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MEMORANDUM

To: Controlled Choice Committee
From: Jennifer M. Joaquin
Re: Social Science Research on the Long-Term Effects of Desegregation
Date: October 18, 1999

The following is a summary of an article entitled, *Perpetuation Theory and the Long-Term Effects of School Desegregation*, Amy Stuart Wells, University of California at Los Angeles, Robert Crain, Columbia University Review of Educational Research, Winter 1994, Vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 531-555.¹ This article is based on twenty-one of the most substantial studies on the long-term effects of school desegregation.²

The "perpetuation theory" states that segregation tends to repeat itself "across the stages of the life cycle and across institutions when individuals have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life." This theory suggests that segregated students will, in most cases, make choices that maintain physical segregation when they become adults. This article

¹ Several experts we have been in contact with felt that this was an important review of social science research on the benefits of desegregation.

²These studies, while extremely informative, do have their shortcomings. For instance, these studies do not allow for the differentiation between various types of school desegregation policy - mandatory versus voluntary transfer plans. These studies also do not provide a measure of the socio-economic class desegregation that African American students experience as a result of desegregation.

expands on the perpetuation theory by considering it alongside the “network analysis” which maintains that segregation is perpetuated across generations because African Americans and Latinos lack access to informal networks that provide information about and entrance to, desegregated institutions and employment.

The body of research discussed in this article is divided into three categories: a) the occupational aspirations of high school students; b) choice of integrated college and subsequent educational attainment; and c) occupational attainment and adult social networks.

A. The Findings Regarding Occupational Aspirations of High School Students

1. Desegregated African American students set their occupational aspirations higher than do segregated African Americans.
2. Desegregated African American students’ occupational aspirations are more realistically related to their educational aspirations and attainment of than those of segregated African American students.

B. The Findings Regarding Choice of College and Educational Attainment

1. African American graduates of desegregated schools are more likely than those of segregated schools to attend desegregated colleges.
2. African Americans from desegregated schools will have greater educational attainment.

C. The Findings Regarding Occupational Attainment and Adult Social Networks

1. Desegregated African American students are more likely to have desegregated social and professional networks in later life.
2. Desegregated African Americans are more likely to find themselves in desegregated employment.
3. Desegregated African Americans are more likely to be working in white-collar professional jobs in the private sector than African Americans from segregated

schools, who are more likely to be in government and blue-collar jobs, though there is less consistent evidence for this last finding.