voices in the conversation would further reveal perceptions and attitudes about race. It would also be beneficial to interview Caucasian students and their thoughts about racial issues at Brentwood Academy. Finally, speaking with alumni would disclose information about how the school has changed over time.

Future studies should investigate the impact school decisions have on not just students but the entire family. Research should also look at the role economic diversity plays in the overall experience of minorities at schools like Brentwood Academy where many of the families are very affluent. There should also be studies on the experience of other minority groups. The school is growing in the number of Asian and Latino students.

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8 Coleman and Stevenson, "The Racial Stress of Membership, 564."
but at a slower rate than African American students. It is not uncommon for these
students to have come to the United States and BA through adoption, so the study of
student of color in the home of white parents should also be researched.

In conclusion, Brentwood Academy needs to care for its minority students in an
intentional way in order to fulfill its mission. The school can do this by first recognizing
that race is still an issue. Rejecting the notion of colorblindness and a post-racial America
is a beginning step. Second, BA needs to continue its practice of admitting minority
students but also prioritize hiring a diverse faculty. A third recommendation is for the
current faculty to be educated about issues and challenges faced by minority students.
Finally, the school can move away from a Eurocentric form of education and begin
teaching from a multi-cultural perspective. In these ways Brentwood Academy can fulfill
its mission for its minority students.
APPENDIX A

Upper School Full-Time Teaching Faculty Expectations 2016-2017

The School Day

1. Arrive at school no later than 7:15 and remain until at least 3:30 (2:30 on Fridays).
2. Sign out in the upper school office before leaving campus anytime during the school day.
3. Direct students to the reading of the Word at the beginning of 1st period each morning.
4. Report attendance at the beginning of every class.
5. Attend and actively participate in all assemblies, chapels, pep rallies and class meetings. Monitor student behavior and administer discipline if necessary.
6. Enforce school policies (food only in dining hall with the exception of advisory groups, no gum, dress code, no cell phone use during school day, student absences, etc.). Model this behavior yourself so that students know that these are school policies.
7. Supervise cleanup (teachers are responsible for assigned areas even if it means doing it themselves; phone calls, copy machine use, tutoring of students, etc., should not take place during cleanup).
8. Strengthen relationships with students and their parents through advisory groups. Write notes, send emails, or make phone calls to report positive behaviors and experiences. Devotions should be a part of advisory group meetings.
9. Propose, plan, and sponsor a Winterim course.
10. Initiate communication and conferences with parents as needed and always inform grade chair. Copy grade chairs on all email communication with parents. Include department chairs in academic concerns if they concern curriculum.
11. Attend (if not, communicate with Amanda Butler) and be on time to all faculty meetings.
12. Attend (if not, communicate with department chair) and be on time to all department meetings.
13. Attend (if not, communicate with grade chair) and be on time to all grade level meetings.
14. Attend (if not, communicate with Paul) and be on time to all US meetings.
15. Wear professional dress code.
16. Eat regularly in the dining hall.
17. Assume ownership of our buildings and grounds. Leave rooms, hallways, parking lots picked up and clean. Involve students if possible.
18. Be mindful of professional conduct. Avoid sarcasm, public criticism, embarrassment, etc. If you need to discuss a student, do so in a private and confidential setting, not in dining hall or faculty workrooms.

Planning and Communication

1. Give Paul, Jeff and department chair a copy of your curriculum overview and procedures by Friday, August 12, 2016.
2. Submit lesson plans for the upcoming week by Thursday of each week to department chairs.
3. Update grades on Veracross by Monday of each week.
4. Homework assignments should be updated on Veracross by Thursday for the following week.
5. Prepare copies of all lesson plans, resources, materials, assessments, and projects that comprise the curriculum for your classes. See department chairs for specific details.

6. Adhere to substitute policy for any missed classes (see resource page on faculty portal).

7. Meet department chair’s deadline for turning in exam review and exam.

8. Initiate appropriate communication with parents. No D’s or F’s at interim or at the end of a quarter without a conversation and a plan with a parent and implement that plan with the student. No surprises!

9. Return phone calls and e-mails within 24 hours.

10. Update calendar and web with events, directions, etc., by emailing Barbara Carney. Check the Veracross calendar regularly.

11. Meet department chair’s deadline for turning in exam review and exam.

12. Present any document for mailing to parents or students to Paul Compton for approval before sending. Allow sufficient time for this review and approval.

13. Prepare to submit a personal self-evaluation of your first semester and progress toward your professional objectives, due by Wednesday, January 18, 2017.

**Professional Development**

1. Meet the SAIS/SACS standards for continuing professional development.

2. Develop professional objectives, discuss with department chairs, and submit written objectives to department chair by Monday, May 1, 2017.

3. Observe other classes (at least one per quarter) and give a written report to department chair/school director. Observation forms are available on faculty portal.

**Calendar Events Outside School Day—Attendance expected by upper school faculty**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 16</td>
<td>Back-to-School Picnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>US Parents Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>US Fall Retreat*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>Admission Day**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Family Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 11-13</td>
<td>Winterim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Admission Day**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17-24</td>
<td>Spring Break*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28</td>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade level activities (TBA by grade chair)

Athletic events (as many as practical and especially those happening once a semester or year)

Fine Arts events (as many as practical and especially those happening once a semester or year)

*Attendance at one retreat is expected of upper school faculty.

**One Admission Day attendance as scheduled; new faculty MUST attend all parent sessions 9-11 AM.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Young, Vershawn Ashanti. "Your Average Nigga." *College Composition and Communication* 55, no. 4 (June 2004): 693-715.