

**COUNTERNARRATIVES FROM DELAWARE:
THE IMPACT OF
BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA (1954) ON
SOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION
FOR BLACK STUDENTS**

by

Akilah S. Alleyne

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The desegregation of public schools continues to be a controversial topic in the U.S., particularly after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)* decision. It's been over sixty years following *Brown*, yet U.S. schools have remained racially and socioeconomically segregated as middle- and upper-class parents have pursued alternative choices like charter and private schools when deciding where to send their child to school. This secondary qualitative analysis examines stories and counter stories concerning the quality of education provided to Black, former students of segregated and integrated Delaware public schools, and explores the extent to which participants' social development was impacted by segregation and desegregation in school and along the home-to-school (HTS) commute. In addition to examining Black, former students' experiences in school and along the home-to-school (HTS) commute pre- and post-*Brown*, this dissertation investigates the impact of desegregation on participants' social identity development.

More specifically, the study explores the ways in which Black students developed racial awareness of perceptions of 'self' as it relates to 'feelings of inferiority' following *Brown*. Few studies have qualitatively examined the impact of desegregation cases like *Brown vs. Board of Education* on Black students' identity development, HTS commute, or their perceptions of the quality of education received after the Supreme Court's ruling to desegregate U.S. public schools. Therefore, this dissertation examines the oral history interviews of 26 former Black students of Delaware public schools and utilizes archival resources to explore their stories and counter stories concerning the pre- and post- *Brown* schooling experience. Implications for this dissertation fill a gap in the sociological and educational literature

concerning Black students' social identity development, their in-school experiences, and experiences along the HTS commute before and after *Brown*.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Throughout U.S. history, schooling has always been more than merely separate and unequal school resources or facilities between Black and White students. Before the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* Supreme Court case mandated desegregation of U.S. public schools, many Black students recalled taking long walks or bus rides to and from school for more extended periods than their White counterparts (Gadsden 2005). Several decades have passed since *Brown* and scholars find that the nation's public schools continue to be unequal and are more segregated than before (Anderson 2004; Boser & Baffour 2017; Orfield & Lee 2004; Wells 2019).

In the past two decades, scholars and politicians against civil rights policies like school desegregation have argued that poor school performance in Black students stems from an anti-intellectualism in Black culture (McWorter 2000; Ogbu 2003; Patterson 2000; Thernstrom & Thernstrom 2003). These ideologies, however, are not new and originated with previous social science theories and writings on untrue assumptions of self-hatred and anti-intellectualism concerning Black American schoolchildren (Cross 1991). Some scholars have purported that Black American school children are subject to racial inequality in the education system due to their personality traits (Carter & Goodwin 1994; Gould 1981). Others have argued that

underachievement in Black children is due to cultural standards (D' Souza 1991; Patterson 2000).

A Black professor at the University of California, Berkeley, John McWhorter (2000), wrote that Black American students are not underperforming due to mental inferiority or laziness. Instead, McWhorter (2000) asserts that there is "a strong tendency toward anti-intellectualism at all levels in the Black community" (xii, 126) that is responsible for the poor school performance of Black students. The late John Ogbu (2003) shared similar views concerning the academic achievement of Black students, arguing that the central problem in poor educational performance is the family and peer culture of Black Americans. These ideologies concerning the persistence of racial inequality in education have been used to justify the racial subordination of Black students and have served as a contemporary rationale for educational inequality. However, analyses on historical scholarship concerning Black American education and culture find no basis for such claims.

Since Vanessa Siddle Walker's 1996 research on the history of African American schools, Christopher Span, Dionne Danna, and Michelle Purdy have written notable books such as *From the cotton field to the schoolhouse: African American education in Mississippi 1862-1875* (Span 2009) and *Using Past as Prologue: Contemporary Perspectives on African American Educational History* (Danna et al. (2015), which reveal the dialectical relationship between policy mandates, legal systems, and the direction of education for Black children.

In *Using Past as a Prologue*, contributing authors Elizabeth Todd-Breland, Jon Hale, and R. Scott Baker presented macro-level findings illuminating Black Americans' attitudes toward schooling and the impact of political and social policies

on Black identity. Elizabeth S. Todd-Breland (chapter ten) and Jon Hale (chapter seven) documented accounts where Black American parents and teachers worked collectively with their communities in attempts to create high-quality educational opportunities for Black students (Span 2009). However, in his analyses, Baker (chapter 11) found that such efforts were thwarted by social and political policy mandates used as mechanisms to subdue Black Americans' educational efforts. Policies such as the desegregation mandate substantially lacked accountability and therefore did not address racial inequities "...and even exacerbated the pervasive and pernicious racial disparities even in educational opportunity" (Danns et al. 2015: 299). Despite the lack of accountability in efforts to achieve racial equity through desegregation policies, Black teachers and parents continued to stress the value of education for individuals and the community. They attempted to gain independence and community control over the direction of schooling in their communities.

James Anderson (2004) analyzed decades of historical scholarship on Black American education in the north and south, including David Cecelski's (1994) and Louis Hilton's (1998) work on Black American attitudes toward schooling. Anderson's (2004) historical analysis revealed findings that challenged distorted stories and "victim blaming" concerning racial inequality in education within the historical context of the *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The findings included the work of historians V.P. Franklin (1979), Robert L. McCaul (1987), and Leonard P. Curry (1981), who observed hundreds of stories, autobiographies, and memoirs revealing that Black Americans highly valued education and believed strongly in education as a means of liberation and individual success.

This dissertation seeks to expand upon recent studies by exploring the social and developmental aspects of Black students' commute and in-school experiences before and immediately following the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case. It addresses four limitations of the existing literature and demonstrates reasons why prior approaches that have sought to explain the educational experiences of Black students are off-base.

First, concerning *Brown*, studies find little evidence supporting the claim that desegregating public schools boosted the academic achievements and test scores of Black students (Grissmer, Flanagan, & Williamson 1998; Hedges & Nowell 1999; Danna et al. 2015). Additionally, scholars find that U.S. public schools are more segregated today than ever before (Anderson 2004; Boser & Baffour 2017; Orfield & Lee 2004; Torres & Weissbourd 2020; Wells 2019). Instead, findings suggest that improvements in academic achievements after desegregation may be attributed to more inclusive social networks and equitable distribution of resources (Hochschild & Scovronick 2003). By examining Black students' stories and counterstories concerning the quality of education that they received before and after *Brown*, this dissertation explores the extent to which the desegregation mandate influenced academic achievements, peer-to-peer social networking, teacher-student relationships, and school resources allocation.

Second, a few existing studies that have utilized critical and storytelling methodologies to empirically examine the unintended consequences of *Brown* primarily reflect teacher, parent, or community members' experiences or perceptions towards segregated schooling (Walker 1996; Tillman 2004). Charles Kimble's (1980) qualitative study revealed that court-ordered desegregation had little

impact on how adults felt about the status of contemporary desegregated schooling. However, student voices concerning their perceptions towards desegregation and other aspects of the schooling experience like the HTS commute and racial awareness remain absent from the literature.

The third matter is that commuting to and from school, which involves social interactions between Black and White residents, was a significant part of the educational experience for students who attended public schools pre- and post-*Brown*. Scholars have examined how public transportation bus times, travel routes (Stein & Grigg 2019; Gottfried 2017), and exposure to violence or crime on the commute may affect student absenteeism (Burdick-Will, Stein, and Grigg 2019). Gottfried (2013) found that a relationship exists between absenteeism and disadvantaged neighborhood contexts and that such a relationship both exists and operates independently of individual disadvantage. Nonetheless, the home-to-school (HTS) commute is not yet recognized in the dominant educational literature as an intrinsic part of the educational experience.

For this dissertation, the HTS commute is defined as a traveling space between home and schools that shapes students' personal, social, and identity development. This dimension includes commuting to school by foot, car, train, or bus. The HTS commute experience plays a unique role in shaping how students perceive their social position in society relative to other racial groups (Shedd 2015). However, the HTS commute and its role in the overall K-12 educational experience is understudied in the educational literature, particularly within the historical context of segregated and desegregated public schooling.

Finally, existing studies that provide documented accounts of schooling experiences for Black students pre-and post- *Brown* are missing narratives detailing how Black students' social identity development was impacted through interactions with peers and teachers in-school or along the HTS commute. Given its absence in the literature, this study examines the HTS commute as part of the educational experience. It seeks to uncover whether additional challenges, like unequal transportation opportunities, may have contributed to inequitable schooling experiences for Black and Brown schoolchildren. Implications of this study seek to fill gaps in existing research by applying critical race theoretical storytelling tools to highlight narrative accounts from Black, former students who attended segregated and integrated schools before and after the desegregation mandate of *Brown*. The counter storytelling tool was adopted from critical legal studies and therefore legitimized as an appropriate tool for critical analyses on how racial power is exercised in everyday social practices in America. This dissertation fills a gap in the literature by conceptualizing the home-to-school commute as a component of the U.S. educational experience where race and place intersect with structural contexts like the *Brown* case. More specifically, this dissertation explores Black students' stories and counter stories concerning social identity development, their in-school experiences with resource allocation, and the commute to and from school before and after *Brown* to demonstrate how social policies like desegregation operate through the lens of race and racial power.

By using counter storytelling tools, this dissertation also contributes to existing historical inquiry methods while privileging former students' stories, perspectives, and lived experiences to help inform future policies and practices concerning equitable educational opportunities for Black and Brown public school students. These findings

will have practical implications for how scholars and policymakers understand how social policies can directly impact social developmental and commuting aspects of the K-12 public school experience, even in attempts to resolve the perpetuation of racially unequal educational experiences.

Research Questions

- 1) What role does the HTS commute play in social identity development for Black public-school students?
- 2) How do Black students' counter-narratives reveal experiences with "feelings of inferiority" throughout their educational experiences pre- *Brown*?
 - a) Post-*Brown* decision?
 - b) Along the HTS commute?
 - c) In-school?

Theoretical Framework

Traditional social science theoretical frameworks theorize that resources and ecological assets are located within the family, community, and school dimensions of an individual's ecological system (Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; Eccles & Gootman 2002; McKnight & Kretzmann 1993; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000). Such resources and assets are necessary for positive development and promoting positive youth experiences in education (Theokas & Lerner 2006). However, no prior studies have theorized the role of the home-to-school commute experience in students' social development or examined how various external factors within an individual's ecological system may intersect with the commuting process to impact students' overall educational experience.

Additionally, the foundational ideologies concerning theories like structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory lack consideration for the direct implications of social policy or the racial character of social interests on lived experiences. Consequently, such approaches lack a critical lens for understanding the impact of social policies when intersected with racism on Black students' educational experiences, particularly their experiences with the home-to-school commute. However, critical race theory (CRT) fundamentally encourages participant agency by introducing storytelling into the academic discourse. This dissertation fills a gap in the literature by examining former students' stories concerning their home-to-school commute experience in Delaware public schools. More specifically, storytelling tools are used to investigate participants' experiences with resource allocation and social networking before and after *Brown*, and demonstrate how the HTS commute may be accompanied by changes in students' racial awareness and perceptions of self.

This chapter provides a brief overview of three out of the four core tenets of CRT: counter-storytelling, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism and discusses two crucial premises of the theory, racial realism and the neutrality of law. These core tenets help to highlight the social and historical origins of CRT, which are necessary for understanding contemporary educational debates. In addition, the core tenets of CRT provide context for understanding the intention and effectiveness of past educational and legal strategies on the modern educational climate in U.S. public schools. This section helps facilitate a general understanding of what choices were made by attorneys involved with the *Brown* case and why the NAACP and the Court agreed to desegregate public schools. Moreover, it provides insight into how, in *Brown's* case, desegregation became a legitimized law that resulted in inequitable education outcomes for Black students.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is both a movement and a form of scholarship that emerged in critical legal studies (CLS) discourse by mostly scholars of color of various disciplines, including law, sociology, education, and other social sciences. Critical legal scholar (CLS) Derrick Bell's critique of traditional liberal and conservative civil rights laws and discourse are arguably the most influential sources of the CRT movement and intellectual agenda. Bell's scholarship concerning CRT emerged between the 1970s and 1990s around the same time that many other Black scholars (Cone 1990, 2010; Crenshaw 1988; Ladner 1988; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw 1993) had begun to engage in the continuing development of Black thought post-civil rights movement, challenging traditional paradigms within their fields.

The central aspect of critical race scholarship that distinguishes it from conventional liberal and conservative legal scholarship about race and inequality is its critique and deep dissatisfaction with traditional and 'liberal' civil rights discourse. More specifically, critical race scholarship points out the unwillingness of liberals or progressives to directly critique the hidden racial dimensions of law and institutions. CRT diverts from CLS, a critique of formalism and objectivism on American legal and social institutions, by adopting deeper critical thinking about race and the racial character of 'social interests' and transposing such insights into an analysis of racial power and law. Due to this foundational critique of liberalism, critical race scholarship is often described as a radical left approach since critical race theorists argue that there is little difference between conservative and liberal civil rights discourse since, philosophically, both forms of discourse are upheld by a color-blind approach (Crenshaw 1988; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, Thomas, 1995; Greene 1995).

In addition, although CRT scholarship may involve various objectives, arguments, and emphases on race and racial power in America, critical race scholars share two common interests. The first is an adoption of a theory-practice approach, asserting "a community of values that were inherited from generations of radical teachers" (Matsuda et al. 1993:3) in order to examine and understand how race, racism, and racial power are constructed and represented in the law of American society concerning White people and people of color, and have come to hold a permanent position in American society (Bell 1980, 1984; Barnes 1990; Calmore 1992; Crenshaw 1988; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; Williams 1987). The second is to not merely understand this structure and how it operates as a 'vexed' bond between

law and racial power—but to challenge and change it (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado 1989, 1990).

Since critical race scholars aim to integrate lived experiences and their experiential knowledge and expertise into expositions of the law, whether moral or situational (Tate 1997), there is a relatively large literature centered on critical race theory (CRT) (Bell 1980, 1992, 1995; Campbell 1973; Du Bois 1935; Mays 1973).

CRT scholars explore a wide range of topics concerning the four central tenets of the theory: counter-storytelling, whiteness as property, interest convergence, and critique of liberalism, which cannot be easily reduced to distinct descriptions apart from one another. This section, however, does not involve a comprehensive review of the entire literature; instead, it aims to highlight two tenets of CRT that are especially relevant to the *Brown* case, which is *counter-storytelling* and *interest convergence*. These two core tenets and its social and historical origins highlighted in this section are necessary for understanding contemporary educational debates and provide context concerning the effectiveness of past educational and legal strategies on the contemporary educational climate in U.S. public schools. In addition, I address the ‘principle of neutrality’ and ‘racial realism’ in relation to *Brown*, which are two concepts that are often used to explain a third tenet of CRT, which is the critique of liberalism.

As described in CRT and *Brown v. Board of Education* literature, interest convergence refers to circumstances in which dominant interests supersede the implementation of just laws (Bell 1979, 1980a; 1980b, 1987, 1992). According to Bell (1980), "interest convergence" underscores how "[t]he interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of

whites" (Bell 1980: 523). Based on the concept of interest convergence, if and when a threat or fear becomes present, whether accurate or not, mainly where the status quo or dominant group would experience loss, inconvenience, or feelings of upset to themselves or other Whites, discriminatory conduct towards Blacks will either remain or follow the present threat (Bell 1992). Bell (1987) noted that the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* was of value to White people in policy-making positions, and therefore the decision cannot be understood without consideration of such circumstances. In the case of *Brown*, Bell (1987) argued that White decision-makers had recognized that there were foreign policy benefits and economic and political benefits in the U.S. that could be gained from racial desegregation.

The concept of interest convergence has also been debated with respect to the U.S. Constitution and the law, particularly in association with a neutrality principle (or sometimes called 'principle of neutrality' or 'neutrality of the law' (Wechsler 1959). In the case of *Brown*, the neutrality principle, in which the government remains neutral on matters of race, was heavily contested. For many legal scholars and others, it was evident that in the former case of *Plessy* (1896), the idea of instituting a neutrality principle with expressed interest in race had been rejected. With this in mind, it began to appear that in *Brown*, much of the majority opinion rested on how to assert a 14th amendment, race neutral application of equal protection with respect to education without entirely overturning the *Plessy* decision. At the time, standing alone, the fourteenth amendment did not intrinsically act to authorize or ensure judicial remedies that provide effective *racial* equality for Blacks with regard to education, or any matter, due to the *Plessy* (1896) decision. Using the principle of interest convergence as a base, Bell (1980) noted that judicial remedies were even less likely to be

authorized if and when they threaten the permanent racial power structure of America, of which middle- and upper-class Whites hold superior social status to Blacks and other racial groups of color.

Interest convergence and the ‘principle of neutrality’ also align with another one of the basic premises of CRT, the permanence of racism, or *racial realism* (Bell 1992, 1995). Bell’s (1992) concept of racial realism suggests that in spite of the ability of some Black people to achieve political gains in the U.S., such achievements may often be short-term and surface-level rather than systemic and reformative. According to the premise of racial realism, prevailing scholarship on race serves as a critical site for the construction of power in the United States and challenges society to re-examine the ways in which we understand White supremacy, which has subordinated people of color to a social structure of power that has been created and maintained in the United States. It insists that scholarship on race in the United States cannot be written with objectivity or detachment, given the formation, production, and organization of ‘knowledge’ is “inevitably political” (Bell 1987, 1992; Delgado 1989; West et al. 1995: xiii), and therefore CRT rejects the prevailing belief that scholarship could or should be ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’.

In sum, this dissertation utilizes the CRT framework to help explain the meaning, nature, or contextual challenges associated with being a Black child attending public schools during segregation and desegregation. CLS suggests that though it is not always obvious, social interests and legal identities are shaped by ‘race relations’ across various plane in U.S. society, and since law is comprised of different social interests and legal identities that make up social power, it is important that we see law as actually being a product of social power. Due to its applicability for

considering the social interests and legal systems that played a role in the final *Brown* decision, the CRT framework is used in this dissertation to examine documented narrative accounts from former students of segregated and integrated schools. Using CRT in this study permits novel opportunities for deeper empirical analyses on Black students' experiences with social identity development, the HTS commuting experience, and their overall quality of education.

Critical Race Theory and the Role of Storytelling

Although some studies have examined the ways in which desegregation cases like *Brown* have played a role in disproportionate schooling opportunities in the U.S., scholars have missed a key examination of the experience – the student voice. Along with Derrick Bell (1984), critical legal scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988) and Richard Delgado (1990) employ CRT methods arguing that the stories (sometimes called counter-stories) of people of color in the U.S. are framed by racism. Counter-storytelling has served as a both a theoretical tool and a methodological base for guiding research in education, legal studies, sociology, history and other fields that focus on analyzing and understanding the effects of race and racism on people of color (Delgado 1989, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic 1989; Garcia 1995; Harris 1994; Solórzano & Yosso 2002). The counter-storytelling tool works by providing a 'counter' narrative to distorted or silenced epistemologies of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso 2002).

Critical race theorist Derrick Bell (1984, 1987) described the use of allegory as a method to tell the stories and counter-stories of people of color in ways that center race and reveal embedded, less visible dimensions of racial power that often go beyond the scope of critical examination (Bell 1987, 1994; West et al. 1995). Bell

(1994) emphasized the importance of subjective personal voice as a methodological tool in legal analysis, explaining that storytelling reveals two important things about the law: (1) how the law has been shaped, and (2) how law shapes issues of race (171). Critical race scholars argue that these methods for storytelling and counter-storytelling help challenge the status quo (Bell 1984; Bettelheim 1975) by illuminating some of the ironies and contradictions associated with the construction of law and policies (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Tate 1997), warranting voiced scholarship that includes situated narratives.

Delgado's (1989, 1990) CRT scholarship, which builds on theories found in the sociology of knowledge has been described by Crenshaw et al. (1995) as 'pivotal' toward the notion of 'voice' concerning lived experience as a form of legal analysis and argument. Critical race scholars argue that stock stories are told by the dominant or ingroup to produce a shared reality for ingroup members that justifies and legitimizes their superior position, allowing them to feel that their superiority is natural (Delgado 1989, 1990; Lawrence 1987; R.A. Williams, 1989). Consequently, critical race scholars argue that counter stories must be shared to "subvert that ingroup reality" (Delgado 1989: 2413).

Delgado (1980) explained that counter-stories are imperative for understanding how the human experience for people of color is structurally different from their White counterparts, as evident in cases where White people indicate experiencing rare instances of overt or subtle acts of racism. People of color, on the other hand, "experience racism all the time" and therefore commonly exchange stories describing their dealings with racism and discriminatory racial treatment (Delgado 1980: 407).

Legal scholars like Derrick Bell (1980a, 1980b, 1992) and Lani Guinier (1991a, 1991b, 1995) held critical views concerning the political bargaining between leading civil rights groups, African American politicians, and Republicans, particularly during the civil rights movement. As a result, the scholars began to center their scholarship toward discussing the changing dimensions of race in contemporary U.S. politics. Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) noted that such scholarship revealed the interrelated nature of racial identities and politics and supported Bell (1980a, 1980b, 1992) and Guinier's (1991a, 1991b) scholarship, which exposed the vexed bond between law and racial power and affirmed how racism still shapes the U.S. social structure.

As critical race scholarship began developing as a movement, education scholars recognized that, despite the numerous theoretical and philosophical considerations of gender and class across multiple disciplines, the salience of race in U.S. society and its role in education had remained untheorized (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; McCarthy & Crichlow 1993). These scholars problematized existing theories asserting that 'raced' education could not be explained using theories of gender or class due to traditional paradigmatic boundaries that lead to omissions and blind spots surrounding racial logic and mechanisms.

Black scholars and community members began engaging in storytelling as a part of their legal and scientific analyses to allow for the potential of changed mindsets (Delgado 1989) that may help us understand alternative scenarios for where resources, money, control, and power need to be reallocated. Therefore, in keeping with Solórzano & Yosso's (2002) application of critical race theory, this study utilizes counter storytelling tools to interpret and contextualize (De Reus, Few, Blume 2011)

the educational experiences of Black former students that attended Delaware schools pre-and post- *Brown*. It aims to center Black former students' narrative, lived experiences with the home-to-school commute, resource allocation, and racial discrimination during the *Brown* era.

The findings based on the counternarratives presented in this study have significant implications considering the fact that there was much contention concerning the priority of *Brown*, and what the proper course of action would have been to achieve equal educational opportunities for Black students at the time. Moreover, the participants' counternarratives may suggest a reality contrary to post-*Brown* national discourse which suggested that desegregation improved the quality of education for Black children. This dissertation utilizes participant stories as a theoretical tool while arguing that adoption of such tools and critical theoretical perspectives help researchers and policymakers to better "understand, explain, discuss, and challenge traditional paradigms around students of color" (Stovall 2009: 259) by revealing the myriad of ways in which racial power is exercised in every day social practices in the United States.

CRT, the principle of neutrality and *Brown v. Board of Education*

Legal background on *Belton v. Gebhart*, 87 A.2d 862, 32 Del. Ch. 343 (Ch. 1952)

Before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) case had been introduced to the Supreme Court, many Black families across various states joined with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund to sue their local and state boards of education. Although few desegregation cases were won by the NAACP, attorneys Louis L. Redding and Jack Greenberg found success in *Belton v. Gebhart*,

87 A.2d 862, 32 Del. Ch. 343 (Ch. 1952) and *Bulah v. Gebhart*, 87 A.2d 862, 32 Del. Ch. 343, 32 Del. 343 (1952). In the *Bulah v. Gebhart*, case, a seven-year-old Black resident of Hockessin, DE had been refused admission to the Hockessin School No. 29, an all-White public elementary school. Around the same time, in the case of *Belton v. Gebhart*, eight Black high school students residing in the Claymont Special School District of New Castle County, Delaware, were suing on behalf of themselves and others similarly situated. In both cases, Black students had been refused admission to their local all-White school and were instructed to attend one of the all-Black schools located in the city of Wilmington approximately nine miles from their residence.

Both cases were eventually consolidated into one, and for trial purposes thereafter referred to as *Belton v. Gebhart*. In each of the cases, the plaintiffs had made two charges against their defendants, the State of Delaware. The main charge was that the State of Delaware's imposed segregation in education had violated their rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In concurrence with the first charge, the plaintiffs contended that the facilities and educational opportunities offered to them and others similarly situated in all-Black schools were inferior to those available to White students in all-White schools (*Belton v. Gebhart*, 1952).

Expert witnesses, whose qualifications were fully established both inside and outside of the court, were brought by the plaintiffs to testify in the trial court. Among the experts were education scholars, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and anthropologists. The harms identified by the expert witnesses on behalf of the NAACP included lack of interest in education and schooling, extensive absenteeism, and various forms of mental disturbances to name a few. With regard to mental health

disturbances, Chancellor Seitz pointed out that during the testimonials, one of America's foremost psychiatrists made a point to acknowledge that State-imposed school segregation provided Black children with an unresolvable conflict that seriously interfered with their mental health.

On the issue of segregation *per se*, the other expert witnesses sustained a general proposition that the legally enforced segregation schools had harmful over-all effects on Black children. However, in his testimony, the psychiatrist asserted that State enforced segregation is "clear cut" and gives legal sanction to any oppositions, and although isolated incidents of school segregation could not be the sole cause of the mental health conflicts in all Black children, continued duration of *de jure* segregation would play an important role in leading to other harms that may not apparently connect to their 'formal' educational progress. According to the psychiatrist, for Black students, although the form, or combination of forms of hardship experienced by Black students may vary in different cases, mental health conflicts are not caused by segregation alone. Although not specified, he noted that there were other indirect factors entrenched in the social foundation (i.e. demographics, culture, politics) and conditions of the Delaware community, as instituted by the State, that had the effect of causing Black children to feel inferior. Based on the findings of the psychiatrist, Chancellor Seitz concluded that State-imposed segregation in education itself resulted in Black children receiving educational opportunities that were substantially inferior, and therefore produced "feelings of inferiority" to White children who were otherwise similarly situated (*Belton v. Gebhart, 1952*).

The questions presented to the court were as follows:

- (1) “Are the Constitutional provision and the statute, in so far as they provide for segregation, in and of themselves in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution?” (JUSTIA U.S. Law, n.d.)
- (2) “Assuming a negative answer to the question (1), are the separate facilities and educational opportunities offered plaintiffs equal to those furnished White children similarly situated?” (JUSTIA U.S. Law, n.d.)

After considering the testimonies in the *Belton v. Gebhart* case, Chancellor Collins Seitz concluded that Black students’ mental health, and therefore their educational opportunities, had been adversely affected by State-imposed segregation in education. This conclusion, however, did not absolve the defendants of the first question presented to the Delaware Court of Chancery. Chancellor Seitz deemed it necessary to take two forms of action in order to conclude it as fact that separate facilities cannot be equal. The first form of action would be to consider the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and their construing of the applicability of the Fourteenth Amendment to the “separate but equal doctrine” in education. The second would be to allow the U.S. Supreme Court to determine whether the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 16 S. Ct. 1138, 41 L. Ed. 256 (1896) could legally be applied in the fields of elementary and secondary education, and if to be rejected, to be done so by the highest Court in the nation. Consequently, the *Belton v. Gebhart* case was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court and would later be consolidated with four other cases to make the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

At the end of the appeal for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, Chief Justice Warren was confronted with the following issue: “Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?” (Bell 2004:17). The statement posed the common legal question of whether public schools under the Constitution could operate on a racially segregated basis.

In the *Brown I* decision, Chief Justice Warren decided that segregation solely on the basis of race does, in fact, deprive Black children of equal educational opportunities stating:

“[t]o separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone” (Bell 2004:17).

This decision was based on the ideological foundation that segregated education denied the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws and would come to overrule the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. However, even after having found that segregation of public schools was a denial of equal protection of the laws, the Court still postponed mandated action for a year and scheduled the case for further argument on questions of ‘relief’. Attorneys general and states requiring or permitting segregated public schools both urged for the Supreme Court to turn the responsibility for a remedy to ‘separate but equal’ to the district courts where state and local officials would have greater participation in creating a remedy. The Court accepted the request

of such states and followed with the decision of *Brown II*, which reversed the momentum and opportunity for progress.

In short, in spite of Chief Justice Warren's previous declarations that U.S. public schools were 'separate but unequal' and therefore unconstitutional, the Chief Justice departed from earlier precedents holding that violations of individual constitutional rights necessitated immediate remedy to be decided on by state governments. In the months following the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) after consideration of further arguments and state requests, the Court issued a second decision, *Brown II* (1955). In the case of *Brown II* (1955), the Chief Justice held that the decision of unconstitutionality involved a "great variety of local conditions...[and] present problems of considerable complexity" (Bell 2004:18).

As a result, the NAACP's request that desegregation be ordered to commence immediately as opposed to 'with all deliberate speed' was denied by the Court, and the *Brown II* decision did not result in any immediate social reform. Rather than immediate action, in 1955, the Court opted to permit each lower court to resolve for itself the administrative and academic problems presented by compliance. Each of the cases was returned to their states and to the district courts and were remanded that orders and decrees be made to admit plaintiffs to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis "with all deliberate speed..." (see note 14, Bell 2004: 18). It took approximately 16 years following the *Brown II* decision before the U.S. District Court would renew litigation for school desegregation in Delaware's Northern New Castle County.

In the consolidated cases of both *Belton v. Gebhart*, and *Brown v. Board of Education*, there were two key factors that served as the primary basis of substantial disparity in the development of self-esteem and judgment between Black and White children who were otherwise similarly situated. Those factors were: unequal quality of facilities and educational opportunities. Besides the issue of unequal facilities and educational opportunities, however, the expert witnesses in the *Brown* case, had not specified what additional factors may contribute to feelings of inferiority among Black children. Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which variations in the types of school resources provided, and the unequal distribution of such resources, had violated Black students' rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In addition, very few studies, if any, have explored the extent to which other aspects of the educational experience like the process of commuting to and from school impacted the development of self-esteem and judgment of the plaintiffs of the *Belton v. Gebhart* case and/or those others similarly situated.

A few years after the *Brown* decision, Professor Herbert Wechsler (1959) was not only suspicious of the evidence presented in *Brown*; he also questioned the practice of principled reasoning in the decision-making process in the case, as well as in other Supreme Court decisions that followed in relation to racial segregation. Wechsler (1959) expressed that for the Court to treat *Brown* as the statement of a principle of neutrality was problematic; from his view, the neutrality principle in *Brown* was "either deficient, or in some instances nonexistent" (Bell 1980: 520). To make his point, Wechsler asked the question:

"Given a situation where the state must practically choose between denying the association to those individuals who wish it or imposing it on those who would avoid

it, is there a basis in neutral principles for holding that the Constitution demands that the claims for association should prevail?” (Wechsler 1959: 34).

Charles Black (1959), a professor and constitutional law scholar at the time, supported Wechsler’s (1959) critiques of the *Brown* decision, and expressed Wechsler’s (1959) argument as a syllogism. In his syllogism, Black (1959) outlined what he perceived to be the major and minor premises of the relationship between race and the 14th amendment. According to Black (1959), in order to affectively apply the principle of neutrality to the 14th amendment, the equal protection clause must explicitly mention race. That is, the equal protection clause should read as “the Negro race, as such, is not to be significantly disadvantaged by the laws of the states” (Black 1959: 421). To ratify the Constitution in such a way would align with the core tenets of CRT because inherently, such a statement would demonstrate concession and acknowledgement of the racial power structure that was created, maintained, and has taken a permanent place in American society by way of the U.S. Constitution itself.

Black’s (1959) second position, the minor premise of his syllogism, directly addressed the issue of state-imposed segregation. He noted that “segregation is a massive intentional disadvantaging of the Negro race, as such, by state law” (421). Here, Black (1959) identified law, specifically state law, as the action through which the racial power structure operates. In the same way that Bell (1992) pointed out in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* that political and economic power were two specific areas of disadvantage for the Black community, Black (1959) noted that Blacks were being disadvantaged through state-imposed segregation laws.

In conclusion, Black’s (1959) logic suggests that in the event that the major premise and minor premise noted above were to be true, the 14th amendment *could* in

fact have been applied on the basis of neutrality. In other words, under Black's (1959) major and minor premises, if race were to be explicitly mentioned in the Constitution with respect to the existing and perhaps permanent racial power structure of the U.S., an individual could conclude that the equal protection clause is responsible for nullifying the racial lines of legislation. Such a conclusion would be made possible since the delineation of race and racial power would be apparent in the 14th amendment if it were written as such and could therefore be used to hold policymakers accountable for any racially discriminatory practices that were inherent in proposed U.S. legislation. But since the equal protection clause is *not* outlined as such by the authors of the Constitution, to suggest that the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment was used in the *Brown* case to nullify the racial lines of legislation would be false and untrue.

With respect to the relationship between the principle of neutrality and the *Brown* decision, Bell (1980) concluded that racial justice—or its appearance—cannot truly be won by the fourteenth amendment as it stands today. According to Bell (1980), equal protection in cases of racial discrimination will always be met by the principle of interest convergence. In such cases, Bell (1980) noted, the Court decisions “may not actually be determined by the character of harm suffered by blacks or the quantum of liability proved against whites” (Bell 1980: 523). Instead, in alignment with the principle of interest convergence, remedies will emerge to operate in ways that primarily serve various societal interests that are deemed important by middle- and upper-class Whites, particularly policymakers and those that hold positions or ties to the courts. More specifically, Bell (1980) noted that any forthcoming racial remedies as it related to justice in America may be attributed to “unspoken and

perhaps subconscious judicial conclusions”, and asserted that if such remedies are approved, the proposed solutions would either “secure, advance, or at least not harm societal interests” of upper- and middle-class Whites (523).

In order to contribute toward a new analysis regarding the operationalization of race and racial power and its impacts on physical and socio-developmental dimensions of students attending U.S. public schools, this dissertation analyzes former students’ stories concerning their home-to-school commute and other schooling experiences. This study will conclude with a discussion on how analyses of older student voices, may shed light on the enduring presence of racism in U.S. schools more than 65 years post- *Brown*.

CRT, Black self-hatred and the *Brown* case

According to legal scholar Herbert Wechsler (1959), as well as social psychologist William Cross (1991), the evidence presented in the *Brown* case was doubtful, inadequate and conflicting. At times, Wechsler (1959) disagreed with and debated the use of social science, particularly when presented in lieu of or in supersession to hard evidence. One of the sources of evidence that was used in the Court to help win the *Brown* case was a series of experimental studies and arguments. Kenneth and Mamie Clark were two Black social psychologists trained in racial attitudes, racial identity, and projective techniques by social scientists Eugene and Ruth Horowitz, and Henry Garrett. The Clarks examined racial awareness among Black children by using Black and White dolls and photographs as primes in their study to test the impact of Jim Crow segregation on self-awareness, identity and self-image in these children (Markowitz & Rosner 1996).

In 1939, Mamie and Kenneth Clark conducted a photo-identification test on Black children between the ages of 3 and five. The test focused on the development of race consciousness and consciousness of self in Black preschool children. With the exception of two instances where Black children chose the white boy when making identifications of themselves, on average, Black children chose the picture of the Black boy more times than they did the White boy. The results also showed that as Black children increased in age between the ages of 3 and five years old, the number of choices made with reference to the Black boy (Clark & Clark 1939) increased. In fact, there was zero increase in the number of choices made with reference to the White boy over time (Clark & Clark 1939).

Wechsler (1959) and Cross (1991) argued the Clarks' empirical evidence did not determine that segregation caused harm and mental or psychological injury to Black children. Nevertheless, along with Thurgood Marshall, the chief lawyer on the *Brown* case, the Clarks still advanced the Black self-hatred argument as legal strategy to win the case. Given the climate and culture of Jim Crow, Thurgood Marshall and the other attorneys on the *Brown* case knew that Americans would pose great resistance and even outright opposition to the idea of providing more funding and resources to Black schools. So, for the attorneys, their main priority was accomplishing the goal of moving large numbers of Black children into the well-resourced, White schools instead.

In theory, the *perception* or prevailing discourse that Black children hate themselves was essentially extraneous relative to the greater goal, which was to, at minimum, physically get Black children into the better resourced, White schools. The logic behind this legal strategy was that in return for being willing to do the unpleasant

act of framing Black children as having low self-esteem, Black children would both gain access to and benefit from the better resources, the advanced teaching, and the advanced curriculum provided by White schools. Moreover, in the long-term, the attorneys believed that access to better schools would create opportunities for increased educational and socioeconomic mobility for Black children and their families.

Consequently, Dr. Kenneth Clark was called on by Attorney Thurgood Marshall in the *Brown* case to help develop the NAACP Legal Defense Fund case. Kenneth Clark's paper which presented evidence that Black children chose the White boy or White doll instead of the Black one in the studies was included as part of the Defense Fund's brief to the U.S. Supreme Court (Cross 1991). In reality, the Clarks' later findings *actually* undermined the notion of Black self-hatred with respect to racial self-identification and racial preference (Clark & Clark 1940; Cross 1991). Such findings were in clear contrast to what Horowitz (1939), former mentor to Kenneth Clark, had previously proposed. However, despite the Clarks' true findings and the severe limitations of their previous studies' designs, the Black self-hatred thesis was still used as primary evidence to win the *Brown* case. The Courts ultimately viewed the admitted psychological evidence as factual, and the *Brown* decision was won based on the argument that segregation created 'psychological and emotional instability' for Black children, including a sense of self-hatred, low-self-esteem, and feelings of inferiority. As a result, the Court mandated the desegregation of public schools by arguing the rationalization for doing so would enable Black children to learn how to love themselves. The false narrative surrounding low self-esteem and negative self-image, which was introduced as part of the legal strategy, ultimately

produced a ‘hopeless’ narrative that has become a part of mainstream discourse about Black children today.

It’s been several years since the *Brown* desegregation mandate was decided, and scholars like Ferguson (2001), Rios (2011), Payne (2013) and Payne and Brown (2010, 2016, 2017) have all provided evidence that sharply refutes the Black self-hatred argument. Their findings demonstrate that although many poor Black boys underachieved academically, many of them did not suffer from low self-esteem. Relative to their middle-class counterparts (Ferguson, 2001; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff 1993), many Black boys from low-income carried a positive self-image of themselves.

This dissertation adopts a CRT lens by considering previous arguments and evidence related to social identity development in Black students before *Brown*. More specifically, prior findings are considered alongside social and political contexts surrounding segregation and desegregation such as interest convergence and the alleged application of a “race blind” neutrality principle. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to the literature on how federal and state policies impacted Black students’ educational opportunities and their social identity processes not only in school but along the HTS commute as well.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins by discussing an existing race equity paradox in educational research and policy. Next, this literature review examines Black students' relationships with teachers and parents, their interactions with other institutional sources of social capital and resources, and how those various relationships and interactions intersect to impact individual student outcomes in U.S. public schools. In general, the educational scholarship focuses on teacher, student, and parent relationships within the context of post-Jim Crow public schooling. In order to address the central problem(s) raised in this dissertation, however, and reveal a more in-depth understanding about the discrepancies between the intentions of the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* case and the actual impacts of the case on Black students' lived experiences, this review intentionally includes studies that capture narratives about these relationships and interactions during Jim Crow public school systems. Moreover, this review critically examines existing literature on segregated and desegregated schooling, particularly those that highlight the voices of Black residents. Although there are few studies that examine multiple aspects of Black students' pre- and post- *Brown* educational experiences, this dissertation adds to existing literature by critically evaluating the home-to-school commute (HTS) and the process of resource allocation as key aspects of the overall educational experience.

The Race Equity Paradox in Educational Research, Policy and Law

Assumptions of an inferiority paradigm between Black and White children have influenced existing social and political belief systems and theories used to

construct education-related policy and law in the United States (Elliot 1987; Hernstein & Murray 1994; Jefferson 1954; Jensen 1969; Oh & Wu 1996). However, if not assessed from a critical race lens, implementing federal and state mandates developed from such belief systems can further perpetuate inequitable education outcomes for Black students (Tate 1997; Lawrence 1993). Recent studies revealed a "racial attitude paradox" related to White Americans' attitudes toward the value of diversity in schools and their support for race equity policies to diversify public schools (Honey & Smrekar 2020; Torres & Weissbourd 2020). Torres & Weissbourd's (2020) findings revealed that while many White parents may value integration in principle, unconscious racial and class biases and other considerations tend to overpower their commitments to integrated schools. In such cases, scholars argue that attempts to achieve racial equity in education, as in the case of desegregation of U.S. public schools, would not succeed since dispositions to one's racial group cannot be changed through socialization (Bobo & Fox 2003; Jackman & Muha 1984; Honey & Smrekar 2020).

Numerous other studies on integrated schooling revealed that integrated schooling has social, emotional, and academic benefits for White, affluent students and low-income students (Coleman 1966; Kahlenberg 2012; Orfield & Lee 2005; The Century Foundation 2019). However, even after *Brown*, White middle and upper-middle-class students are the least likely to attend schools with students from other racial groups (Roda and Wells 2013; Torres & Weissbourd 2020). Scholars find that many social-psychological and social structural theories explain unconscious racial and class biases in education, as underscored by concepts like symbolic racism. "Symbolic racism" is a term that suggests that White Americans have prejudice and

intolerant dispositions, or realistic group conflict concerning racial equity in education (Bobo 1983; Bobo & Fox 2003; Key 1949; Levine & Campbell 1972). Moreover, scholars argue that such theories contribute to color-blind ideology by suggesting that overt, systemic racism in the U.S. has been replaced with more subtle forms of race-neutral principles (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Lewis 2003).

The race-neutral policy preference embedded in traditional social science theories is rooted in individualism and the idea of fairness. Such preferences, scholars argue, are based on the belief that progressive change toward race equity can be accomplished through socialization over time (Sniderman & Carmines 1997). Studies find that many White Americans express a desire for race-neutral policies that do not explicitly or even implicitly privilege one race over another, even if such policies do advantage a particular racial group in practice (Sniderman & Carmines 1997; Torres & Weissbourd 2020). These findings concerning race-neutrality toward educational policy and law are compelling when considering evidence related to school decision-making. Scholars find that individuals are more likely to make schooling decisions that align with their racial group due to competing interests, primarily when there is an evident advantage in attaining or maintaining a certain status or position through identification with the dominant racial group (Mead & Green 2012; Mickelson et al. 2008; Orfield & Frankenberg 2014; Sikkink & Emerson 2008; Torres & Weissbourd 2020; Wells & Roda 2008). The aforementioned is concerning when considering the impact that social theories and educational policies have on the academic futures of students of color.

These findings legitimize one of the basic premises of critical race theory on the permanence of racism. Moreover, evidence from the studies mentioned earlier

reveals the reality of systemic racism in education throughout the United States' history, leading critical race scholars to question the integrity of educational reform related to inequitable funding and unequal resource allocation to Black schools (Ladson-Billing & Tate 2016; Crenshaw et al. 1995; Kluger 2011). As a result, many scholars have expressed concern that traditional quantitative or qualitative paradigmatic methodologies and conceptual frameworks are not sufficient for empirically examining the impact of systemic racism on the educational experiences of students of color (Gage 1989; Lomawaima 1995; Moran & Hakuta 1995; Schrag 1992; Shulman 1986; Tate 1997; Weinberg 1977).

When seeking to conduct educational research concerning children of color, scholars argue that social-psychological and social structural theories, methodologies, and frameworks should include three components. Those components are: pertinent historical and legal background, knowledge about the influence of communities of color on schools, and a continuous reexamination of prevailing views of the role of race in the learning experience (Weinberg 1977; Tate 1997). Lawrence (1993) noted that historical and legal background related to education policies and laws is significant, for example, when seeking to understand how policies like the desegregation mandate in *Brown* changed the schooling experience for Black children and their communities. In *Brown*, the Supreme Court found that segregation through physical separation between Black and White children was not necessarily unconstitutional. Instead, the Court found that the message that segregation conveyed, particularly the speech that communicated the status of inferiority to the general community concerning Black people, was inherently responsible for perpetuating racism, and therefore unconstitutional.

In chapter 4 of *And We Are Not Saved*, Bell (1989) used metaphorical tales to demonstrate how litigation, particularly the *Brown* decision, impacted the educational experiences of Black children. According to Bell (1987), if we acknowledge that the motivation behind segregated schooling was to achieve White dominance in education, we can understand the goal of the NAACP litigation strategy toward achieving racial integration. The solution in *Brown*—a court-mandated school desegregation, however, did not achieve educational equality. Moreover, Bell (1987) argued that the Supreme Court should prioritize the desegregation of money and control in public education rather than prioritizing racial balance in schools.

Bell (1987) used a debate-style metaphorical narrative to discuss the impact of the *Brown* decision, suggesting that there may have been a better desegregation policy than court-mandated desegregation. Bell (1987) explains that a better policy would have included mandated proportionate Black representation on all school boards in policy-making bodies reflective of Black students across districts and mandated immediate resource allocation to create equitable facilities. Furthermore, Bell (1987) argued that failure to recognize that the motivation for segregation was to maintain White dominance in public education resulted in the Supreme Court prioritizing racial balance and not the desegregation of money, power, and control of resources and facilities. Therefore, this study considers these findings related to the race equity paradox in educational research, policy, and law by using counter storytelling tools from a critical race framework to examine the impact of federal and state segregation and desegregation policies like *Brown* on Black children's social development, commuting, and in-school experiences.

Student-teacher relationships in school

Research on the educational experiences of Black students in public schools during the *Brown* era draw on the voices of Black Americans and examine the relationship between Black teachers and their students, and the Black communities' efforts to build independent social systems and schools through educational attainment. Many decades later, however, the focus of the educational literature has shifted toward examining the impact of classroom and school-level factors on academic engagement and school climate (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009; Koth, Bradshaw & Leaf, 2008; Welsh 2000), using race/ethnicity as a control variable as opposed to centering racial differences in the educational experience.

Scholars find that supportive parent, teacher and peer relationships and collective socialization are sources of social capital that “significantly mediate the academic engagement and outcomes” (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009:171) and play a primary role in a child’s academic development and success (Carey 2016; Madill, Gest, & Rodkin, 2014). When unsupportive relationships exist between students, teachers and family members, students generally report having negative school outcomes such as fighting in school (Hong, Merrin, Peguero, Gonzalez-Prendes, & Lee 2016) or dropping out (Perreira, Harris, & Lee. 2006). However, these contemporary studies do not assess the extent to which teacher and peer supports in public schools today have increased or decreased as a result of desegregation. A few previous studies have used oral history interview data to highlight aspects of the educational experience in Black segregated schools pre- and post-*Brown* (Walker 2001; 2005; 2013). Studies and reports that describe the student-teacher relationship during segregated schooling commonly argue that Black teachers served as human

resources that played a primary role in ensuring the successes of generations of Black children in the classrooms of segregated schools (Fairclough 2004; Walker 1996; Tillman 2004, 2006). Past studies, for example, have focused on the school, community, and the role of teachers, administrators, principals, and parents in segregated schooling of Black students (Walker 1993a, 1993b, 1996a, 1996b, 2003; Walker 2013; Pellegrino, Mann & Russell 2013; Phillips 1940). Existing literature provides some contexts about such experiences from the teacher perspective. Walker (1996) and Fairclough's (2004) findings suggest that Black teachers brought a level of inspiration, motivation, and commitment to Black students in the era of Jim Crow (Fairclough 2004; Walker 2001; 2005; 2013) in ways that strengthened and reinforced their sense of community which has gradually come to be lost in many contemporary, integrated public schools today.

However, few have captured the student narratives concerning their experiences with segregated neighborhoods and schools, or their transitions to integrated communities after the *Brown* desegregation mandate in 1954 and 1955. Extant sources that contextualize the *Brown* case focus primarily on roles of Black educators as advocates for Black children and are more centralized toward the student-teacher relationship and the advocacy networks that helped build aspiration and positive school climates for Black students. Existing literature capturing the perspectives of teachers reveal accounts and memories of the supportive school climate environments that Black teachers built for Black students in segregated schools before schools began to integrate (Davis & Dollard 1940; Johnson 1941; Frazier 1940; see Palmer 1977). Other studies have also appropriately considered the context of segregation while examining the impacts of human resources such as Black

teachers on the quality of education received by Black students and their overall educational successes during segregation (Cecelski 1994; Foster 1990; Morris & Morris 2000; Ramsey 2008; Walker 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013).

Consequently, prior studies do not prioritize the narrative experiences of Black students as a central component of the study, nor do these studies examine the socio-developmental aspects that formed among Black students during their home-to-school commute experience. As a result, there is no clear understanding regarding the impact of the home-to-school commute experience on many of the key socio-developmental areas related to the schooling experience such as students' sense of community, perceived quality of education, and their experiences with school resource allocations. Moreover, little is known about how Black students perceive the quality of education prior to *Brown* or after the implementation of *Brown* since narrative descriptions detailing the reality of Black students' experiences with feelings of belonging among their peers and community after *Brown* mandated U.S. schools to desegregate have yet to be explored.

Within the most recent decades, there have been a few research reports that capture narratives from Black teachers who taught in segregated schools in the era before *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*. In sum, these reports from former teachers at segregated Black schools suggest that desegregation exacted many costs— institutional, economic, and psychological (Danns et al. 2015; Fairclough 2004; Span 2009; Tillman 2004). However, existing data heavily rely on memoirs and oral history interviews from former teachers about segregated schooling alone and exclude retrospective interview data from Black students themselves. Although far and few across the educational literature, the existing scholarship often include select oral

history quotes or statements from Black teachers who taught at segregated schools before or after the *Brown* era (Danns et al. 2015), rather than stories detailing segregated public schooling experiences from the students themselves. These studies consist of teachers' memoirs and oral history interviews and often detail former teachers' experiences with teaching in segregated schools in Southern states like North Carolina and Louisiana (Fairclough 2004; Span 2009; Walker 2001; 2005; 2013), but some lack accounts related to Black schooling experiences in Northern states.

Consequently, the costs of desegregation have yet to be systematically examined in relation to the educational experiences of Black students. This lack of research is problematic because scholars find that segregation (Rumberger & Willms 1992; Rumberger & Palardy 2005) and desegregation (Schofield 1989) of U.S. public-schools not only affected Black teachers but had direct impacts on Black students as well. This study seeks to further exploration counter-narratives that may elucidate Black students' perceptions and experiences with segregated and desegregated schooling.

School policies and resources

Previous studies have also examined how different policies or practices related to educational reform may impact different aspects of the K-12 educational experience. Examinations include the effects of changes in accountability over time on student outcomes (Danns et al. 2015; Torres & Weissbourd 2020; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebniak 2005; Wells 2019), the impact of school quality on labor market outcomes (Boozer, Krueger & Wolkon 1992; Kim 2011; Schneider & Saw 2018), and the mitigative effects of school choice policies (Gamoran & An 2016; Riel,

Parcel, Mickelson, & Smith 2018) or variance in school quality (Shedd 2015) on segregated schools.

Understanding the processes of resources allocation pre- and post- *Brown* is important because at the time of Jim Crow, the *Brown* decision aimed to address issues of unfair treatment by providing Black students with rights to ‘equal’ quality of education through mandated access to schools in White neighborhoods. But the court mandate did not explicitly state or guarantee that Black students would have an ‘equitable’ experience, which would involve access to resources in proportions that achieve fairness. Yet, no empirical studies have investigated how resources were actually allocated between communities and schools in attempts to accomplish ‘equal’ quality of education for Black public-school students. A critical review of educational policies on school resources allocation, student-teacher relationships, and school attendance, therefore, reveals a major empirical and conceptual gap in the sociological and educational field concerning problematic educational policies related to Black student’s experiences with their home-to-school commute.

Dominant discourses on the segregated schooling experience

Further exploration of the literature reveals that when seeking to understand where some of the discrepancies between the intention of the *Brown* case and Black students’ lived experiences exist, dominant discourses in society, and sometimes in scholarship, often contrast with Black residents who worked with children in segregated U.S. public schools. These ideological parallels reveal that for some, desegregation achieved the ultimate goal of equal educational opportunity for Black children. But counter arguments contend that desegregation efforts were more so aimed at allowing access to spaces but hardly intended to ensure students’ protection

of rights against racial discrimination (West et al. 1995). Other research has shown that such discourses, particularly Achievement Gap discourses, are problematic because they overlook cultural processes at play that blame the failure of students of color on them and their families, instead of on broader social structures that keep failure in place (Carey 2016).

Scholars find that during Jim Crow, Black communities adopted collective responsibility for the schooling of Black children and believed that their schools played a valuable role in the growth and formation of their communities (Danns et al. 2015; Fairclough 2004; West et al. Thomas 1995). Therefore, as suggested by critical race theoretical frameworks, centering Black students' K-12 public educational experiences amidst national discourse and contention regarding equal educational opportunities is crucial, as Black students in public schools were, and continue to be, among the greatest impacted by the court-mandated desegregation order in *Brown*. This dissertation seeks to challenge and critique the formulation of dominant discourses which have developed throughout the history of public-school education in the U.S by inserting Black students' narratives to the mainstream discourse.

The student voice operates similarly to youth participatory action research (YPAR) or 'PAR' and is essential for positioning students as agents in the educational reform process (Dana Mitra 2008, 2018; Camino 2000; Zeldin 2004). 'PAR' is a methodological framework that is based on four key methodological principles: *participation, action, power, and lived experience*, which asks researchers to observe, collect data, and perform analyses that are typically overlooked by community interventionists, such as capturing the *phenomenology* of the population of focus

(Baum, MacDougall, & Smith 2006). Therefore, the student voice is a legitimate focus of study that can strengthen classroom practice and deepen implementation efforts.

With respect to this study, inclusion of the student voice is important because public schools in the North were also impacted by Jim Crow segregation, yet we have no empirical knowledge about Northern public-school students' experiences. This dissertation expands on the existing research highlighting oral history testimonies of former Black teachers by adding testimonies of Black students to the literature. It also attends to another major gap and contributes to the educational empirical literature by exploring social identity development and resource allocation processes that occurred within the overall educational experience as well as on the HTS commute of students attending segregated and integrated public schools.

The HTS commute in the educational experience

Recent studies have shed light on victimization, or the physical harms related to violence within the neighborhood that may pose as an obstacle to getting to school (Burdick-Will, Nerenberg, Grigg & Connolly 2019; Gottfried 2013; Pattillo 1999/2013; Kirk 2009; Shedd 2015; Stein & Grigg 2019; Vargas 2015). Those studies examined the HTS commute as a routine activity of travel through which students may experience physical obstacles or barriers, tense interactions with members or local authorities (Shedd 2015), or adolescent perceptions of inequality (Shedd 2015) to explain rates of school absenteeism or truancy, along with dropout or push-out. Based on previous findings, we can further theorize that perhaps there are other factors besides time and physical danger that operate in various ways to impact students' experiences outside of and within public schools in ways that have yet to be

explored—and not just in the late middle school and high school years, but in the early years of K-12 as well.

In efforts to extend upon prior studies, this dissertation conceptualizes the process of commuting to and from school as an explicit part of the overall educational experience. Recognizing the HTS commute, and the development of social identity within it, as part of the educational experience is important for a few reasons. Scholars have described social identity as the conceptualization of ‘self’ relative to ‘others’ (McLeod 2008; Tajfel & Turner 1979). In alignment with previous descriptions of the phrase, for this study, social identity development refers to Black students’ racial awareness and their perceptions of ‘self’ relative to their White counterparts in the era of *Brown*.

Understanding social identity development within the context of the HTS commute is important because research shows that identity plays a key role in driving and shaping attitude and behavior (Hodson & Earl 2017). Although the focus of this study is not on the outcomes or behaviors of students, much of the literature focuses on school outcomes or behaviors as key characteristics of the ‘educational experience’. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing social identity development as one of the experiential factors of the HTS commute.

Shedd (2015) makes a valuable contribution to this literature by evaluating the development of social identity along the commuting experience by highlighting the interrelationships between micro- and macro-level factors like race, location, and perceptions of society. Unlike previous studies, Shedd’s (2015) ethnographic work examines how adolescents from urban communities reconcile their social identity and position in U.S. society, and how such reconciliations are affected when accounting

for personal aspirations and life experiences. For her analyses, Shedd (2015) examined adolescents' perceptions of self within social locations like peer networks, neighborhoods, and schools. In her study, Shedd (2015) introduces a two-pronged conceptualization of social identity based on a previously established conceptual tool, the notion of 'geographies of exclusion' which was developed by social geographer and theorist David Sibley. On one end, Shedd (2015) conceptualizes social identity as a position held in society and examines how adolescents perceive their social position within the dominant social hierarchy. On the other end, Shedd (2015) examines how adolescents' interactions within specific social locations like schools, neighborhoods, and peer networks act as frames of references for one's social position in this dominant social hierarchy. This two-pronged conceptualization explains how locations, and spaces within them, may impact adolescents' identity formation with regard to their perceptions of what their social positions are in wider society.

Shedd's (2015) findings further reveal that identity or perceptions of social position are part of adolescents' 'cognitive landscapes', which are socio-ecologically structured based on their interactions with people (i.e. authority figures) and how this configuration informs their feelings of injustice. With regard to social identity, Shedd (2015) also underscores the importance of 'geographies of exclusion', which are often used in reference to adolescents' experiences and sometimes referred to as 'adolescent geographies'. *Adolescent geographies* which Shedd (2015) describes as young people's "social and physical destinations" (9) are useful conceptual tools for understanding the various ways that social locations influence adolescents' perception of social position. According to Shedd (2015) adolescent geographies are based on three factors: 1) how schools provide experiences and shape perceptions in a

discernibly stratified way; 2) how adolescents understand social boundaries and exclusionary landscapes, and more specifically; and 3) how physical terrain becomes deeply ingrained with social meaning and markers to shape the “ecological self” (Sibley 1995).

These conceptual and empirical frameworks concerning cognitive landscapes and geographies are important because they suggest that a relationship exists between students’ geographies and their social identity. However, existing studies sparingly get underneath the relationship between neighborhood effects and social identity development on the commute within the context of the *Brown* era. As a result, there are few studies that employ research designs or theoretical frameworks that specifically focus on capturing the lived experiences of students regarding leaving their homes and getting to the school building before and after *Brown*.

Despite previous empirical contributions, neither Pattillo (1999/2013), Shedd (2015) or Theokas & Lerner (2006) account for historical factors like U.S. Supreme Court cases that directly impacted public schools from the 20th century onwards. Therefore, we are lacking critical examinations of the socio-developmental aspects of the home-to-school commuting process for Black students who attended public schools pre- and post-*Brown* and argue that such contexts are part of the larger educational experience. Based on these findings, this study aims to explore how the social context of segregation and desegregation impact the stages of social identity development for Black students both in-school and along the HTS commute. Shedd’s (2015) argument provides support for one of the key arguments of this dissertation, which is that within the context of segregated and desegregation schooling, the

intersections between commuting and social identity are not well recognized as part of the educational experience in the broader educational literature.

Research in historical sociology and education literature have not explicitly examined the HTS commute within contexts of the *Brown* case, if at all. On the one end, scholars have examined how social policies implemented during Jim Crow segregation that disproportionately impacted Black students' academic achievements compared to their White counterparts (Danns et al. 2015; Span 2009; Gadsden 2005; The Brown Foundation, n.d; West et al. 1995). Other research on youth development tells us that availability and accessibility to physical resources in the family and in schools has significant effects on positive youth development and inverse effects on depression and risky behaviors (Theokas & Lerner 2006). However, there is a separation in the discourse concerning the HTS commute and social identity development, particularly within the historical context of social policies like *Brown* that directly and disproportionately impacted Black students' educational experiences. Consequently, the HTS commuting experience within the context of social policies is often left out of discussions or not considered to have an influential role on youth's social development.

Failure to use a critical race framework to understand the influence of the HTS commute as part of the overall educational experience for Black students before and after *Brown* has broader implications for the educational literature. The first being, if segregated schooling and disproportionate experiences with the home to school commute had an impact on 'feelings of inferiority' as stated in the *Brown* case— and segregation is worse now than it was in the early decades following *Brown*—scholars, community members and policymakers may assume that the social identity of Black

students has also been negatively impacted by the increasing re-segregation of schools. But such assumptions have not been tested using critical theoretical framework that center the relationship between race and social policies like desegregation. Therefore, it is still unknown whether the assumption that the context of social policy has disproportionately impacted social identity development for students of color can be proven true. Exploring such assumptions are important considering the fact that social identity development during the HTS commute and in-school may act as a precursor to the school behavioral outcomes that are more popularly studied in the literature. Therefore, my dissertation, although not focused on in-school behavioral outcomes, will provide necessary analysis on how we understand the development of social identity on other distal outcomes like school attendance or dropout rates.

Overall, the findings from prior studies help inform our understandings about adolescents' perceptions and experiences concerning social injustices in U.S. as Black students navigate their travel routes through their neighborhoods to schools (Shedd 2015), or the stress of needing to account for time estimates when walking or taking public transportation (Burdick-Will, Stein, Grigg 2019). However, we lack understanding about the home-to-school commute and interrelated processes like socio-developmental changes for Black students pre- and after- the implementation of social policies like segregation and desegregation.

Neighborhood effects, commuting, and social identity development

Neighborhoods and schools operate in a natural ecosystem which lead to the formation of social bonds in spaces between neighborhoods and schools that impact student behavioral outcomes (Coleman 1988; Kasarda & Janowitz 1974; McNight &

Kretzmann 1993). For example, when examining the relationship between neighborhood context and adolescents' perception of self in relation to other individuals and institutions in society, Shedd (2015) concluded that a student's identity is formed by multiple influences that shape their perceptions of inequality, opportunity, and injustice in the world they live in. Such influential factors include racial inequality, economic instability, and spatial segregation.

Similarly, with regard to the significance of social context when examining the HTS commute, Pattillo (1999/2013) made an important contribution to the empirical literature by contextualizing the Great Migration of Black folks, a unique and historical mobility process from the South to Northern urban centers from the start of WWI to the 1960s, as a key factor that shaped the development and social cohesion of neighborhoods and schools in Black communities. Pattillo's (1999/2013) longitudinal ethnography demonstrated that fear of loss of connection to friends and length of commute to and from school played an influential role in students' decision toward what high schools they prefer to attend (Pattillo 1999/2013). Despite a lack of robust research capturing students' narratives concerning their experiences with the actual process of commuting to and from school, these findings are important because they demonstrate the ways in which the HTS commute can impact social cohesion and social identity as it relates to school proximity from students' residential community.

Although the literature consists of various theoretical and empirical analyses concerning different aspects of the educational experience for public school students, few use a critical framework that simultaneously applies transdisciplinary knowledge from historical, sociological, and legal disciplines to better understand the dynamic aspects of the segregated and integrated K-12 public school experience for Black

students. It is noteworthy, however, to mention that student narratives regarding their K-12 experiences with segregated and desegregated schooling, the period of youth development that *Brown* decision was based directly on, are largely absent in both modern and historical studies.

Methodological limitations

There are also several methodological limitations regarding prior studies on the impact of neighborhood effects and social environments on educational outcomes. Scholars have utilized survey methods to explore connections between neighborhoods, peer networks, and schools. According to Burdick-Will et al. (2019), neighborhood social environments that most greatly influence students' decision to attend school are those where physical impedances in the environment may pose a threat to students' personal well-being. More specifically, Burdick-Will et al. (2019) found that while general crime or police presence along a route do not have a significant effect on student attendance, threats to personal safety do. These analyses unearth how time and physical obstacles operate as external, observable factors that negatively impact Black students commuting experience. Other analyses reveal how human and school resources like the work status of adults; educational attainment in the community; and in-school mentorship and programs affect youth developmental outcomes (Theokas & Lerner 2006). Such findings help provide clarity towards what neighborhood factors along the commuting route have significant influences on students' absence from school, particularly during the middle and high school years.

However, these studies lack the narratives from Black students on their home-to-school commuting experience. Beyond the middle and high school level, we know significantly less about the earliest years of the public-school experience (i.e., grades

1-6). Therefore, little is known about how the home-to-school process is actually experienced by Black students in their earlier years of public-school, as there is virtually no qualitative analysis utilizing historical data that retrospectively captures Kindergarten through 6th grade during segregation and desegregation.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

In order to adequately answer the research questions proposed in Chapter 1, this dissertation utilizes critical race methodology (Solórzano & Yosso 2002), specifically the *counter-storytelling* theoretical tool. Of the existing empirical studies that dominate the academic literature and discourse in relation to Jim Crow segregation and desegregation in U.S. public schools, many adopt traditional non-critical paradigms or frameworks. More specifically, few if any have adopted methodological tools like CRT counter-story telling methods that foreground race and racism in all aspects of the research process. This includes utilizing critical or cultural frameworks to examine individual or collective memories of lived experiences with *de jure* and *de facto* schooling from students of color themselves.

Use of the critical race methodological tool of counter-storytelling in education research involves recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color as not only legitimate, but also appropriate and critical for understanding Black students' lived experiences in educational institutions (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). Critical race methodology appropriately challenges ahistoricism, and with the exception of studies that apply critical and cultural frameworks, confronts the uni-disciplinary focus of existing literature on the experiences of students of color in U.S. public school systems (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). By using the counter-storytelling tool, this dissertation offers research on pre- and post- Jim Crow public schooling that is grounded in the experiences and knowledge of Black students themselves.

Oral histories & Storytelling

For this dissertation, oral histories are used as primary sources of data. Oral histories are often used by historians as primary sources of data (Tanis 2020) to not only give insight and meaning into people's everyday experience, but to also help us to understand why people remember and forget events or experiences in their lifetime (Bonomo 2013; Portelli 1981, 1997). Such histories provide firsthand testimonies of the past which typically include accounts of the reactions, thoughts, or experiences of a particular period (Tanis 2020). Thus, by design, oral histories help shed light on cultural trends of a particular time or era. Unlike other types of qualitative interviews, oral histories allow participants to tell their own version of events that they personally witnessed while taking into account major social and political influences of the era or time in which the event occurred (Janesick 2010).

The basic premise of oral histories is compatible with the *counter-storytelling* or counter-narrative tenet of CRT. This compatibility stems from that fact that the purpose of oral histories is to not only establish historical information by drawing on memories of the past, but to also give voices to individuals and groups who have been marginalized in conventional histories. Therefore, use of oral histories for this study in conjunction with an application of the CRT framework adds to the methodological and theoretical strength of this study, and thus contributes to the empirical literature in the field of education. A critical analysis of the findings aims to reveal the extent to which the interests of Black students were met both pre- and post- *Brown* ruling, and to provide insight on potential outcomes of desegregation policies if implemented in the future.

Some of the limitations to using oral histories as a method include inaccurate recollection of events (Kang, Kruttschnitt & Goodman 2017), and critics argue that

personal knowledge is generally less reliable than written documents. However, the strength of oral histories is the subjective and narrative quality of the source (Hajek 2013; 2014). Hajek (2013; 2014) finds that narratives offer a ‘different credibility’ to research and help to uncover hidden relationships between the past and present, perceived identity, and between an individual’s personal memory and collective memory (Portelli 1997, 1981; Frisch 2006). My dissertation accounts for issues of accuracy and consistency of the retrospective data collection by using archival and media source data to help contextualize the oral histories. The use of multi-source approaches when using oral history data aid in filling in gaps of inconsistencies or inaccuracy of recalling events (Kang et al. 2017).

Student Voice

Within recent decades, important empirical and phenomenological contributions have been made toward understanding the educational experiences of adolescent students of color. Payne, Starks, Gibson (2009) and Shedd (2015) used participatory action research methods and ethnographic methods respectively to explore how Black students navigate or utilize their social identities and perceptions of self in high school in relation to other individuals or institutions in society. By using phenomenological framing and PAR methods, Payne et al. (2009) revealed many dynamic aspects of street-life oriented young Black men’s experiences in U.S. education systems that are rarely captured in the educational literature. Findings showed that Black adolescent boys have troubled relationships with their teachers and other school officials, experienced feelings of alienation and frustration in their schools, and do not view the school environment to be nurturing or supportive for learning.

Below are the research questions that guided this study, as derived from the existing literature on student voice:

Research Questions:

Chapter 4 (Qualitative)

1. “How do Black students experience the home-to-school (HTS) commute pre-and post- *Brown*?”

Chapter 5 (Qualitative)

2. Do Black students’ counter-narratives reveal experiences with “feelings of inferiority” before and after the 1954 *Brown* decision?

Data sample

Between 2003 and 2010, oral historian Roberta Perkins partnered with Laura Lee, who was the director of the Iron Hill Museum at the time, to create the *Iron Hill Oral History Project*. Together, the two established the primary goal of the project, which was to document and preserve the memories and stories about life in the Iron Hill community and nearby Pleasant Valley community in Newark, Delaware. The oral history project contains thirty-four audio cassette tapes of interviews of former students, and 21 of the interviews are transcribed. The sample population for the Iron Hill Oral History project consisted of former students and alumni of the Black-only Iron Hill School #112C; alumni of other du Pont schools in Hockessin and Milton, DE; alumni of the White-only Pleasant Valley School; the parents of former students of Black-only schools; an alumna of a Conowingo, Maryland school; and one teacher. The interview data used in this dissertation were accessed from the “Iron Hill Oral

History Collection” in the Hugh M. Morris Library, Museum, and Press. These data can be found under “History and Delawareana” in the online digital archives located in the “Special Collections” section of the library

This dissertation is a secondary analysis of respective oral history interview data of its Black participants (n=26), collected from the Iron Hill School Oral History Project (Perkins et al., 2003). My secondary data analysis draws on 26 participants, both females (N=14) and males (N=12) between the ages of 50 and 92. Four participants were interviewed more than one time in different years across the span of data collection from 2003-2010. Participants interviewed noted residencies in the following locations during the course of their schooling: Newark/ Iron Hill, DE (N=15), Wilmington/ Claymont, DE, (N=5), Hockessin, DE (N=3), Middletown, DE (N=2) and Elkton/ Conowingo, MD (N=1).

During Jim Crow segregation, the Iron Hill School #112C and the Hockessin School #107C and the remaining Black only, du Pont schoolhouses served elementary school students (K-5). Howard High and Middletown High served Black high school students. The Iron Hill School #112C and the Hockessin School #107C, like many others, were one of 89 schools that were built throughout Hockessin, Milton, and Claymont, Delaware between the early 1920s and 1964, an era of educational reform in Delaware. During this era, the state of Delaware provided virtually no funds to segregated Black schools, forcing them to fund their own schools by levying local property taxes against them. In response to the injustices of the state, Pierre du Pont used his wealth and capital as a member of the state’s wealthiest industrial family to single-handedly improve the schools serving the Black students in Delaware. Pierre du Pont, who would later become elected as governor of Delaware in 1977, made a \$2.6

million-dollar philanthropic contribution towards improving all-Black existing schools and constructing new ones (Kluger 1975).

In the interviews, participants shared retrospective experiences and memories about various topics including but not limited to community life; political vote-buying and civil rights activism; religious involvement; community social ties; employment, transportation issues to and from school; and school life. There are two key areas of focus for this dissertation: Black alumni's K-12 experiences with Jim Crow public schooling and desegregation in Delaware public schools. Specifically, Black former students' social identity development both in-school and along the HTS commute, and their perceptions concerning the quality of education received in segregated and integrated schools. With the exception of one alumnus, all interview participants attended one or more of the African American one- or two-room schoolhouses built in Delaware.

In addition, fourteen items from the *Desegregation of Delaware* archive material collection were used in this dissertation and those items came from the Hugh M. Morris Library, Museum, and Press. The *Desegregation of Delaware* collection is an archival source that provides documents detailing the history of desegregation in Delaware. Materials in the archival collection include reports, articles, and other correspondences from the Delaware General Assembly, State Board of Education, and Governor's Papers. Formal documentation and sources dated and published between 1960 and 1978 concerning actions of the state board of education and local school districts that took place during *de jure* and *de facto* segregation in the state of Delaware were critically reviewed. A critical review of such documents is important for telling a more complete story about how the *Brown v. Board of Education of*

Topeka decision impacted school resource allocation and the schooling experiences of Black students living in New Castle County and Sussex County, Delaware. While the oral history narratives will serve as a primary source for informing readers about Black students' sense of identity, the collection of report, articles, and other papers obtained from the archival materials collection will help formally validate or invalidate dominant discourses surrounding Black students' educational experiences pre- and post- *Brown*.

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invalidate dominant discourses surrounding Black students' educational experiences pre- and post- *Brown*.

Sampling and recruitment

The participants in Perkins et al.'s (2003) study were selected using the snowball sampling method, which generates "new" participants based on referrals made by previous participants (Atkinson & Flint 2011; Frey 2018). During the recruitment stage of the Iron Hill Oral History Project, participants in the original sample provided names of one or more additional participants for the study including family, friends, or old classmates, or neighbors. Researchers used the contact information provided by their initial sample of participants to seek out additional participants in the local area who were former students at one of the segregated or integrated schools in Delaware during the *Brown* era. The snowball sampling method, which yielded a total of 34 participants for the Iron Hill Oral History Project, was an appropriate method for this project, as research on snowball sampling suggests that interviewees for oral history projects are more likely to trust and participate in the project when they have been 'recommended' as a participant by a known source that usually shares a close affiliation or tie (Hajek 2014).

Interview procedure

The oral history interviews from the Iron Hill Oral History Project were semi-structured and examined the participants' memories, perspectives and stories about their educational experiences in U.S. public schools, their home life, and their community life during an era of racial segregation. The interviews that were conducted for the Iron Hill Oral History Project ranged between 17 minutes and 2

hours. With the exception of three interviews, all of the interviews collected for the *Iron Hill Oral History Project* were audio recorded on cassette tapes and uploaded as MP4 files for public access. Each of the recordings were processed, encoded, and transcribed by Evan Echols in 2010 using *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. There were two interviews in my sample that had not been previously transcribed by so, I transcribed these interviews using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA. MAXQDA is well-suited for qualitative and mixed methods research that involves grounded theory, thematic analysis, content analysis, ethnography, or phenomenology because it provides flexible visualization tools to assist with synchronizing codes and memos across different data formats (i.e. Word, pdf, mp3, Youtube, etc.)

The primary goal of the study was to answer the following research questions: How do Black students experience the HTS commute pre-and post- *Brown*? Do Black students' counter-narratives reveal experiences with "feelings of inferiority" before and after the 1954 *Brown* decision? To achieve this goal, this study focused on analyzing participants' responses to questions related to the *Brown* decision, travel and commuting to and from school, and the racial make-up of their communities and schools. Some of the questions that interviewees were asked include: "Do you feel that integrating schools improved your education? Do you think that the Supreme Court decision exposed you to a better education?"; "What do you remember about any stories or incidents as to how discrimination occurred?"; "What kind of transportation did people use to get to school?"; "Did you think anything about going to separate schools?"; and, "If segregation had remained and you had the same teaching situation,

the same teachers and you were to go through 12th grade do you think the quality of the education that you were getting would be the same?"

Interview analysis

For this study, I used oral history methods, which has been described as “one of the oldest, best known, and most often used” qualitative research methods (Givens 2008) for passing down memories of the past through the exploration of people’s life experiences in narrative form. The oral history method utilizes open-ended questioning as a technique to allow participants to share first-hand knowledge of their own life experiences within the context of specific social, historical, and political life events (Givens 2008). Although grounded theory is not adopted in full, I used grounded theory techniques in conjunction with critical discourse analysis (CDA) methods. Critical discourse methods involved analyzing interviews, texts, and/or recorded “talks” and describing them as “a set of social practices embedded in a particular social order” (Silverman 2020).

This methodological combination between grounded theory and critical discourse analysis allowed me to gather information examining social processes, broad generalizations about perception, and explore how ‘meaning’ is constructed “in talk” through an iteration of coding, reflecting, and creating themes (Givens 2008; Silverman, 2020; Strauss & Corbin 1998). The goal of this dissertation was not to develop a new theoretical framework. Therefore, the combined methodological techniques between oral history, grounded theory, and critical discourse analysis were appropriate for extending beyond an internal analysis of the language in the interviews and placing the participant stories in a broader historical and societal context (Silverman 2020), specifically, *de jure* and *de facto* segregation.

For the first phase of interview analysis, I started off by browsing through all of the transcripts. In this initial phase, I took short notes about my first impressions of the transcripts as I browsed through them. In the second phase of analysis, I began an open coding process, which involved re-reading the raw data in each of the transcripts again one by one while listening to the audio recordings and taking copious notes. While listening to the audio tapes, I followed along with the transcripts using grounded theory techniques which involved conducting a close line by line reading of the text in order to assess and parse out meanings or themes in the data and create codes (Gravlee 2011; Charmaz 2011; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In order to reduce the coded data into clear, meaningful categories, I went through each of the coded categories and engaged in focused and selective coding, which involved closer analysis of the codes created in the initial open coding process.

While some themes began to emerge organically in the data during open coding (Giles, De Lacey, & Muir-Cochrane 2016; Stuckey 2015), other themes were developed based on words, phrases and sentences that aligned with previous findings in the educational literature. In such cases, I determined the relevancy of these codes based on having read about similar experiences or topics in previously published reports and scientific articles. On occasion, I came across phrases and sentences in participants' transcripts that surprised me, and I decided to code those segments as well. The final stage of coding involved selective coding, where conceptual themes were developed using main points concerning participants' mood, geographical locations mentioned in the interviews, or other relevant demographic information. Some codes were combined and merged with other codes as I revised my memos for the participants. Memos ranged from 1 to 3 pages in length. The final themes were

derived from participant accounts concerning their quality of education, experiences with the HTS commute, and new or existing conceptualizations of ‘self’ concerning social identity development before and after *Brown*.

Themes and subthemes

Quality of education

Quality of Education was assigned to narratives where former students described the perceptions of the quality of education they received in segregated and desegregated schools. Such experiences include but are not limited to education received at home, relationship building with teachers and peers, the rigor of school curriculum, types of courses offered, and the school culture. Participants’ experiences were divided into three subthemes: school resources and supplies, supportive learning tools, and personal and shared responsibility. The subtheme ‘personal and shared responsibility’ was further divided into three additional categories, “peers”, “teachers”, and “parents,” describing how the three parties interacted in the classroom and outside of the school to ensure educational success.

Segregated to integrated School

Segregated to Integrated School theme was assigned to narratives describing participants’ experiences transitioning from segregated to desegregated schools. This theme was divided into two subcategories: Pre-*Brown* Schooling Experiences and Post-*Brown* Schooling Experiences. Stories include participants’ experiences with adjusting to new schooling environments (i.e. curriculum and teacher/student supports), social bonding with peers and siblings, perceptions towards desegregation, and perceptions of their schools’ commitment to their academic successes.

Social identity development

Social Identity Development emerged from participants' stories describing their awareness of their own racial identity at particular social locations or events, either in-school or along the HTS commute, and whether these interactions lead to the development of a new perception of 'self'. I devised this theme based on the main argument in the *Brown* case, which was that segregation created 'psychological and emotional instability for Black children, including a sense of self-hatred, low self-esteem, and feelings of inferiority. This theme was divided into the sub-theme 'racial awareness and the development of the perceived 'self'. The sub-theme 'racial awareness and the development of the perceived 'self' was developed to accomplish two goals. The first goal was to uncover the processes through which the participants previously understood or became newly aware of their own racial awareness prior to the *Brown* decision. The second goal was to examine how the *Brown* desegregation mandate impacted participants' racial awareness and self-perception. In addition to providing analysis on how Black students felt about their schooling experiences, these narratives also describe how the former students' interactions with teachers and peers in segregated and integrated schooling influenced their perceptions of self and self-esteem.

Reflexivity statement

Reflexivity (Berger 2015; Dodgson 2019; Teh & Lek 2018) involves the practice of clearly identifying one's positionality in relation to what is being studied (Dodgson 2019). Depending on the topic of study, the researcher may be positioned as an "insider" or an "outsider" in the population being studied, and/or may have shared experiences with study participants. Thus, transparency and clarity about the

similarities and differences shared between the researcher and the participants is important for bringing awareness to unconscious bias and expectations towards pre-existing beliefs (Buetow 2019). Scholars also find that in qualitative research, there is a large risk for finding what has been set out to find, particularly when researchers analyze qualitative data through the lens of an established theoretical framework (Berger 2015; Dodgson 2019). According to Dodgson (2019), this is particularly common in the case where a theoretical framework may be one that limits what the researcher ‘sees’ in the data (Dodgson 2019).

Although I am conducting a secondary analysis on data from the *Iron Hill Oral History Project*, I am examining the lived HTS commute and educational experiences of Black students who attended K-12 public school pre- and post- *Brown* from the critical race theoretical perspective (CRT). CRT challenges the ways in which race and racial power have created and maintained a social structure that holds a permanent position in U.S. society. Given the fact that I am a Black, lower middle class, cisgender, straight, non-disabled female doctoral student, it is important to acknowledge that I occupy characteristics that are often sources of marginalization and disadvantage, particularly being Black and a woman.

From age of 5 and 8, a key developmental stage of early childhood, I had experienced multiple school moves. During those three years, I moved from a small apartment in Crown Heights Brooklyn, New York to live in low-income government housing in the outskirts of Prince George's County, MD. During these early elementary years, I had attended 3 different elementary schools in 3 years and had a range of different experiences with the home-to-school commute. While some days my mother would leave home early to drop my brother, sister, and I off at school

before commuting to the city for work, other days we waited at the bus stop for the bus to pick us up. When I was 5 years old, we had early dismissal at school and my teacher put my brother and I on the wrong bus home. The bus driver made us get off the bus at the last stop, and we began walking around the strange neighborhood lost and confused. At that point, I drew on my memory of various routes and nearby roads to try to find my way home.

For what seemed like hours, my brother and I walked around strange and unfamiliar neighborhoods asking strangers if they could call our mother, who was a single parent at the time, or help us get home. About an hour or so later, my mother found us holding hands standing at the crosswalk attempting to cross a major four-way intersection on a main road. This traumatic experience was my first memory of having to navigate the home-to-school commute at a young age. I would draw on those memories again at age 8 when we moved to the suburbs of Baltimore County and my mom took a job teaching in Baltimore City Public Schools. At age 17, I moved to Newark, DE to attend the University of Delaware. I was inspired by my mother's lifelong work as a public-school educator in the City of Baltimore to begin studying the K-12 education system. It was then that I learned of Delaware's history of fragmented and consolidated school districts, and that sparked my interest in studying how the HTS commute process differed for students across each district. Although I did not endure the type of compounded experience that comes with being Black and having to navigate the HTS commute *and* segregated Jim Crow, I recognize that my own personal experiences of enduring the HTS commute in multiple different locations at a young age has inspired me to want to study this topic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Black, former students' educational experiences in Delaware public schools before and after *Brown*. More specifically, this dissertation seeks to understand Black, former students' social development experiences along the HTS commute as well as in-school pre- and post-*Brown*. This study does not examine specific school outcomes per se, but instead fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the impact of *Brown* on various in-school and HTS commuting experiences with *de jure* and *de facto* segregation.

In order to counter or challenge the dominant discourses surrounding segregated schooling for Black students, and the impact that *Brown* had on their lived experiences along the HTS commute as well as in school, this dissertation will analyze the voices of Black students who attended Delaware public schools during the Jim Crow and *Brown* era. Although racial segregation in public education was challenged between 1951 and the late 1970s in New Castle County and Sussex County, DE (Gadsen 2010), real systemic change was never accomplished, which strongly suggest or explains why Delaware schools, and others alike are still strongly segregated by race (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

In relation to segregation and desegregation, this research makes a contribution to the literature by exploring the home-to-school commute process pre- and post-*Brown*, which until now, has not yet been empirically studied from a critical lens. This dissertation also seeks to challenge dominant discourses which suggest that *Brown* alleviated the major challenges that Black students endured pre- and post- *Brown* (Morris 2008; Mungo 2013; Horsford 2009, 2013; Rodgers 1967).

This dissertation also presents important, yet unexposed stories about the home-to-school commute for Black students during the *Brown* era and presents

evidence for the extent to which the home-to-school (HTS) commute is connected to other aspects of the educational experience for Black students, like resources allocation. In addition, through close examination, this dissertation reveals the intricate details of the legal premises of the *Brown* decision that would ultimately determine the fate of Black and Brown children's in-school experiences across the U.S. My study concludes by discussing implications for the ways in which these challenges may still exist for Black students today.

Chapter 4

THE HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUTE

This chapter answers research question 1, “How do Black students experience the home-to-school (HTS) commute pre-and post- *Brown*?” by analyzing students’ commuting experiences from Kindergarten to 12th grade. Typically, when people think about *Brown*, they think about two schooling experiences for Black children. The first is the general narrative that Black students attended poorly resourced segregated Black schools in segregated Black neighborhoods before the Supreme Court opinion. The second dominant narrative related to *Brown* is that following the desegregation mandate, Black students were met by mobs of White students when entering into predominantly White integrated schools. Such narratives may have been true for Black students who had to walk or travel by bus to schools in White neighborhoods far from their homes. However, the stories shared in this study revealed some social development experiences related to the HTS commute experience that has not been reflected in the dominant narrative concerning *Brown*. This study contributes to the educational literature by centering the HTS commute, an aspect of the educational experience that is often left out when referring to the ‘unequal educational experience’ initially referenced in the *Brown* case. Previous studies have explained unequal educational experiences primarily through socio-political and ecological factors such as school choice, residential steering, or redlining. Therefore, before this empirical examination, researchers and policymakers could assume that those were the only factors solely responsible for the unequal educational experiences of Black students in Delaware public schools.

Former students in the sample attended schools in Claymont, Hockessin, Middletown, and Newark, DE. Study participants did not explicitly note how many Black schools were in or near their neighborhoods compared to White schools, but their narratives suggested that there were fewer Black schools than White schools before *Brown* in their residential neighborhoods in New Castle County, Delaware. Analyses also revealed Black students often had to pass White schools while walking or bussing to the Black schools in or around their neighborhoods due to segregation.

Female participants represented about 64% of counternarratives as compared to 36% of males (see Table 2); and it should also be underscored their perspective more closely aligned with the themes and subthemes identified in this dissertation. Table 3 shows the results for the number of times participants mentioned types of HTS commutes by gender between grades 1 through 12 pre- *Brown* and post- *Brown*. Study participants experienced at least one of four different types of HTS commutes from grades 1 through 12: walking, riding the train, bussing, or getting a ride from a parent.

Participants shared stories concerning the physical and social developmental aspects of the HTS commute 84 times, with 48 total mentions from female participants, and 36 male participants. Interestingly, even though males made up 46% of the total sample, they represented 54% of the total number of times participants mentioned types of HTS commute from grades 1 through 12. Furthermore, more male participants shared stories about the physical travel aspect of the HTS commute rather than the social developmental aspect as compared to female participants. This finding makes sense given that in addition to having multiple experiences with walking and bussing, the male participants in the sample also talked about their experiences riding

the train, which was a type of commute experience that did not come up in the female participants' stories. The findings on the HTS commuting experience suggest that in the small state of Delaware, the HTS commute was complex involving various types of travel for Black children. Out of the 26 participants, only 3 participants mentioned riding in a car to and from school. None of the 3 participants' narratives related to experiences with commuting via car were significantly related to the main themes and subthemes identified. As a result, this dissertation does not highlight the three participant stories and counter stories related to the HTS commute via car ride from a parent in the subsections below.

Educational opportunity

Pre-Brown Commuting Experiences

Brown, which was passed with the intention of increasing educational opportunity had social and political influences toward the mobility of Black children and their families. As described in chapter 4, through mass migrations, there were geo-spatial shifts related to politically influenced displacement and movements (i.e. redlining, housing discrimination, busing, etc.), state and local housing policies, and education policies. These shifts have greatly influenced the home-to-school commute experience for generations of Black children overtime. This study argues that students' experiences with getting to school are equally as important as their experiences in school. By focusing on the commuting experience to school, this work addresses the belief that transient youth make it to school at all. Further, this work may shed light on *why* some students either don't make it to school or drop out and some of the locations they may visit along their commute.

Before *Brown*, participants recalled having little or no access to state-funded transportation (i.e., bussing); and as result, long commutes were one of the primary obstacles they faced. All participants attended primary schools in New Castle County and none of the students in the sample attended primary schools in Wilmington, Delaware, for grades 1 through 6 [see Chart 1]. The city where participants attended primary school is essential, at least contextually, given that *Gebhardt v. Belton* (1952) came before *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.* (1955). The NAACP brought suit in *Gebhardt v. Belton* (1952), which involved two Black families who lived in Hockessin, DE. The suit challenged how the State Board of Education had assigned Black children to inadequate, segregated primary (grades 1-6) and secondary (grades 7-12) school facilities. The suit also included the secondary schools, which were located outside of many Black students' neighborhoods and had failed to provide additional resources like transportation for Black students.

In the case of *Belton*, which ultimately became one of the combined cases in *Brown*, the families represented resided in Hockessin, Delaware—a predominantly white neighborhood. They were suing for their civil rights to attend the White-only schools located in or near their neighborhood communities at the time. At the time, some of the other desegregation cases may have focused primarily on unequal resource allocation for Black children living in Black neighborhoods attending poorly resourced Black schools. However, the *Belton v. Gebhardt* case in Delaware focused on unequal educational opportunities for Black children living in mixed or predominantly White neighborhoods. Plainly stated, these Black parents in Delaware wanted their children to attend schools in their neighborhoods rather than undergo long commutes. *Belton succeeded* in the Supreme Court; however, the litigation

in *Belton* was specific to Black students in Hockessin, DE, attending predominantly White schools in their neighborhoods. Therefore, in the case of *Belton*, the Court's rejection of the notion of "separate but equal" concerning segregated schooling was only applicable concerning Black students' access to public education in Hockessin, DE. The litigation did not apply to Black students' HTS commutes in other regions of Delaware. Consequently, the transportation burden of traveling several miles to the only Black high school in the state, Howard High School, which was in Wilmington, was not eliminated by *Belton*. Herman (age 68) remembered:

Herman: "I guess I must have been in second or third grade when we used to have to go past the white school to go to the black school and I used to ask my mother why can't I go to that school and she said because you are the wrong color and I just couldn't understand why and it took a little time for it to sink in that we had to go past a school that was half the distance to go to another school and then as years went by I realized what was going on. But I never really experienced that until I really got in school, high school."

Post-Brown Commuting Experiences

Starting in the late 1950s, Black schools began closing down following the *Brown* decision. When asked, "Why did you not go [to Iron Hill] through to 6th grade?" Gail (50) responded, "The school closed...I don't think they had anybody...It kind of dwindled down to nothing." Gail's (50) memory aligned with the context when the Educational Advancement Act of 1968 was passed. Around the late 60s and early 70s, the same time that 'white flight' took place, Black students were assigned to schools in White neighborhoods (*see Evans vs. Buchanan*). Although Chief Justice Warren mandated desegregation with "all deliberate speed," the lack of action toward

making schools more equitable would have significant implications for the future of public schooling for Black students in Delaware. Black students would have to endure up to twenty more additional years of long commutes in addition to racial discrimination from White peers along the commute. According to the participants, the slow progress in achieving desegregation appeared to make the transition to new schools difficult not only for Black families, but for their White counterparts as well.

Evelyn (73): "Deseg was a difficult transition. It's hard for kids, I mean the name calling and the fights. All the aggression...it was hard. I guess it was for the teachers too. Like not wanting to teach a certain race of kids on both sides you know, black and white. I don't want to teach your kids because they are black. That was hard on the education system I think altogether."

Elsie (65): "We had to pass one another going to school. It was not always a good thing because someone or another would start a fight to the point where they would sic dogs on us...Our biggest thing was why couldn't I just go to Newark High School but that didn't happen. That was basically it, you know, because we had to go out of our way to go to school when the school was right there."

In 1968, Wilmington experienced a major uprising that occurred after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the national guard remained in this city for about a year. At the time of the 1968 uprising, Wilmington was a predominantly White city. During that year, the National Guard occupied "The Valley," a predominantly Black community in West Center City, Wilmington. It is important to note that during this period of heightened racial tension, many White and Black

families did not support the desegregation mandate. White families with the resources and economical means to disregard desegregated schooling started enrolling their children in private schools. Increasingly, families relocated to the suburbs resulting in a drastic decrease in the Wilmington population over time.

The *Belton* and *Brown* cases had significant social and educational policy impacts on Black students' educational experiences. As participants suggested, in addition to having to continue to endure long commutes, the challenges of transitioning to desegregated schools also included adjusting to racial tension in social interactions in the community and in-school. These hardships were complicated by the fact that the *Brown* decision to desegregate schools was not supported by policies prohibiting other physical, legal, or political actions that could perpetuate structural inequities. Such actions included discriminatory redlining, which continued to segregate neighborhoods, steer funding resources for schools based on property taxes in Delaware and facilitate private schools' development.

Walking

For several participants who walked to school, the HTS commute ranged from 2 to 5 miles one-way. Eight males and eight females indicated that walking was their primary mode of transportation before *Brown* (see Table 4). Concerning primary modes of travel, particularly during the early years of segregated schooling, Robert (89) shared, "Everybody walked. The teacher didn't have a car until very late. Everybody walked". Herman (68), whose mother sometimes walked with him, recalled having to walk to school in first and second grade, "When I was in the first grade, we had to walk all the way...years later... in either third or fourth grade that they had some kind of transportation for us".

Robert (89) recalled a pre-*Brown* memory from junior high school where he and his siblings had to leave early in the morning to walk to the train station to get to school on time. He shared, "...we left so early in the morning we wouldn't see the buses, but if we got out of school early and caught the early train home, we'd see the school buses carrying all the white kids and we would walk. I thought about that..." According to William (69), even students who lived on the same streets would receive different schooling assignments:

"I graduated from Glasgow School, and we went to Middletown; everybody on this side of the creek, all black people on this side of the creek, went to Howard for their high school... So, the black people on this side had to go to Howard...."

As noted earlier in the chapter, before the 1968 uprising, Wilmington was a predominantly White city. However, stories about the HTS commute revealed that schoolhouses (grades 1 through 6) for Black and White children were located one to two miles from some participants' homes. Their reflections suggest that Black and White families in New Castle County did not live far, particularly in Newark. Edith (89) shared Black children routinely experienced harassment and name-calling from White children who passed by on buses or foot on their commutes to or from school. She also noted that walking commutes ranged between one to four miles one-way. Participants shared mixed reviews concerning race relations in their communities during their K-12 years. Edith (89) recalled,

"We walked four miles to school [one way], okay? It was tough for the Black children growing up. Cause they would ride the bus, and we would walk four

miles one way. The white children would ride the bus and pass us along the road. They would say "n***r, n***r, n***r" out the window, you know?"

In addition, long distances and racial discrimination were not the only obstacles for Black students along the HTS commute. Nine participants who primarily walked to school shared experiences with inclement weather. They recalled walking through harsh rainstorms, sleet, and snowy weather. Such conditions made it difficult to commute by foot to their one- and two-room segregated schools. They also noted that seasonal weather changes often took a toll on their shoes and clothes, which weathered and became damaged over time.

Betty (no age given) stated, "We never had a lot...I hated it because we had to walk in the rain and the snow. It was terrible. We couldn't go anywhere. We didn't have no days off like they do now; we had to go anyway with the snow and all." When reflecting on the commute to and from school, Betty (no age given) shared how bad weather wore down the soles of her shoes. Gloria remembered the snow being very thick where she stayed with her grandmother in the country. To get through the snow and up to the schoolhouse, she, her siblings, and her peers wore men's socks outside of their shoes to help create traction in the snow that would prevent them from slipping:

Betty: "My mom had bought me these ugly shoes that wouldn't tear up... then they didn't have no bottoms in them, the other shoes, they put cardboard in them...they would be soaking wet by the time we got to school, but you still had to go...I hated walking".

Gloria (78): "[We used to wear] men's socks...my grandmother would put them all over our boots so we would walk in the snow [so we could get traction]...There was a lot of snow down in the country, and see the horses and buggies and the cars came up and down the road [inaudible] and across the road from us there was a field and the guy had [cows] and there was a bull [inaudible] over there too, and we had to watch and see where that bull and those cows were and we would walk up through the snow. The snow would be up to your knees almost. We always had school."

This theme was prevalent in the data as represented by these other poignant remarks:

Evelyn (73): "...you had to [walk] regardless of what the weather was...rain, shine, snow, or blow... every day you had to come to school.

Nora (66): "it was always raining out there or snowing."

Edith (89): "[We] walked four miles one way, rain, sleet, snow, we didn't miss no time out of school at all."

Further, Evelyn (73) remembered that, in the wintertime, the HTS commute came with additional sets of physical obstacles when daylight savings had ended. She shared, "After we finished, we had to walk home. We would get off the bus here, but we had to walk home, and sometimes it would be dark when we walked home but back then, nobody bothered you."

Dorothy, Betty, and Evelyn also reflected on positive social experiences with the HTS commute despite the long distances. For example, the women recalled bonding with their peers by engaging in child's play on their long HTS commutes.

Dorothy (80) described how long commutes played an essential role in providing opportunities for the children to bond with other students in their neighborhoods. She shared, "We didn't mind walking, there was a whole lot of us. Like 6 of us." Betty (no age given) remembered on her walk that, "This lady had a big cherry tree...she would give us Kool-Aid, water, we would stop and pick cherries, go home and cook them."

Brown and Buchanan impact the HTS commute

The Supreme Court investigated the charges related to unequal educational opportunities in the *Belton* case. The Court found that all-white schools near all-Black schools were “superior” to the Black schools. According to the Court, the unequal facilities unconstitutionally denied Black students and their families their rights to ‘separate but equal.’ The plaintiffs won their case, which challenged the prevailing *Plessy v Ferguson* doctrine established in 1896. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* that ‘separate but equal was unconstitutional. The justices “decreed that the principle of equal educational opportunity required an end to state-mandated segregation” [*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.*, 347 U.S. 294 (1955)]. The declaration of “separate but unequal,” which stemmed from *Gebhart vs. Belton*, was considered an essential milestone in the fight for equal education for Black and Brown youth. Such a milestone was only the beginning of a more monstrous debate surrounding equity. The issue of unequal educational opportunities would soon be brought up in litigation later in the national case of *Brown v. Board* (1954/1955).

When schools finally integrated post-*Brown*, Wilmington was a predominantly White, small city of about 110,000 people (Ames, Callahan, Chase, Siders 1991). Between 1950 and 1970, the Black population had grown from 17,202 to 35,072.

Following the *Brown* ruling, the Court had mandated desegregation “with all deliberate speed” as federal law. All states were ordered to gradually dismantle their segregation system and replace it with a ‘unitary system’ of public education. However, the State Board of Education and New Castle County delayed desegregation after receiving subsequent orders from the *Brown* case concerning allocating adequate resources for school facilities. Therefore, many of the White schools refused to open up their facilities to Black students. The desegregation process did not begin until almost 20 years after the 1954 ruling. After desegregation had finally begun years later, the State did not pass any laws providing transportation for Black students to attend their assigned schools.

Study participants reflections on the HTS commute strongly suggested there were no Black high schools in the Newark, New Castle, Sussex, and Elkton, MD area to attend. The two segregated Black junior high and high schools that were mentioned were Howard High and Louis L. Redding High. Those two high schools were located in Wilmington and Middletown; and participants had to commute past White high schools like Newark High, Christiana High, and Glasgow High. Those schools were all located in or around their neighborhoods, but they could not attend.

According to Bell (1992), racial progress in America will always be met with periods of regression. Therefore, contrary to what many believe, linear progress in the civil rights concerning equal educational opportunities was not, and perhaps cannot ever, actually be achieved. As a result of the limited schooling options, Black children continued to endure long commutes ranging anywhere from 3 to 5 miles by foot, or twelve to fourteen miles by bus, to attend Black-only schools in predominantly White areas based on these schooling assignments.

In 1956, two years after *Brown*, five Black parents from Wilmington filed a petition for their children, and others similarly situated, to be granted their Constitutional rights to attend schools in the neighboring school districts (Delaware Department of Public Instruction & Keene 1980). This case was known as *Evans v. Buchanan* (1956). Following the *Evans* suit, the Court ordered Delaware to submit a comprehensive desegregation plan (Hoff 2007); however, implementation of the plan was delayed.

The additional context related to *Evans v. Buchanan* is significant in conjunction with the White and Black flight to the suburbs between the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and 1971. As noted previously, the state government in Delaware had taken no legal action to implement desegregation after *Brown*. Thus, no policies were developed to ensure ‘equal educational opportunities’ or proper allocation of funding and resources to the remaining Black schools in Wilmington and other surrounding towns. This action, or lack thereof, would have significant implications for the future of public schooling in Delaware.

During the gap of years (1954 to 1971), the State Board of Education did not receive any state or legal sanction requiring them to re-submit a compliant desegregation plan. Without such pressures, the State Board took no action to submit a suitable plan. Instead, in 1964, the State Board of Education presented a resolution to the Delaware General Assembly that would give board members the power to reorganize existing school districts. By this time, Delaware schools had already begun desegregation by consolidation, which involved merging Black schools to create fewer Black schools in White school districts. With the consolidation of Black schools already underway, the State Board of Education proposed a plan to expedite the

closing of the remaining Black schools in the predominantly White districts in NCC (Delaware Department of Public Instruction Division of Research and Publication 1969). The resolution, known as Delaware's Educational Advancement Act (1968), passed; however, this Act excluded the Wilmington school district from the reorganization. Nonetheless, the Court declared the proposed 'unitary system' as an appropriate method for achieving desegregation and ordered that the State Board of Education submit plans to remedy segregation across Delaware schools.

Busing

Prior to *Brown*, transportation resources were scarce, and participants' stories suggest that at one point in time, there was only one bus available to pick up all of the Black students in the neighborhood. Six participants remembered being picked up in a make-shift bus by Mr. Rudolph Valentine. In their stories, the former students recalled how Mr. Valentine would drive his bus from where he lived in Pleasant Valley, a predominantly White town. Pleasant Valley was located adjacent to Iron Hill, a predominantly Black town where many of the Black children lived. Herman (68) remembered:

“...[the community] got involved with this man by the name of Rudolph Valentine, and he had like a panel truck, and he had some benches and things in it that he'd pick us up, not at our doors, but down at the cross roads from the house and take us. And sometimes he would take us back home if the weather was real bad, but most times he just dropped us off where he picked us up at.”

Nora (66) and Herman (68) lived in Newark, but since they were attending schools before *Brown*, they were assigned to Louis L. Redding in Middletown and

were not allowed to attend Newark High School, which was a school right up the street. For many Black children, the provision of transportation from local community members was essential since travel from home to school could be up to 14 miles one way on a school bus. The former students commuted from different parts of Delaware to attend Iron Hill school or Howard High School in Wilmington prior to *Brown*. Herman (68) remembered, “We had to be transported all the way to Middletown, that’s the only transportation we could get...We couldn’t even get transportation to go to Newark, not even after desegregation, which was like in 1956.” “Mr. Rudolph Valentine picked us up on the bus. He had like the only-est bus in the area. It was a truck at first. He made benches inside this truck so we could sit on and later he got a little yellow bus, and then later he got a bigger bus.”

Evelyn (73): “Our bus driver’s name was Mr. Rudolph Valentine and he lived there on Pleasant Valley Road and he picked us up in the morning about 7 o’clock and I don’t know, from here from 6th grade to 7th grade it was, at first it was kinda difficult, transportation, I guess it’s because you’re going in the same place for like 6 years right at home and then all of a sudden you have to travel 13 or 14 miles one way to get to school you know on a school bus.”

After the *Brown* ruling, taking the bus to school become an essential form of transportation for both male and female participants (See Table 4). With the growing need, more residents including “Mr. Moody,” “Mr. Herb,” “Reverend McNear,” and “Mr. and Ms. Williams” began to volunteer to provide bussing transportation services. Seven participants told stories about how the residents who were middle-aged Black men and women worked collectively with families to devise plans for ensuring that the children in their Black neighborhoods obtained the necessary mode of transportation

to attend their assigned schools. The community members worked collectively to build and drive buses for Black children, taking turns transporting them to and from their elementary, junior high, and high schools. This type of collective efficacy was necessary because for some children, the commute from their neighborhood to the integrated schools required more than one bus. Nora (66) and Gloria (78), who lived in New Castle County and Conowingo, MD, attended Iron Hill for elementary school, remembered times when several of their peers had to take two busses to get to junior high and high school. They shared,

Nora: "we caught a bus; we had two busses. Mr. Rudy would take us in one bus [from Iron Hill to Howes Corner], and then Mr. Herb would pick us up [from Howes Corner] and take us to Middletown...Mr. Herb would pick us up, and he would come from St. George's and all around Port Penn; he would pick us up and then go to Summit Bridge and pick up kids, and all the way down till we got to Middletown."

Gloria: "The kids that came to school there came on a bus from Rising Sun I believe it was or somewhere up the road, these kids came down there to this little country school on a bus, so I've known about busing all my life...you should have seen that school bus we had to ride in bad weather, old rickety school bus and the school bus came in from Hockessin and one came in from Delaware City that had schools because this was the only high school in the area that blacks could go to and there were some people in some parts of Maryland and lower Delaware would have their children stay with relatives in Wilmington so they could go to Howard School."

Bussing commuting distances varied by participants. Donald (62) recalled having to walk "a couple miles or better" to and from school for most of his elementary school years. Two former students, William (69) and Gail (50), lived closer to Cooch's Bridge and the Glasgow area, and remembered their fathers taking some of their older siblings to school. William (69) shared, "Dad took them here to Newark to catch the bus to go to Wilmington. Rev. McNair drove a bus from Newark to Wilmington every day to take them and bring them back to Newark."

Participants remembered having a range of different thoughts and experiences concerning the bus ride home. Two former students, Evelyn (73) and Betty (no age given) remembered the long distances being the most difficult part of the bussing commute. Gail (50) shared that in her experience with busing to the integrated schools, there was name-calling and racist remarks from White students. Evelyn (73) said,

"at first it was kinda difficult, transportation, I guess it's because you're going in the same place for like 6 years right at home and then all of a sudden you have to travel 13 or 14 miles one way to get to school you know on a school bus."

Betty: "[It was a] big difference. Never seen so many people. Scared. Didn't know your way around. It was terrible. Everybody had a hard time when you first started. You had to catch the bus. Just find your way around. It was different... There was only one bus. One bus picked up everybody from Otts Chapel all the way around down Pleasant Valley on our side, Old Baltimore Pike. They picked up all the kids."

Gail: "The name-calling – I fought 24/7. I remember my mom coming there and beating me in school you know. I remember my first day of school with getting on the bus. I went to sit down, I was scared. It's like oh my God, this girl, Sharon Bonner, Bonners lived on Frenchtown Road, the corner. She went like "I don't want a nigger sitting next to me." I started beating her head against the window thing, so I was in the office like on day 1... We fought constantly."

Study participants also revealed that some children stayed with relatives while there was no transportation from where they lived in Newark or Hockessin, Delaware, to Howard High School. Like Gloria and others who had to make plans for the HTS commute due to the segregated schooling assignments, when Gail (50) became school-aged, she also remembered having to stay with her grandparents during the week just to attend school, sharing, "my parents used to bring us up to my grandparents, and then we walked, for a while, but then they had a bus. I remember Mr. Moody was the bus driver." Gail (50) also remembered staying with her sister in Newark so she could attend Delcastle High School when it was built. She shared, "So when my sister lived in Newark, [she said] yes the bus, the Delcastle bus comes to Newark so you can stay with me." Having the opportunity to stay with family members made the HTS commute more manageable for the former students.

Table 2 illustrates that between grades six through twelve, 43% of the sample attended at least one junior high or high school in NCC/Wilmington, compared to 48% who attended at least one secondary school in Middletown. The remaining 9% represent students who attended at least one secondary school in Newark. Some participants' did not explicitly note the exact dates for when they moved from one

school to another. The demographic data is based on the school locations that participants mentioned in their counternarratives and these data suggest participants gained access to integrated schools between 1954 and 1978 following *Evans v. Buchannan (1956)*, a subsequent order to desegregate schools following *Brown*.

Train

For former students residing in New Castle County, the closest Black high was located in the City of Wilmington. Participants living in Newark and Glasgow needed to take the train to get to high school because there were no buses going from Newark or Glasgow to Wilmington. Two male participants, Allen (72) and Robert (84), recalled taking the train to school between sixth and seventh grade (See Table 4). Allen (72) shared, "if you lived outside of Newark you had to get your own transportation." He continued to share that although he lived in Newark, the commute to Howard was many miles away, as the state did not provide a bus to Wilmington. Allen's (72) father had a railroad pass from his job working on the railroad so that he and his siblings could catch the train. He recalled,

"the railroad I'd say was about 4 miles from where I lived at, from where the old home place was at. That station where I caught the train was where my father used to have a, where his working area was in that area and that's where we would catch the train. There was maybe about only 2 trains stopped there during the day. The train that we caught going to school and the train that we caught coming back at night. That was about the only trains that would stop there."

Robert (84), his siblings, and some of his friends received train passes from his father to catch the train from Newark to Wilmington. For five years, Robert and his

friends walked about two miles to the train station to ride to Wilmington, after which, he had to walk fourteen blocks from the train station in Wilmington to 13th and Poplar street attend school. Herman (68) and Rev. Allen (72) also lived in Newark and he had similar experiences as Robert. Herman commuted several miles to Middletown by bus, but remembered that his brothers and sisters awake early to walk and catch the train.

According to Herman:

"My brothers and sisters before me had to go to Howard...they had to catch a train every day...our school district would have been Newark, but by the segregation, we had to be transported all the way to Middletown.

Rev. Allen (72) remembered feeling bitter about his HTS commute and wondering why he could not attend the White school closer to his home. However, for Allen (72), going to school was necessary, no matter how difficult the commute, and his peers recognized this. He shared,

"I had to catch a train to go into Wilmington when there was a school within a five-mile radius of where I lived at, at Newark High and I couldn't go there. I had to catch a train to go into Wilmington to go to Howard High School, and I was a little bitter about that. I thought why can't I go to school closer to my home. After I got off the train, I would have to walk about 14 blocks [from 13th to Poplar] to Howard High School...for 5 years...The kids up there, once they knew it, they said you guys must really want to go to school."

Due to the District Court rescheduling the date of submission for desegregation plans and postponing submissions until after the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), Black students continued to endure long HTS commutes for another five years. In 1974, the *Milliken vs. Bradley* Supreme Court case, which

dealt with desegregation plans for bussing students across district lines among 53 school districts in metropolitan Detroit, determined that any court-ordered remedy for desegregation must be related to "the condition alleged to offend the constitution..." (Milliken I, 418 U.S. at 738). After the ruling in Milliken, the federal District Court for Delaware invited all affected school districts to present evidence on their desegregation bussing plans to the Court.

In 1975, the *Evans v. Buchanan* case was re-opened, and a three-judge court determined that the dual school system in Wilmington had not been eliminated. According to the judges, Wilmington schools which had been *de jure* before the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown I* (1954), continued to remain 'identifiably black.' The federal district court concluded that segregated schooling in Wilmington had never been eliminated, and as a result, a dual school system still existed, therefore declaring the Education Advancement Act (1968) to be unconstitutional.

In the following year, 1976, the federal district court afforded the appellants the opportunity to demonstrate 'whether the impact of the inter-district violations was limited' (*Evans v. Buchanan*, 416 F. Supp. 328, 344-348 n. 43 (D.Del. 1976)). The district court reviewed the plans submitted by the defendants in a 1- 3-week evidentiary hearings and reaffirmed its finding that there were, *in fact*, inter-district violations. In response to the review, the State of Delaware submitted two more plans, a Wilmington only plan and an inter-district plan. The Wilmington-only plans that were submitted were found to be 'unacceptable.' The Court rejected the specificities proposed in their inter-district remedy plan, which relied primarily on voluntary transfer incentives as well as cluster and pairing strategies (*Evans v. Buchanan*, 416 F. Supp. 328, 344-348 n. 43 (D.Del. 1976)).

The Court determined that both submitted plans were "fraught with complex problems unsuitable judicial determination" *Id.* At 347. The district court found that the inter-district violations had "a substantial, not a de minimis, effect on the enrollment patterns of the separate districts" and that the state and its subdivisions were "a substantial and proximate cause of the existing disparity in racial enrollments in the district of Northern New Castle County" (*Evans v. Buchanan*, 439 U.S. 1360 (1978)). Following its determination of unacceptability and the rejection of the State Board of Education's proposed remedy plans, the federal District Court concluded that any remediation ordered must include suburban districts since their existence and actions were part of the violations. The district court ordered that Delaware schools located north of the Appoquinimink School District be desegregated and reorganized into "new" districts and boundaries that would comply with the Court's 1976 opinion in the month prior (Franklin 1977).

Since the State Board of Education's desegregation plans had been already rejected multiple times for insufficiency, with the approval of Gov. Pierre S. DuPont IV, the state legislature formed a special committee on desegregation that worked in conjunction with the Assistant State Superintendent of Education at the time, Howard E. Row (Franklin 1977). At a 1977 hearing, the state legislature's special committee on desegregation presented a new bussing plan. It was a one-way legislative voluntary transfer program that operated under "reverse volunteerism." Under reverse volunteerism, there would be a "mandatory" reassignment of every Black student in the city to a suburban school with the voluntary transfer plan while White students in the suburbs and the city stayed in place (Franklin 1977). As part of the plan, the Black students would have the option to return to Wilmington schools if they wanted to

return after reassignment. This 'reverse volunteerism' plan was the fifth plan adopted by the State Board of Education in two years (Franklin 1977).

The Memphis lawyer representing the predominantly Black Wilmington School Board, Louis R. Lucas, questioned the State Board of Education's plan. Lucas argued that a 'successful' one-way bussing plan would result in a "tiny, depopulated and virtually all-white school system" (Franklin 1977, 3) that would prolong segregation in the school system. According to Attorney Lucas's legal argument, if formally executed into policy, Wilmington would lose state funding for their schools as many of the buildings would close, and teachers would be laid off and left to seek teaching positions in the suburban districts (Franklin 1977). The District Court rejected the 'reverse volunteerism' plan (*Evans v. Buchanan*, 416 F. Supp. 328, 344-348 n. 43 (D.Del. 1976)).

Bell (1976) noted that the NAACP's desegregation plan requests, which called for establishing a racial population within a range of 10-to-15 percent that reflected the percentage of White and Black students in each school district, could not be easily accomplished pending the other factors. Participant findings revealed that students like Elsie (65), Gail (50), William (69), and Lois (67), who were either nearing their final year in primary school or high school, experienced multiple school reassignments following the Brown ruling. Since many Black schools had closed due to the Educational Advancement Act (1968) succeeding Brown, Wilmington schools began to depopulate as Black students were assigned and then reassigned to multiple schools in White school districts between grades during their high school years. These counternarratives aligned with concerns shared by attorney Lucas. Gail (50) shared,

"I went here [Iron Hill] from first to fourth grade and before integration once you were going to 5th grade you automatically went to Louis L. Redding... [but] there were so many schools because I went to Eden in 5th...from 3rd grade they (neighboring Black parents) sent their kids I want to say to the White school, and then I went in 5th grade, it was called Eden which is maybe then it changed to Leasure. I was the first one in my family to go, you know in my immediate family. When I went to Eden my brother and 2 older sisters still – now they went to Christiana Junior High. It was pretty rough for a while I think. But it was like I wasn't used to white kids and they wasn't used to me... then went to Joseph McVey then and 6th and then Christiana Junior High 7th, 8th and then Delcastle used to be 9 through 12 instead of 10 through 12. I was their first graduating class at Delcastle."

When asked why she was assigned to Eden, which was an integrated school in Middletown, in 5th grade and then reassigned to another school, McVey, in 6th grade following the *Brown* decision, Gail (50) responded, "I think it was just too many kids for the school." Another student, William (69), recalled having to graduate twice from the same school, once segregated, and then again after integration. Although his story was brief, William (69) likely graduated twice from the same high school due to the constant changes in school assignments that Black students following the desegregation mandate. In his story, William (69) remembered that Black students were assigned to schools depending on what side of the street they lived:

"I graduated from Glasgow School, and we went to Middletown...I graduated from Middletown twice. In the 10th grade and in the 12th grade. Because when I first went to Middletown (Redding), the grade only went to the 10th...I

should say, went to Delaware State for the 11th and 12th year...in the meanwhile Redding had started building their [integrated] school so in '52, or '50 somewhere, anyway '53 or '54 I graduated from Middletown again in '54...Went to Howard for my 11th year and went back to Middletown and graduated. We were the first to graduate from the new school. '54.

Gail (50) was the only participant in the sample that attended school at Delaware State College High School. In the 1940s, Delaware State University (DSU), formerly known as Delaware State College, essentially operated as a bridge or resource to ensure that Black students living in the Southern part of Delaware could still receive a high school education. The College built a high school division, a one-room schoolhouse with Black teachers, and Black children from Milton DE and other areas of Sussex County would come and live in a boarding room during the course of the week at the College ((Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League [YouTube], 2021). Some Black students who wanted to attend high school endured long commutes to Howard High school in Wilmington since, at the time, Howard High had the most resources for junior high and high school students. However, others could not afford the long commute. Therefore, the optional living arrangements at Delaware State College High School allowed them to do schoolwork 'on campus' so that they would not have to endure a long commute to NCC to try and get up to Howard High School for school every day. Howard High School and Delaware State College High School were the only high schools for Black students in Delaware from the 1940s to the 1950s until Delaware State College High closed in 1952 (Delaware Public Archives).

Conclusion

Brown was a case that involved multiple contexts that impacted multiple aspects of Black students' educational experience. Therefore, the purpose of reintroducing the context of the case was to reveal a three-fold connection between this study's findings, the core questions raised in the *Brown* case, and the wording of the final Supreme Court opinion. In the case of *Brown*, Chief Justice Warren had decided the closing opinion based on the following question: "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunity?" This question suggests the primary issue in *Brown* had focused on the relationship between separate schools and "equal educational opportunities." On the one hand, the question asked whether keeping Black and White students in separate public schools solely based on race deprived "children of the minority group" from receiving educational opportunities equal to their White counterparts. This question *also* asked whether segregated schools deprived "minority" students of equal educational opportunities *if* facilities and other "tangible" factors were equal. In a unanimous decision closing the case, Chief Justice Warren concluded, "We believe it does." (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)).

Chief Justice Warren's opinion stated that the Court believed that separating Black students "from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates feelings of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)). The wording of this opinion was the chief factor that led to the *Brown* decision to desegregate public schools. More specifically,

counternarrative revealing that participants experienced unequal educational opportunities mainly related to the HTS commute probes the question of what Chief Justice Warren meant by “equal educational opportunities.” A close reading of the Supreme Court case transcripts and the final opinion of the *Brown* case revealed that the phrase “equal educational opportunities” had somehow come to be replaced with a new focus on the relationship between separate schools and “feelings of inferiority.”

Prior to this empirical examination, it could only be assumed that Black students in Delaware public schools experienced ‘unequal educational experiences’ or “feelings of inferiority” due to socio-political and ecological factors such as school choice, residential steering, or redlining. This study focused on the home-to-school commute to examine how transportation also impacted the educational experiences for Black students pre- and post-Brown. The empirical findings presented in this chapter demonstrated that participants’ HTS commute were negatively impacted by Brown and subsequent education-related policies/law(s). More specifically, the findings suggest that external structural conditions (i.e., law and policy), whether intended or unintended, contributed to the perpetuation of unequal educational experiences for Black students concerning the HTS commute.

Study participants' counter stories reject Brown's dominant narrative suggesting that desegregation successfully created "equal educational opportunities" between Black and White students. Their HTS commuting experiences revealed that even when responding to a prolonged lack of funding and resources with collective efficacy between Black families within respective neighborhoods, school desegregation was not adequately implemented following the Brown mandate. Their rights to "equal educational opportunities" were complicated by structural racism

related to mass school closings and coupled with delayed legal actions towards equitable schooling for Black students. In addition to the impact of complex legal and political actions, the participants' HTS commutes were also met with physical obstacles related to inclement weather, lack of state-funded transportation, racism, and harassment. Therefore, the desegregation did not accomplish what it had intended to achieve, which was "equal educational opportunities" between Black and White students. The obstacles that participants faced related to the HTS commute necessitated collective efficacy among families and community members to pool together human and physical resources within their communities to ensure that Black children could exercise their rights to an education.

This study did not examine counternarratives concerning residential relocation. However, participants' stories provided contexts revealing the extent to which Delaware's State Board of Education contributed to racial discrimination in redistricting and redlining. By the time the Board had finally received approval for adequate redistricting plans in the mid-1970s, Black students had already experienced many years of unequal educational opportunities related to the HTS commute. The participants' stories concerning the HTS commute suggest experiences with numerous experimental desegregation plans designed and implemented in such a way that Black children experienced between 3 and 5 school moves from grades 1 through 12, particularly following the *Evans v. Buchanan* case (Delaware Department of Public Instruction & Keene 1980). Furthermore, many families who had left the city had likely already relocated to suburban residences to take advantage of new policies for developing private and charter schools, creating alternative school choices available to all but the most impoverished students (Rothstein 2017).

According to Derrick Bell (1980), Black families had sought out litigation with the hopes of receiving increases in school funding and more political representation in their local school boards. However, local NAACP leaders and other decision-makers in the Court prioritized winning the case, believing "equal educational opportunities" could be gained by achieving balance in the racial composition of schools. Bell (1980) found that civil rights lawyers and Court personnel continued to insist that there were no disadvantages in integrating Black students into White schools, and therefore continued to advocate for desegregation beyond the interests of the Black community.

In chapter 4 of his text "And We Are Not Saved," Bell (1989) used metaphorical tales to demonstrate how litigation, particularly the *Brown* decision, had grown to disproportionately impact the educational experiences of Black children. Bell (1989) noted that if we acknowledge that the motivation behind segregated schooling was to achieve White dominance in education, we can understand the goal of the NAACP litigation strategy toward achieving racial integration. The findings on the HTS commute disprove the Court's assumption that achieving racial balance through desegregation plans would ensure rights to equitable opportunities for Black children. Following the desegregation mandate in *Brown (1954)*, Bell (1976) warned that integration between racially isolated neighborhoods would not be possible unless additional commitments were made at local and state levels. Such commitments would require White families to transport their children over long distances attend predominantly Black schools in urban school districts.

Unfortunately, for Black students in Delaware, the final strategy for desegregation proposed by state officials in partnership with the NAACP, which focused on racial balance, consisted of a desegregation busing plan that required Black

kids to attend White schools, and not the other way around, or a combination of both. Therefore, the counternarrative stories revealed that Black students bearded the brunt of the desegregation mandate and experienced multiple school moves. As Bell (1976) predicted, and as Colin Gordon (2019) revealed in his book "Citizen Brown: Race, Democracy, and Inequality in the St. Louis Suburbs," contextual factors related to residential 'flight' and the building of new schools in New Castle County, DE were linked to participants' experiences with desegregation.

| Chapter 5

FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY

This chapter answers research questions 2, “Do Black students’ counter-narratives reveal experiences with “feelings of inferiority” before and after the 1954 *Brown* decision? This question was inspired by the *Brown* ruling, which was decided based on the argument that segregation ensured “feelings of inferiority” for Black students relative to their White counterparts. Chancellor Seitz concluded that under a state-imposed mandate for segregated schooling, Black children received educational opportunities that were substantially inferior to their White counterparts. With regard to the Delaware case (*Belton v. Gebhart* 87 A.2d 862 (1952)) in *Brown*, the Supreme Court determined that the segregated education system produced “feelings of inferiority” for Black children in comparison to similarly situated White children.

However, as revealed in chapter 4, the totality of Black student’s educational experience extended well beyond unequal resources, dilapidated buildings, and long walks to school. Black students had to maintain relationships with their teachers, family members, peers, and other members of the Black community, while also navigating relationships with their White teachers and peers. Yet, it is unclear how their social relationships with Black and White communities played a role in helping them succeed academically and how they impacted their perceptions of self.

This dissertation contributes to this discussion by examining how Black students developed racial awareness and a sound self-concept in the era of *Brown*. This chapter also examines how socio-emotional dimensions of the educational experience for Black students were impacted by segregation and desegregation in

school and along the HTS commute. The socio-emotional aspects of the educational experience examined in this study include social identity development concerning perceptions of self and racial awareness. Finally, this dissertation closes with a discussion on the implications of the findings as it relates to the legacy of *Brown* on Black students' educational experiences in Delaware public schools. The first part of the document, titled "Pre-*Brown* Schooling Experiences" refers to Black students' schooling experiences before *Brown*. The second part of the document titled "Post-*Brown* Schooling Experiences" refers to Black students' schooling experiences after *Brown*.

Pre-*Brown* Schooling Experiences

Quality of Education

Qualitative analysis revealed three major themes related to the quality of education in segregated schools: (1) "school resources and supplies"; (2) "supportive learning tools"; and (3) "personal and shared responsibility" for Black students. The theme "personal and shared responsibility" was then divided into three additional sub-categories: teaching instruction, parental support and peer support. When coupled with stories from Chapter 4 concerning a lack of state-fund transportation, the former students' memories of school resources and supplies revealed systemic inequities in school resource allocation between Black and White schools before the desegregation mandate of *Brown*.

Study participants shared segregated Black schools routinely received sub-par resources (i.e., textbooks) which greatly contributed to poor and unequal educational opportunities for Black students pre- *Brown*. The State Board of Education's failure to

provide equitable school resources and transportation between Black and White segregated schools demonstrated the state's complacency and role in contributing to the systematic injustices that Black students experienced in their K-12 public school education. Despite being faced with a systematic unequal allocation of school resources, study participants revealed that teachers, parents, and students were resilient. The Black communities in New Castle County and Sussex County, DE utilized additional learning tools and shared educational responsibilities such as providing transportation, cooking, clothing, and tutoring. By working collectively, Black residents formed extended friendships and social bonds to ensure Black students were prepared and successful in their academic endeavors.

School resources and supplies

When reflecting on their early years as students in segregated schools, seven study participants noted school resources and supplies were not always provided to them by the State, but when they were, they were used and usually in extremely poor conditions. Participants remembered that although the State Board of Education had the authority to equitably allocate school resources between White and Black segregated schools, their schools generally received old, outdated textbooks and were sometimes responsible for supplying their own pencils, crayons, and other writing tools. Four participants remembered that although the State Board of education helped supply some resources to Black schools including paper, pencils, and crayons, the majority of books provided, were 'handed down' or passed on from all-White schools across the state.

Evelyn (73): "...books, you [didn't] have the same quality of materials that some of the other kids had like out in the suburbs or the ones they had to have

bused to the city. I know when I was at George Gray our books were years behind the kids who were out in the suburbs.”

Rev. Allen (72): “[The books were] poor, fair or good. Most of ours were fair. Some of them had been well used...we had new books, but it was not that often...I think that the State [Board of Education] helped supply some of the items that we needed.”

Dorothy (80): “When I went to school, we got the books they were tore up. The pages were torn out of them and everything else when we got them. I know Miss Body would take her book and she would make copies so we could do our lesson.”

William (69): I think there was a truck or a bus or something came by and exchanged books. They would bring some or take some or something like that if I am not mistaken...like a book mobile. They dropped off some books so you wouldn't have the same books all the time. They carried books on I guess to another school or whatever.

In spite of such inequities, they (students) worked with their teachers to make the best use of the used, hand-me-down textbooks that were given to the Black schools. Findings from the former students' stories concerning unequal school supplies supported and validated Noble (age 62)'s story, which emphasized that most people don't understand how unequal the school resources were between Black and White schools during segregated schooling. When discussing the availability of

resources in their segregated schools, Noble (62) and Robert (89) shared memories revealing how the State Board of Education and the schools allocated books to Black and White schools. They distinctly remembered that when Black teachers in the segregated schools would order new books, the White schools would get them, and the Black schools would receive the outdated ones:

Robert: "...the Board of Education supplied them... but I don't think they gave them new ones every year...I think they (the teachers) would put in a requisition for the books and things...we had enough books, but they would be old...they'd be hand-me-downs from maybe 4 or 5 years ahead. Like I might get one of my brother's books...and of course by that time it would be getting a little dog-eared. That's the way it would be."

Noble: "...Our books were missing several pages, torn pages, because we got the books from the white schools. When our teacher would order new books the new books would go to the White school and we would get their old books over here...I guess Miss Piper was lucky enough to get a book card or Miss Ann to get enough books with full pages, with everything in them that they had so that they could teach us..."

Two students, Noble (62) and Lois (67) shared detailed accounts on how unequal school resources impacted their notions of inferiority and self-concepts. Although Noble (62) believed that he and his peers were unbothered, and their self-esteem were not impacted by the inequality or resources, Lois did not feel the same. From Noble's perspective, the former students were just happy to be able to receive an education. Lois, on the other hand, shared a deep reflection revealing that she and her

peers were not being invested in “one hundred percent” when it came to their education. . Lois recalled having to settle for “raggedy” textbooks, or textbooks that were beaten up on the exterior and missing pages and notetaking on the inside. In her story, she remembered how her peers could not submit written answers or ideas in their workbooks, and she described the challenges associated with navigating the condition of their books.

Noble (62): “...we didn’t lose anything by it (the lack of resources). It was funny because one of the kids that— a White kid that I grew up [with], he did not know that [resources were unequal], and he was asking me one day about it, he said oh that was wrong, I said it didn’t bother us we were just so happy that we had.”

Lois: “I often wondered did we get the one hundred percent [in terms of quality of resources], which we didn’t... we didn’t have materials to substantiate our learning. We got books from the Hockessin school up on the hill which was all White... We had textbooks and some workbooks, you know, and they were so sparse and few that it was like passing around the torch... by the time we got them they were dog-eared and raggedy and some of the pages were missing or they were all written in so that we couldn’t put our own ideas and answers down in the workbook so it was a struggle there for a while... We all had to take turns and you can’t get very much out of that because the words and the work was already done so that’s not beneficial to you because the answers were there and it didn’t give you a chance to apply your own personal answers whether yes or no, or right or wrong...I vaguely remember her

blocking out areas that would give us the answer blatantly right there. She did a wonderful job with us children. She really did. I appreciate it now...she sacrificed a lot to make sure that us little colored children got what we could of an education in life. It was hard and I know it was hard on her.”

At the close of her story, Lois shared that despite unequal resources, her teachers did an excellent job ensuring she and her peers did well in school. Nonetheless, they felt that they were being treated like second-class in life and academically compared to their White peers.

Support & learning tools

Study participants described how their teachers used physical tools and techniques to help support students’ learning, such as loose-leaf writing paper and line-by-line tracking, which involved running a finger across the line on the paper. These tools and techniques helped accommodate different learning styles to improve student’s reading and writing skills. Ronnie (age 61) recalled his teachers combined assistive academic learning tools with her one-on-one teaching instruction which helped him to thrive academically in the one-room segregated schoolhouse. Ronnie’s teacher Miss Ryder incorporated a line-by-line technique to help students follow the words to assist with reading comprehension. In his story, he remembered his teacher taught him how to fold the loose paper in half and use it as a practical tool to help follow along the line during reading and comprehension lessons. This added instruction helped to ensure that Ronnie and others similarly situated could keep up with their peers. With the help of the assistive learning tools from his teachers during his earlier years, Ronnie recalled being able to pick up the school material much faster

over time and remembered that he and his peers were ahead of the other kids when they were forced to attend the integrated school in Middletown. Ronnie said,

“I’ll never forget she took a piece of paper and half it like that and put the paper under the word like that so we would stay in line with the paper... She would have a piece of paper, like a marker. Like this marker here and she would have it we would read like that and then come back to the next sentence...it was very helpful. Since my eyes have started getting a little bit bad, I could do it now. Just stay on [the] line...”

“...she trained us first for reading and stuff of that nature. She was pretty good in that. She knew how to work with children and then we had books and I think we started using books in third grade you know. But she would start us out reading from the black board. She would write the words on the black board and then we’d start reading. It was, she took her time with us. When we went to Middletown we started to pick up (hands clap) a little bit.”

Most participants felt Black teachers prepared them very well for standardized tests and assessments. Noble (62) passionately shared how William C. Jason, a one-room segregated school in Milton, DE produced many successful Black students; and Noble attributed this to Black teachers. Noble remembered the various careers fields that his peers acquired after graduating from the segregated schools. Many went to college and became doctors, attorneys, entrepreneurs and teachers. Noble also shared that not only did the former students produce higher test scores than their peers in the White schools, he believed that segregated schools were responsible for the students’ professional career goals and life achievements. He said,

“Those of us who graduated from William C. Jason when we took our SAT’s and we took our other tests and I don’t know what they called them back then we scored higher than any other white schools...When we were separate, William C. Jason (a segregated Black school) put out some of the finest students. We are doctors. Okay who would think that an iceman’s son would be a business manager of Roger Williams Law School?...I went back and got my certification in special ed and then I taught for a while and then I found a training school and then I moved on up and got my Masters...we had people that were contractors out in California, we had people that have their Doctorate in Ministry, we have people that are developers, we have people that have just, people like Caestine, she owns her own business you know. We have people from that school that have achieved great things.”

Five participants recalled having positive relationships with their peers and being academically successful in segregated schools. Although they did not have adequate school resources (i.e., textbooks, workbooks), participants remembered that segregated schools provided helpful tools and learning spaces from their former teachers to aid in their academic success. Participants often noted their teachers’ interpersonal characteristics when sharing stories about their experiences with one-on-one teaching instruction. They remembered how teachers supported their overall well-being not only inside the classroom but outside of the class as well. Concerning their teachers’ use of assistive learning tools and one-on-one teaching instruction, study participants praised their teachers and acknowledged how they played an instrumental role in the quality of education that they received in segregated Black schools.

Personal and shared responsibility

Twenty-one participants discussed positive memories about the care and attention they received from their Black teachers in segregated schools. Participants glowingly shared they enjoyed school, had positive self-esteem, and were well-prepared in their segregated schools. Also, participants noted that because of their positive educational experiences and especially their extended friendships and social ties to teachers and peers, they were able to perform well after transitioning to predominantly White integrated schools. Female and male participants used terms like “caring”, “patient”, “caring” or “highly certified” to describe their Black teachers. Interestingly, when discussing teacher support and competency, female participants commonly interwove their teachers’ interpersonal characteristics with their abilities to lead, organize, and instruct students. Female participants Evelyn (73) and Betty (no age given) shared,

Evelyn: “Miss Ryder was an excellent teacher...she knew how to schedule her lesson plans and different activities so that they did not run together...she loved her job. She loved teaching the kids, making sure that they learned from any experience that was out there that they could grasp you know...She wasn’t a pushover now, because she (teacher) would keep you on your toes...”.

Betty: “She was nice. She was a good teacher. She took her time with you. If you didn’t understand something, she would help you. She was good.”

Noble: “Here [at the Black school] all of our teachers had their master’s degrees or were working on their master’s degree... We were highly certified.”

Male participants' however, provided more context surrounding the practical and socio-emotional impacts of the social bonds between students and teachers on Black students' quality of education. Three male participants Herman (68) and David (54) revealed their teachers' dedication to teaching not only had a positive impact on their self-esteem, and academic success, but also helped them build a community of support. For the male students, segregated schooling created friendships that grew to become like "family" and extended from the school setting into their residential community. The strong relationships with their teachers and peers motivated them to learn, helped them develop a positive self-image, and played a foundational role in their academic success.

Herman: "She was one that was really interested in the children and the kids and she would do anything she could to try and help you, for you to learn. She was a very good teacher, very good..."

David: "I did well in school, I admit that. I made a lot of friends in that school, started to interact with more people in the community... Oh yes, we were prepared. And I think too it was just a family group having those [inaudible] from the family I think it still stands today from this school."

Herman: "For me, I used to like to go to school. I liked going to school and I liked being with people and learning different things. I enjoyed school. All the years that I went, I enjoyed school. Even to this day, I know that was the roots of my education because that's where I started and I was just able to keep on building on that foundation, but I really got the foundation from Iron Hill. This

gave me the mind to study and want to be something or somebody. I always tell everyone that my roots and foundation come from Iron Hill.”

These findings offer counterevidence that refutes the inferiority claim. The counternarratives illustrate that Black students did not feel inferior to their White counterparts concerning education. On the contrary, Black students had high self-esteem, enjoyed going to school, and felt well-prepared for educational success.

Teachers

One of the biggest challenges for Black segregated schools pre- and post-*Brown* were the small schoolhouses and overcrowded classrooms. Five former students described how their small one- and two-room segregated school buildings became overcrowded as the neighborhood population grew, and the classrooms ranged from 10-60 students throughout the school year. Study participants acknowledged how difficult it must have been for their teachers to teach several multiple grades at once. Despite the overcrowded classrooms, they shared their Black teachers were “pretty good” at balancing several grades and large numbers of students in one classroom and had an “unbelievable” ability to keep the class in order. Noble (62) remembered one occasion when his teacher Miss White sent a note home with one of his peers to give to his mother to let her know that he (Noble) would be staying after school. After he was able to gain a better understanding of the material, Noble shared that his teacher Miss Catherine took on the responsibility of ensuring his well-being and safety beyond the classroom by walking him home. This relationship between Noble and Miss White serves as an example of the social interactions between teachers and students that contributed to Black students’ positive self-esteem towards themselves and their

education; it demonstrated how the students' perceptions of self were impacted by interacting with their teachers inside and outside the classroom.

Noble: "Looking back over it, it amazes me to this very day how the teachers were able to teach 3 grades with no aides, no para-professionals and the classrooms were orderly. The kids were orderly, and we learned unbelievable and everybody just was the same... The teachers were unbelievable at that time because I know Miss White when I was in the 2nd grade math was a terrible thing, memorizing those time cards, flash cards...she would just send a note home if one of the students was going by my home and tell them to tell Miss Catherine that Noble is going to be staying after school. I am going to be helping him with his timetables, and she stayed there with me. At that time, she didn't have a car so she walked home but she would walk me home, and then she would walk home herself and she lived over on the other side of town and for several years she did that."

When asked how many students per grade were in one classroom with one teacher, Nora (age 66) responded "mostly about 10 to 12 students in each [grade]...there was a lot". Lois (age 67) noted "it was quite the feat for her to work around." Notwithstanding such challenges with inadequate space in their school buildings, the participants greatly admired how their Black teachers navigated their overcrowded classrooms and provided quality teaching instruction that allowed participants to be on track with their grade level, and in some cases ahead of their peers.

Richard (57): "I can't remember exactly how many was in each row each class but I know at least four or five in the first grade, five or six maybe more in

second and first grade and maybe more in third grade than fourth grade, but she took her time to me and we all had fair time with the teacher... I was looking back over some of my old report cards and they indicated that everything was pretty good, she was teaching pretty good and I [had] no problems with learning or paying attention.”

Noble: “...in September, October, early November, our classrooms were crowded because at that time we had migrant children, families here working in the fields. Well they had to go to school...I mean I can remember sitting on desks, sitting up here, the rooms were crowded but they were orderly. There was no disrespect.”

David (54): “It (school) was really structured because when I'm thinking about it now you know you have these six grades and we did well and I will say they taught us well because I was very prepared. I was well prepared when I moved on to the next grade, well prepared...”

Betty (no age given) did not have any memory of parent-teacher meetings inside or outside of the school, but five participants, Evelyn (73), Dorothy (80), Richard (57), Noble (62), and Herman (68) remembered their teacher's concern for their well-being extended beyond the classroom, including staying after school with them to provide academic tutoring, rewarding their hard work with trips to the local ice cream parlor in the community, supplying clean clothes for them, and coming to their homes when they were sick. In a shared interview between two participants Dorothy and Evelyn, Dorothy recalled that the PTA meetings were full and well-

attended, and Evelyn agreed the PTA meetings were “so much different” than the PTA meetings today, “There was so much parental support and official support where they pulled together.”

Noble: “There was a couple of families that didn’t have running water and, in the morning, when they got off the bus Mrs. Creighton would give them a brown paper bag. She had clean clothes in them, and they would go down to the gym and take a quick shower and put their clothes on and she would take their clothes home and launder them so they would have them so that they wouldn’t feel you know.”

Richard (57) recalled a time when his schoolteacher, Miss Ryder, had come to his home to ensure that he had received the schoolwork he had missed while ill. During his interview, Richard sometimes struggled to remember specific events concerning his interactions with his former teachers. However, he remembered when he was sick with the measles, and he identified his teacher’s decision to come to his home and speak with his mother about his progress in school as an act of concern for both his well-being and academic success. Richard (57) said, “I do remember the teacher coming to our house...I knew I had the measles or something like that at one time and she was concerned...and it might have been a conference....”

Two other participants shared more detailed stories demonstrating their teachers’ level of commitment to their academic success and personal well-being beyond the classroom. Noble, Herman, Richard recalled seeing great value in the fact that their teachers spent extended time with them on class assignments, made efforts to keep in touch with their parents concerning their progress in school, and spent personal time and money to cater to their well-being outside of school. The

participants described their teachers' interactions with them and their families to be central to the quality of education they received in their segregated schools, noting that Black teachers even boosted their self-esteem and self-worth, thus greatly improving academic standing.

Noble: "...Miss White, she would just send a note home if one of the students was going by my home and tell them to tell Miss Catherine that Noble is going to be staying after school. I am going to be helping him with his timetables and she stayed there with me. At that time, she didn't have a car so she walked home but she would walk me home and then she would walk home herself and she lived over on the other side of town and for several years she did that."

Herman: "...Many times she would take us someplace... every once in a while if you did very good in the classroom she would take you out for a little treat or something like that...[or] we would go to her house and have ice cream and cake...sometimes she would just take us to a store and just buy us something...she would always look out for the ones that [were] really trying to do something and [go] forward."

Peer support

Eight participants shared reflections on personal and shared responsibilities that took place in the classroom learning spaces between teachers and students. Shared responsibility practices in the classroom included tutoring the younger children, helping keep the classrooms clean, and sometimes assisting their teachers with preparing meals while teachers managed the classroom. Five participants shared memories about how after the older and more advanced children in the classroom had

completed their assignments, they would locate children in the lower grades and tutor their younger siblings and peers. The stories reveal how older, more advanced students shared the responsibility of teaching with their teachers. This type of shared responsibility in the classroom was a collective action between teachers and students that created a learning space where the students gained knowledge from each other. Such practices helped keep the classrooms that held five grades in order and helped the teacher move swiftly from teaching one group to another between mealtimes. These acts of collective responsibility between teachers and students in the classroom before *Brown* reveal that cooperative social interactions between teachers and students contributed to Black students' positive self-perceptions of themselves and their education.

William (69): "...a lot of the time, some of us was bigger than others so she (teacher) would put us in charge of the next class to help with whoever, or who was the smartest you know, to help with homework doing different things and stuff like that."

Gloria (78): "I can remember after school the smarter kids helping you know the other (younger) kids. I can remember that..."

Evelyn (73): "Like she would have like maybe someone from the older group like would be maybe a tutor to the younger ones whereas is she was having a reading session with one group maybe you could do that with the 1st or the 2nd grade you know and then she would come behind you and make sure everything was covered or she was just there when we needed her."

Nora (66): “They (older children) had one of them big old pot-bellied stoves and they would make vegetable soup and they made rice, a big pot of rice, they would have that and hot chocolate. Sometimes apple dumplings, they (older children) would drop them (the dumplings) in the pot...”.

Donald (62) and Robert (89) recalled when their peers engaged in opportunities during class time to help them sharpen their spelling, writing and phonetics. Donald and Robert fondly remembered two female classmates and praised the intellectual capacities of two of their female peers calling them “brighter” and “sharp”. The two participants were very appreciative of the academic help that they had received from their classmates.

Donald: “I was talking to one of the students the other day. Good Friday we had a fish fry at our church, so one of the girls in my class, and I was telling one of the ladies and we were spelling a word or something and I said this girl here, she used to help me spell. I couldn’t even spell my name and it was only like D-o-n and she gets so tickled every time I tell that. Her name is Janice Henry. She used to help us out. She was a little bit brighter than some of us. She caught on just like that. She was sharp.”

Robert: “I do remember there used to be a girl that used to help me. I’d always get a P and D, or a D and a P mixed up. They had those little squares that when you wrote you were in like what you would call little pads that you made words out of and I’d always get those mixed up. A D and a P something like that. I remember how she used to help me.”

In addition to helping with schoolwork, Herman (68) and Nora (66) recalled students performed other duties like “take the flag down, picking up the trash, picking up the paper, emptying out the trash, cleaning the black boards. Every week it was different ones that would do different things.” Such tasks were part of the classroom daily routine for participants and their perspectives demonstrated that as the former students progressed into higher grades, they acquired skills and practices related to collective responsibility in their segregated schools. The former students’ stories demonstrate how helping on another improve their academics contributed to positive self-esteem building, providing evidence for why and how Black students did not feel academically inferior to their White counterparts.

Parents

Study participants’ take on the quality of their education focused primarily on their in-school interactions with teachers, peers, and the quality of books they received in their segregated schools. However, participants also described how their mothers played an important role in the collective responsibility of educating Black students. In their stories, the former students share that they read a lot of books in their homes. Four participants (Noble, Richard, Ronnie, Lois, and Betty) remembered that reading was common in the household for the women and children and learning how to read was often non-negotiable. Two participants, David (54) and Lois (67) noted that reading encyclopedias and National Geographic books took precedence since at the time, there weren’t too many other options for leisure activities for Black children and their families.

Lois: “My mother, she loved to read, in fact we all loved to read, even my brothers, we all loved to read... My sister and I both were always well read, we started reading at five years old, my mother always started us, we didn’t have the books that the children have now but we would read the Sears & Roebuck catalogs and anything that we could get our hands on...we were like a couple of steps ahead of certain children, you know what I mean, and our awareness of literacy was a little more brighter.”

Betty: “I didn’t like reading. I don’t know why. My mom read a lot. Books and books and books. She’d make you read...You had to learn how to read... any type of books she could find. Love stories, westerns, she read any kind of book. When we would go to the store, she would get magazines.”

David: “...we read a lot. We didn’t have TV and I know I read a lot. I used to read encyclopedias [inaudible]. There’s nothing better than when we got those World Book encyclopedias and that was like a lifelong investment I think in our house. We may still have them, but I can remember daily reading them, reading the schoolbooks. I met girls who were told to go to school, the guys prepared to go to work.”

Lois: “we didn’t have very much but that reading took us through some lives that we might not have led... it made us aware that there are other people and other places and exciting places... I didn’t know anything about Turkey,

Greece or anything through National Geographic... we really got just almost another life.”

The stories from each of the subthemes related to ‘quality of education’ countered the dominant narrative in *Brown*, showing little support for the argument that segregated schools produced feelings of inferiority in Black children. Despite being educated in small, poorly resourced one-and-two-room schoolhouses from grades 1-6, participants underscored their educational experiences was in fact superior to their White peers, and fundamentally tied to the Black teachers in their segregated schools. Participants also noted their teachers contributed not only to their academic success, but to their well-being as well, and had a positive effect on the quality of education they received in segregated Black schools. Their experiences in schools unearthed and put a spotlight on an inherent relationship between having Black teachers from the community in pre-dominantly Black schools and the quality of education that Black students had received.

Post-*Brown* Schooling Experiences

Segregated to integrated schooling

As noted in chapter 4, the Supreme Court ordered states to desegregate public schools “with all deliberate speed” following the *Brown* desegregation mandate in 1954. Interestingly however, at least 6 students identified they went to consolidated schools after *Brown* demonstrating Delaware schools did not immediately desegregate. Consolidation involved combining Black students into fewer school segregated Black school buildings located in White school districts. Due to limitations involved with the use of secondary data, the exact time period for when the

consolidation of Black schools took place is not made explicitly clear. However, prior to full integration, the State Board of Education initiated the consolidation of Black schools in New Castle County, Delaware.

For this reason, you will note instances where I use the phrase “new school” in reference to participants’ quotes when it is unclear whether the experience was related to “consolidated” or “integrated” schooling. Given that my research questions do not focus on the consolidated experience, I use the language “new” to indicate a change between schooling experiences, and to not misinform or misrepresent participants’ experiences. Since consolidated schooling involved maintaining a segregated environment, it is possible that participants’ stories about their segregated schooling experiences are representative of an overlap in the time spent in consolidated schooling as well. Therefore, the extent to which readers can understand distinctions between the consolidated and segregated experience, and how such experiences fare relative to integrated schooling experiences is limited to examples where students share memories related to changes in class sizes or teacher instruction.

One challenge Gail (50) and Evelyn (73) discussed regarding transitioning from segregated schooling to the new schools was adjusting to the difference in the classroom sizes when schools began to merge and later integrate. Although it was unclear whether Gail was describing her transition from a one-room schoolhouse to another segregated but consolidated school, or an integrated school, she shared a memory about going from one-room schoolhouses with five or six kids per class to a classroom of up to thirty people.

Gail: “...when you went to the other schools you took much larger classes you know like I’m used to being even though it was one room 5, 6 kids and then

when you are talking about going to another school with 25 or 30 people in a room with 1 person trying to teach this... if you had a problem Miss Ryder was right there even if you needed something she could stop here and come over and help you and over there because it's so many people...I think I missed it somewhat..."

Evelyn: "When you would get to school it was like it was different you weren't in a one room building you were in a big like a high school or you know a junior high school..."

Although participants had positive experiences with teachers, peers, and siblings in segregated schools, for the most part, the same feelings were not reflected in their experiences transitioning to new schools. In the new schools, the classrooms were bigger, and in some classes, the students had White classmates. Five participants revealed their transition from segregated to integrated schooling was "difficult," "hard" and "took a bit of getting used to." The primary challenges associated with transitioning into new schools were adjusting to the differences in class sizes and course curriculum. Concerning the provision of supportive learning tools in the new schools, former students' reflections indicated that White teachers provided little teaching assistance to help Black students learn. They compared their new schooling experiences to their segregated schooling experiences with Black teachers. When asked whether she felt there was the same kind of commitment to making sure Black children learned, Betty (no age given) perceived there to be a lack of commitment from White teachers toward the academic success of Black students in integrated schools. In addition to having to board buses with several other students that didn't

live in their neighborhoods, once at the school, the participants had to find their classrooms and adjust to the new social locations on their own with little support. Other challenges involved social interactions with White peers, and reduced class-time with their friends and siblings.

Betty: "... it was different. They didn't help me there. If you didn't learn then you was out of luck. They didn't do a lot of teaching or help me."

Lois: "... it was totally different. I'm not saying that we were any smarter but the quality was a little more in depth in us, maybe I'm saying that incorrect but going to an all-black school again was a little different because we had learned an awful in that tenure of going to the white school that differed from going to the all-black school again. I don't want to say quality but there was a different quality as toward the teaching."

Gail: "It took a little bit of getting used to... Recess was hard for a while because you took a lot of abuse from kids and then I gave a lot because they didn't want to play with you. It was hard. They had to adjust too and for me I was the only Black in the 5th grade."

Evelyn: "...you had to change classes and make new friends, and new teachers, and [there was] different work—it was quite a transition for me....we weren't in the same class like we were [at our segregated schools]. We were split up. I might have been in Mr. Herman Moody's class and maybe a couple of them might have been in his brother's class or another classroom so you

weren't all together like you were here, like sitting right behind each other or right across from each other and being with each other all day long. It was different.”

Five participants reflected on how their parents or teachers felt about the impact of *Brown* on their education. Although participants generally revealed they were too young to understand the complexities of desegregation, there were two participants who explicitly recalled times when Black students began integrating into the White schools. Lois (age 67) remembered that her mother closely followed the *Gebhardt v. Belton* (1952), which came before *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.* (1955) and involved two Black families residing in Hockessin, DE (see Chapter 4). In one instance and without prompting, Noble (age 62) ventured off into an interesting and thoughtful explanation for why he believed that segregated schools had begun to close. According to Noble (62), the student population in segregated Black schools were growing so fast but the State Board of Education was not providing funding for bigger buildings to hold Black students. As a result of this delayed action, the teachers began taking their classrooms to locations outside of the school buildings. Such locations included church buildings and military headquarter buildings. He shared,

“...the enrollment at the two-room school got so large, it was outrageous. They were teaching over here in the basement of the church, they were teaching out at the American Legion and everything and the teachers, Miss Piper and the Board of Trustees wanted to build a new school for the colored students. Well the [W]hite man didn't want that to happen, so they decided to do this thing called integration. We'll build a school and all of us will go to school together

and that's it because... we all know that when they went to integration there [would be] a change in our students because we all graduated from Jason.

Lois' mother supported the Bulah family represented in the *Belton v Gebhardt* (1952) suit and agreed that the State Board of Education had treated Black children unjustly by assigning them to inadequate school facilities. After the case was won, Lois' mother took the opportunity to put her two daughters in the integrated school on top of the hill believing that the girls would have a better quality of education. On the contrary, Gail's (50) father felt reluctant toward the *Brown* decision to integrate school, and didn't believe that his two daughters would get a better education in the integrated schools.

Lois: "...when we started, of course you know with the *Bulah* and the *Gebhardt* case and how Mrs. Bulah fought for her daughter Shirley to go the Hockessin Consolidated on the hill and after that transpired my mother decided that Lorraine and I would benefit from that 'quality' education and so in the fifth grade we went sent up on top of the hill..."

Gail: "I remember my Dad being mad because he didn't want his kids going to the white school... His whole thing was I guess in his own way he was really prejudiced but a lot of them were, its like 'oh you go there and the first time something happens they are automatically going to blame you'. That was just his thing. He didn't really feel that you were going to get a better education ..."

Perceptions towards desegregation

Nora (66) and Reverend Allen Smith (72), shared their school-aged children went to public school when Delaware started integrating. And from their perspective, their children had very positive experiences with integrated schooling. According to Nora, her children got along well with the White children in their schools at the onset of integration. They did not have to experience many of the challenges she had faced with unequal resources and lack of transportation during her time in segregated schools.

Interviewer: “Your children would have been going into school at about the times that it was being integrated.”

Nora: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “Did they experience any difficulties?”

Nora: “No, I guess it was because it was just their first time. They never went to an all Black school like I did. They got along all right. They got along good.”

Rev. Allen Smith (72) had a similar experience when his daughters started high school and recalled that integration must have already occurred when they started school in the 1950s. When thinking back on his daughter’s experiences in integrated schools, Reverend Smith believed as the years progressed, that integration was a “thing of the past.” He recalled his children got along fine with their white peers and saw integration as an event that brought Black and White residents closer together.

Interviewer: When did Newark High School become integrated?

Rev. Smith: It must have been in the '50's. My daughters they went to Christiana and Glasgow.

Interviewer: Were there any problems because of the all-white high school and all the other kids were being shuttled out?

Rev. Smith: I don't think there were. As the years have progressed it has become – segregation has become a thing of the past. I believe. They had white friends and everything, in fact my son married a white woman. His first wife was a white woman. I believe that it had brought the races closer together than they were before.

Interestingly, while many participants faced a number of challenges with the HTS commute, experienced racial discrimination, and had difficulty adjusting to the changes in social location and separation from their Black siblings and peers, there were four participants who described having little or no racial issues when integrating into White schools. For example, Evelyn (age 73) had experienced difficulties adjusting to the longer distances in the HTS commute and took a while to get used to being separated from her peers in the new integrated school settings. However, when asked whether she felt she had received the same kind of attention and care to her learning from teachers at the integrated schools compared to the segregated ones, Evelyn (73) shared, "I got along with my teachers. Yes... I had a nice class with the teachers all through middle school and high school." Similarly, when asked if it took

long for him to get comfortable and feel accepted at the integrated schools, Robert (89) said,

“No. No it didn’t and I knew some of the kids by being up here in the summer, I mean by being up there in the summer so it didn’t take us long for us to really get into it...they just accepted us just as we were.”

Gail (50) also believed that desegregation helped improved her education, and that both Black students and White students benefited from going to school together. When asked whether she felt that having to leave the schools in Iron Hill as part of the desegregation decision improved her education, Gail (50) responded, “Yes, I do. I think it did. A lot. For one thing just being with other kids with a whole mixture of kids. I think everybody needed that.”

Although Nora, Rev. Allen, and Gail’s stories align with a mainstream narrative that desegregation was good for Black children and their communities, the majority of participant narratives related to the transition from segregated to integrated schools were counternarratives—stories that countered the dominant narrative concerning the desegregation mandate resulting from *Brown*. Overall, 17 participants’ shared stories concerning their educational experiences prior to *Brown* revealing that they felt supported, accepted, and well-prepared based on the instruction they had received from Black teachers in segregated schools. The former students also valued how Black teachers spent the necessary time to ensure students understood the subject matter and cared for their safety and well-being beyond the classroom.

In their counternarratives, the students explicitly noted teacher instruction and support as tools that proved to be good and valuable during their time at one- and two-room segregated schools and recognized the value in having smaller classes. In

general, participants believed that going to the same school with their siblings and neighborhood friends, and having Black teachers was important for their academic success and self-esteem. More specifically, participants made reference to how their teachers lived in their neighborhoods and/or were related to them, which allowed teachers, parents, and students to maintain positive, supportive relationships with one another. These findings suggest Blacks students' learning communities were far more complex than what the Courts had believed them to be. More specifically, the narratives and counternarratives amplify the human, socio-psychological experience that exists at the center of Black students' educational experience. Such an experience is one that could not be fully understood without defining and assessing the phrase "equal educational opportunity" as noted in the case of *Brown*.

Social identity development

Racial awareness and self-perceptions

The HTS commute and schooling experiences played critical roles in the development of participants' social identity. For participants, social identity development can be conceptualized as a 3-stage process within the context of school and the HTS commute. This 3-stage process is characterized with the acronym I.L.L., which stands for Identify, Locate, and Link. Within the 3-stage process, former students describe their racial awareness in connection to a social location, and then link their perceptions of self to a social position that exists relative to their White counterparts. For this dissertation, "racial awareness" refers to stories where participants acknowledge and identify differences in treatment from teachers or peers due to their race (i.e. Black).. This dissertation uses the 3 components of this

developmental process to understand and evaluate students' social identity and "feelings of inferiority" in school and along the HTS commute. Along with the aforementioned findings on other aspects of Black students' educational experiences, these findings on racial identity and the development of the 'perceived self' also help to answer research questions 1 and 2. More specifically, these findings captured their awareness of their own racial identity at particular social locations or events, either in-school or along the HTS commute, and whether these interactions lead to the development of a new perception of 'self'.

At stage 1 (Identity), the identification stage, participants became aware of their own racial identity, but their thoughts about race were not clearly connected to a social location or their own social positions in society. In other words, during their schooling experiences prior to *Brown*, many had not actively engaged in thinking about their Black identity relative to the broader social world. Although Herman (68), Richard (57), Sandra (55), and Lois (67) were aware of relative differences between race and space (i.e. schools) between grades 1-6 prior to *Brown*, they had not thought about what their race meant in relation to social position relative to their White peers.

Racial awareness and self-concept within the educational experience before *Brown*, particularly concerning "feelings of inferiority," has significant implications for the central argument of the *Brown* case, which was that Black students felt inferior to their White counterparts. Interestingly, participants' stories revealed that Black students had only begun to develop "feelings of inferiority" related to their educational experiences after the desegregation mandate. These findings counter the dominant argument in *Brown*.

Lois' (age 67) story was representative of a significant finding in the data, which was that Black students had developed new forms of racial awareness in their schools, during playtime in their communities, and along the HTS commute. Lois described the initial stage in which she first came into her awareness of racial identity. On her first day at a new school with White children, she recalled that she and her sister were walking into the room, and her White teacher was reading a book to the class. As she and her sister took their seats and read along, her teacher had pointed out the skin color of the Black character through a storybook illustration. For the first time in their lives they had heard the word "Black" or had seen a character in 'blackface'. That was the first time that Lois realized that her skin made her different from her peers. She and her White peers had begun to look around as the teacher emphatically described the main character, a Black child, and it was in that moment that she and her sister conceptualized race and became aware of what it meant to be Black. With the newfound understanding of racial difference, Lois noticed that she gained a new perception of 'self', and the attitudes of her White peers changed toward her. She struggled to maintain friendships as the White peers she grew up with no longer wanted to play with her.

Lois (67): "... the first day we walked into the room they were reading 'Little Black Sambo.' That was the first time in our reading or our lives that we ever saw the word black or a black face depicted in a school book and we were astounded ... who is Little Black Sambo, you know, and that was the first awareness that we were something other than what we are ... when the ones that we played with, the white children, were no longer our friends. We found out the difference of being black and being white..."

At the second stage of social identity development, Lois (67) made connections between her racial identity and the broader social world. She identified instances where she was afforded or denied opportunities as a child in school settings, including opportunities to interact and form social bonds with her peers, stating, “[The] hardest part of separatism [was] knowing that you are Black, and you are White, and you can’t do the same things... You (Black students) are not equal.” Lois also recalled when her White peers or friends started to dislike her after schools desegregated:

“I got rewarded by a trip to New York to see Radio Music Hall to see Vivian Leigh in the ‘Swan Song’ and I mean that was the highlight of my life...[but] getting back to the school, I was still that little Black girl, still the one that my little White friends that I grew up and played with had a different attitude to my being there or being my friends. It was still there. The awareness never shed itself until I went to Absalom Jones but I think it still was embedded in here you know but it (integration) was a terrible time...It really was, it really was, and the parents I never knew or felt how a child was black, white or green but the older white persons...[they] were so hateful. I didn’t know that we were the focal point of their dislike.”

Lois (67) also described the impact that the desegregation mandate had on her social bonds. She pointed out that Black children had grown up with, formed social relationships with, and developed friendships with White children residing in their neighborhoods and communities before *Brown*. However, the desegregation mandate of *Brown* negatively changed those relationships that had been formed. Once integration began, Lois (67) explained that those friendships greatly “diminish[ed],”

and she later grew to understand the racial differences between herself and her White peers meant that she could no longer go to her White neighbors' houses. Lois (67) said,

“...we used to be in and out of the white houses all the while their kids would come to our house but that stopped because of this feeling that was uhm, how can I say that after the beginning of integration. The feeling of being part of the friendship diminished even though in the summer friends we kept in good contact with. But it was a heart-wrenching thing; it really was heart wrenching to become aware of the hatred.”

Lois' (67) story illuminates how the *Brown* decision to desegregate schools not only harmed social bonds between White and Black children who lived in the same neighborhoods; desegregation impacted Black children's feelings towards school as well. Once desegregation begun, some participants in segregated Black schools grew a disliking for education or they admitted they did not like attending school. Instead, they wished they could go back to their former segregated schools where they had felt excited about going to school with their siblings and peers. She noted,

“...the awareness of Black and White was so blatant to us that it was not a joy going to that (integrated) school, not like coming here (to Iron Hill) with our own Black siblings and school friends.”

After the *Brown* desegregation mandate, which forced Black students to transition to new schools with their White peers, two participants, Lois (67) and Sandra (age 55) progressed to a third stage in the social identity development process. At the third stage of social identity development, the participants were able to make specific links between their racial identity and certain social locations and develop a

perception of their own social position relative to their White counterparts. Lois (67) made an interesting connection between her racial identity, the school resources provided to segregated schools, and her perception of her social position in society as Black person in U.S. society. She shared, "...it was the realization that the books that we were studying out of were hand-me downs...that meant that we were second class, in life and academically..."

In another in-depth reflection, Sandra (age 55) was able to make connections between the ways in which her racial identity denied her accessibility to higher-level classes in her new school. In her story, Sandra talked about how her interactions with the school counselor at the newly integrated school helped her realize her social position:

"Sometimes I look back at like, going to Christiana, how sometimes like, I wanted to take a Spanish class at Christiana, and they told me I couldn't do it. They said the classes were too full, so they put me into a Latin class which was very hard, you know what I mean? It was like I was sure to fail it so that was just like a whole year wasted of taking a class of what they knew I would fail to begin with. You know it was like I couldn't do what I wanted to do but this advisor was here telling me I had to do this, and I had to do that because I wasn't going to college anyway. This is the thought they were telling me you know where perhaps if I went to a different school I may have been encouraged to go to college, you know, to do something different. At that time, I was thinking that they (counselors) were helping but then when you look back at it, I think a lot of it, they could have helped me better considering that I

came from a different nationality. Their basis was on white kids getting to college instead of what I could do myself ...”

The two former students’ stories revealed that once they advanced from elementary to high school, and changed from segregated school to integrated schooling, their level of awareness toward racial identity, social location and social position changed too. More specifically, as the participants had become more exposed to new schools that were larger and more integrated in terms of social location, they gained increased understandings of racial awareness and perceptions of self. As it relates to research question 2, the findings revealed that in comparison to Black participants’ counternarratives on the segregated schooling experience, which did not reveal any feelings of inferiority in school or along the home to school commute prior to *Brown*, the findings describing the post-*Brown* schooling experiences demonstrate the opposite.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that changes in the stages of social identity development for Black students were most prominent when schools began to desegregate, and these changes reflect a key unintended consequence of *Brown*. Ironically, Black children did not receive the promise of better-quality education and school facilities as a result of *Brown*. One of the most influential pieces of evidence used to decide the ruling of the *Brown* case derived from an expert report from psychologists Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark, stating that Black children felt inferior to their White counterparts. However, this false evidence, which is sometimes referred to as the ‘Black self-hated argument’ (Cross 1991), and is most notably recognized as ‘Footnote 11’ in the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)* case, was

responsible for sabotaging the image of Black children's segregated schooling experience.

In the absence of a clear definition of "equal educational opportunities" concerning the *Brown* opinion, this dissertation utilized research question 2 to focus on how social identity develops or is impacted by study participants schooling experiences pre- and post-*Brown*. At the time of the *Brown* case, there were no empirical studies that examined the presence or absence of "equal educational opportunities" between Black and White schools. However, Justice Warren based his opinion on faulty evidence suggesting that Black children had developed psychological and emotional instability in the form of self-hatred, low self-esteem, and feelings of inferiority from attending separate schools from White children. The findings of this dissertation revealed that separate educational facilities solely based on race did deprive Black students of "equal educational opportunity" in terms of structural resources (i.e., textbooks) However, while the Court believed that segregated schools had deprived Black children of "equal opportunities," the counternarratives showed that Black students had not been deprived of the opportunity to receive a *quality* education.

When asked whether she thought the students from Iron Hill benefited or lost something from desegregation of public schools in Delaware, Dorothy (80) replied, "I think they lost a lot of pride." When asked whether her parents ever talked about the *Brown* ruling shortly before the desegregation mandate was made, David (54) shared, "I think it was pretty much one of those things you didn't talk about. I think it was just like a lot of history and things we were afraid we would lose things that belonged to us, so we never talked about it the closing." These findings are contrary to the

dominant narrative of *Brown*, which suggested that desegregation would improve the educational experiences of Black children.

As described in chapter 4, the totality of Black student's educational experience extended well beyond unequal resources, dilapidated buildings, and long walks to school. Despite unequal resources, Black students were well supported by their teachers, family, and other members of the Black community. The students described the various supports and strategies that were offered by their Black teachers to help them succeed academically and found that their segregated schooling experiences helped them develop a positive self-image of themselves. As a result, Black students reported feeling optimistic about their educational abilities during segregated schooling.

Interestingly, however, the counternarratives on Black students' development of racial identity and self-concept revealed a significant finding concerning desegregation and social bonds between children. First, although Black and White students had not attended the same schools during Jim Crow, the participants had managed to form close social bonds with White peers in their community through social interactions. These social bonds which had formed despite "separate but equal" educational facilities did not withstand the racial tension that came following the desegregation of schools. Following integration, social ties had come to diminish over time as tension toward race relations had increased in the community. Contrary to what the Court may have expected when deciding on the desegregation opinion in *Brown*, a new' perception of self' had manifested for Black students after the desegregation mandate and following *Brown*. The empirical findings presented in this

chapter demonstrated that *Brown* had a negative, inverse effect on participants' racial awareness, perceptions of self and educational experiences.

The empirical findings in this dissertation demonstrated that between grades 1 through 12, participants became more racially aware of their identity in school following the *Brown* decision. In addition, when asked whether she thought the students from Iron Hill benefited or lost something from desegregation of public schools in Delaware, Dorothy (80) replied, "I think they lost a lot of pride." When asked whether her parents ever talked about the *Brown* ruling shortly before the desegregation mandate was made, David (54) shared, "I think it was pretty much one of those things you didn't talk about. I think it was just like a lot of history and things we were afraid we would lose things that belonged to us, so we never talked about it the closing." These findings are contrary to the dominant narrative of *Brown*, which suggested that desegregation would improve the educational experiences of Black children. They demonstrate how social and political policies like desegregation could be detrimental to the HTS commute experience for Black students and be structurally damaging to the social bonds and sense of pride created in Black communities through schooling. This research also affirmed Derrick Bell's proposition on the pervasive and enduring nature of racism and presented examples of lived experiences demonstrating how racism shaped the educational experiences of Black, former students of Delaware public schools. It revealed how structural racism in U.S. public schooling operates through social policy and can be so subtle that it may be ignored if not explored through storytelling methods.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

This dissertation involved a secondary analysis of respective oral history interview data of 26 Black participants (N=14 females, N=12 males), collected from the Iron Hill School Oral History Project (Perkins et al., 2003). I used critical race theory (CRT) for my theoretical framework, founded on the fundamental presumption that race and racism are intractable from law and policy. CRT suggests; therefore, race and racism are “permanent” in America (Bell 1980). According to this theory, we can only understand the relationship between law and society through the lens of race. Therefore, this dissertation applies CRT to examine how *Brown* and the resulting desegregation policy impacted the HTS commute and in-school experiences of Black students.

The HTS commute

Research question 1, which focused on the home-to-school commute pre- and post-*Brown*, asked, “How do Black students experience the home-to-school (HTS) commute pre-and post- *Brown*?” As presented in chapter 4, there were limited schooling options for Black children before *Brown*, so they endured long commutes ranging from 3 to 5 miles by foot, or twelve to fourteen miles by bus, to attend Black-only schools in predominantly White areas based on these schooling assignments. However, before this dissertation, there was little evidence to demonstrate how policies implemented after *Brown* directly impacted the HTS commute of Black students.

Belton v. Gebhardt (1952), Delaware's Educational Advancement Act (1968), and *Evans v. Buchanan* (1978) represent three examples of legal proceedings that directly impacted the HTS commute of Black students. More specifically, these three legal proceedings help explain the State Board's attempts, or lack thereof, to achieve what the Supreme Court termed 'maximum feasible desegregation' or 'racial balance' by altering Black students' HTS commute. Out of the three legal proceedings, the Educational Advancement Act (1968) gave the Delaware State Board of Education the authority to reorganize and reallocate resources to existing school districts. However, it excluded the Wilmington school district from the reorganization. This exclusion set the foundation for an inequitable experience with Black children's HTS commute.

After passing the Educational Advancement Act (1968), the State Board was required to submit a desegregation plan to the federal court but failed to do so until the 1970's. In 1976, the State Board finally submitted a 'Wilmington-only district' plan and a separate inter-district plan for surrounding schools. The federal court found the State and its subdivision plans were "a substantial and proximate cause of the existing disparity in racial enrollments in the district of Northern New Castle County," concluding the submitted plans were "fraught with complex problems unsuitable judicial determination" (*Evans v. Buchanan* 1976. 416 F. Supp. 328). In other words, the court determined the dual school system in Wilmington had not been eliminated, as Wilmington schools which had been *de jure* before the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown I* (1954), 'continued to remain identifiably black.'

A federal order was put in place in 1978 to respond to the unconstitutional treatment of Black students concerning the HTS commute. In *Evans v. Buchanan* (1978), federal judge Murray Schwartz approved the "9-3" desegregation plan, which

ordered Wilmington students to be bused to the suburbs for nine years and White suburban students to be bused to the city for three years. On page 133 of his opinion in *Evans v. Buchanan* (1978), Judge Schwartz also ordered merging the predominantly Black Wilmington school district and the ten school districts in the New Castle County suburbs. This order would affect as many as 80,000 students-about three-quarters of all public-school students in the State of Delaware (“Vast Delaware Busing is Ordered,” 1978). In 1981, three years following the judge’s “9-3” order, that plan would be abandoned. The City of Wilmington would instead be split into a single school district divided into four “pie slices” that mixed suburban and city areas, leading to the fragmented system that exists today (Albright 2016: 2).

The counternarratives presented in this study demonstrate how the burden of *Brown*, which involved carrying the responsibility of commuting long distances and adjusting to new curriculums and social settings, did not fall on White children and their families. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate the extent to which conflicting opinions towards desegregation had, and arguably, continues to have, a detrimental impact on the HTS commute experience for Black students. Perhaps the most significant social and moral failure of desegregation, particularly concerning the achievement of “equal educational opportunities” between Black and White schools, was the structural violence towards Black communities and schools that resulted from *Brown*.

According to Galtung (1969), structural violence is structural or indirect violence, meaning there is no specific actor. Instead, the violence is “built into the social structure” where this is an uneven distribution of *resources*, and little *power* to decide over the distribution of resources (131). Moreover, Galtung (1969) notes that

social structures are generally stable, and although they have the potential to change overnight, the change may not often occur very quickly. Galtung's (1969) argument on structural violence strongly supports my analysis on the poor resources intentionally provided to segregated schools before *Brown*.

Bell (1954) explained in "Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation" that there was significant disagreement concerning what Chief Justice Warren called "equal educational opportunities" through the concentration of "racial balance" (471) and "maximum feasible desegregation" (479). More specifically, Bell (1954) argued successful integration between racially isolated neighborhoods would be impossible for large urban areas in both the South and the North unless commitments were made at local and State levels to transport students from both neighborhoods over long distances. Bell's (1954) assessments revealed that White families made no commitments to long distances due to low confidence in the quality of education provided in Black schools. They perceived the education provided in Black schools had little or no benefit to White children. Black families, on the other hand, committed to the long distances to White schools. According to Bell (1954), Black families made these commitments *even* when they had doubted the success of integration and had low confidence in the quality of education in White schools.

As a result, the HTS commute experience consisted of Black students going to the White students' schools, not Black students primarily attending predominantly Black schools. Following the desegregation mandate of *Brown*, around the late 60s and early 70s, the same time that 'white flight' took place, Black students were assigned to schools in White neighborhoods (*see Evans vs. Buchanan*). My findings support how Black students endured up to twenty more additional years of long

commutes in addition to racial discrimination from White peers along the commute following the *Brown* decision. The subjection of Black students to attend schools in White neighborhoods, as well as mass school closings in Black communities are also two key examples of structural violence that occurred following *Brown*. Today, few empirical studies examine the extent to which White students' HTS commuting experiences consisted of traveling to Black neighborhoods to attend Black schools pre- or post-*Brown*. Also, we must continue to examine how *Brown* negatively impacted the HTS commute for Black students historically and presently (Wolters 1984); and how *Brown* produced disruptive redistricting policy for schools, which also greatly affected the HTS commute (Mowrey 1974).

Social identity and social bonds

Research question 2 asked, “Do Black students’ counternarratives reveal experiences with “feelings of inferiority” before and after the 1954 *Brown* decision?” This question was inspired by the ‘Black self-hatred’ argument used to win *Brown*. In addition to the burden of the HTS commute, chapter 5 documents how feelings of inferiority for Black students were most prominent after integration and suggests the desegregation mandate of *Brown* harmed participants’ racial awareness, perceptions of self, and educational experiences. *Brown* resulted in Black children and their families losing many of their local schools along with previously established social bonds between Black teachers and other Black students during segregated schooling. These findings have important implications considering existing evidence suggest integrated schools have significant academic and social benefits for liberal, middle to upper-class White families and low-income students (Kahlenberg 2012; Orfield & Lee 2005).

Four out of the twenty-six participants recalled having positive experiences with integrated schooling. Few participants also reported integrated schooling provided a better quality of education to Black students in terms of academic rigor, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Although they did not have adequate school resources (i.e., textbooks, workbooks) in segregated schools, most participants noted they were provided with the necessary tools, helpful learning strategies and spaces from Black teachers needed for school success. Additionally, the participants shared they developed strong relationships with their teachers and peers in segregated schools, which motivated them to learn, develop a positive self-image, and these relationships also played a foundational role in their academic achievements.

Results from this dissertation and especially on the HTS commute, provide empirical support for upcoming educational policy for K-12 students in Delaware. For example, due to decades of school redistricting and amendments to the current Delaware code concerning the District Enrollment Choice Program, siblings living in the same neighborhood but in different homes are sometimes assigned to different schools. At the end of June of this year, with the support of Senator Elizabeth Lockman, Chair Kimberly Williams introduced HB270, which focused on amending the Delaware code concerning the District Enrollment Choice Program. This policy has important implications for renewing the social bonds in our communities, particularly as it relates to the City of Wilmington, which were lost as a result of *Brown*. More specifically, if this bill gets passed into law, it will allow siblings in separate school districts to go to the same school, which would increase opportunities for children and their families to build intergeneration rapport with teachers and schools, as demonstrated in the findings.

Furthermore, despite having unequal resources pre-Brown, Black students were well supported by their teachers, family, and other members of the Black community. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 reflect the resilience of Black communities despite decades of educational trauma in Delaware’s public schools. Chapter 4 illuminates voices from the pre-and-post *Brown* experiences to dispel myths of Black anti-intellectualism, center acts of collective responsibility concerning Black students, and provide evidence for how Black students developed new social identities and perceptions of self. In other words, these findings reveal that contrary to the ‘Black self-hatred’ argument used in *Brown*, Black children had high self-esteem, enjoyed going to school, and placed a high value on their education. In addition, the findings demonstrated that Black community residents formed extended friendships and maintained strong social bonds to ensure Black students were prepared and successful in their academic endeavors.

Where do we go from here?

Findings from this study strongly support segregated or same-race schooling for Black children, particularly between grades 1 through 6. The findings of this dissertation revealed that separate educational facilities solely on the basis of race did in fact deprive Black students of “equal educational opportunity” in terms of “tangible” factors such as receiving the same types of curriculums and the same resources as White students. However, while the Court believed that segregated schools had deprived Black children of “equal opportunities”, the counternarratives showed that Black students had not been deprived of the opportunity to receive a *quality* education.

The findings in this dissertation revealed that same-race schools provide valuable academic, social, and emotional supports for Black students. In their counternarratives, study participants recalled being well supported by teachers, family, and other members of the Black community. From their perspectives, segregated schools promoted advocacy, positive morale, and helped them develop high self-esteem. As a result, when schools were segregated, participants were much more optimistic about their schooling aspirations. Contrary to the Black self-hatred argument that was used to desegregate schools through *Brown*, same-race schools are still valued by Black communities.

One example of a same-race schooling model is the Center for Black Educator Development. This Center is located in Philadelphia and its core mission is to “ensure there will be equity in recruiting, training, hiring, and retention of quality educators that reflect the cultural background and share common socio-political interests of the students they serve” (The Center for Black Educator Development, 2018). According to the Center, Black or same-race teachers help to ensure Black student’s success because of their willingness to use culturally responsive practices and anti-discriminatory habits. Also, the Center attributes its same-race schooling model with its increased literacy rates for over 250 elementary school graduates (The Center for Black Educator Development, 2018). By having Black teachers, Black students are less likely to experience *stereotype threat*, which Steele and Aronson (1995) describe as “being at risk for confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (797).

The Kuumba Academy, a charter school in Wilmington, Delaware, is another example of a successful same-race school. Kuumba caters to the whole child by

providing an innovative learning environment that involves academics, arts, technology, and family engagement (“Kuumba Academy Charter School”, 2019); and this mission aligns with my dissertation or core argument concerning the value of segregated Black schools before *Brown*. A 2019 academic assessment showed that more than double the percentage of Kuumba students met their growth targets on their Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) reports advancing from 28% to 64% overall growth in student achievement (“Kuumba Academy Charter School”, 2019).

In closing, we must take into serious consideration how Black students’ lived experiences are negatively affected by racial power, or law and policy developed to regulate public school systems. Today, Black students continue to share similar experiences to their grandparents regarding the home-to-school commute, loss of social bonds with peers, and difficulty adapting to the teaching styles and curriculums taught in predominantly White schools. It is crucial to consider the findings of this dissertation relative to the current state of the educational experience for Black students in Delaware’s public schools. Bell (1992, 1995) noted that as members of the oppressed continue to insist on the possibility of justice, it is vital for them to be truthful and honest with themselves about the reality of racism and not ignore opportunities to dismantle the same systems our grandparents fought against. Perhaps the most eye-opening note on Bell’s conceptualization of racial realism, then, is the notion that for Black people, contentment can always be found in the struggle, even when there is little or no proof of progress in sight.

Limitations & future research

There were a few limitations to using secondary data to answer my research questions. Given the interviews were retrospective, or recollections from past

experiences, in some cases, it was unclear whether the students' responses to some questions were describing their educational experience in a consolidated (but still segregated school) or an integrated one, which presented some challenges during the analysis process.

For future research, I intend to examine the role trauma and social identity plays in the educational experiences of current and former Black students in Delaware's public schools. Also, deeper policy analysis is warranted and such analysis in Delaware should be contrasted or compared to school policy in nearby metropolitan cities, including New York City, Philadelphia, PA, Baltimore, MD and Washington, D.C.

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Appendix
TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1 Core variable frequencies

	N	%
Gender		
Males	12	46.2
Females	14	53.8
Themes		
Home-to-school (HTS) commute	84	46.9
Adjusting to integrated schooling	32	17.9
Quality of education	18	10.1
Racial awareness	45	25.1
TOTAL	179	100.0

Table 1 describes the frequencies and percentages for each of the core variable themes.

Table 2 Number of times participants mentioned sub-themes by gender

	HTS commute	Adjusting to integrated school (positive)	Adjusting to integrated school (negative)	Quality of education	Racial awareness	Total	Percent
Males	36	2	8	7	12	65	36.3
Females	48	2	20	11	33	114	63.7
TOTAL	84	4	28	18	45	179	100.00
PERCENT	46.9	2.2	15.7	10.1	25.1	100.0	-

Table 2 describes the interaction between the categorical variables gender and each of the major sub-themes. Only participants who shared experiences related to these sub-themes are included in this table.

Table 3 Number of times participants mentioned types of commuting by gender

	Walked to school	Rode the train	Bussed to school	Ride from parent	Total # of mentions	Percent
Males	11	4	6	1	22	53.7
Females	8	0	7	4	19	46.3
TOTAL	19	4	13	5	41	100.0
PERCENT	46.3	9.8	31.7	12.2	100.0	-

This crosstabulation tables shows data reflecting the number of times male and female participants talked about each type of commuting experience between grades 1 through 12 when asked about their HTS commute. Only participants who shared experiences related to these specific aspects of the HTS commute are included in this table. **The numbers in the table do not represent participants in the sample.*

Table 4 Primary mode of travel

	Pre-Brown					Post-Brown				
	Walk	Bus	Train	Car	N	Walk	Bus	Train	Car	N
Male	8	1	2	1	12	3	5	2	0	10
Female	8	4	0	2	14	0	3	0	2	5
Total	16	5	2	3	26	3	8	2	2	15
Percent	61.5	19.3	7.7	11.5	100.0	20.0	53.4	13.3	13.3	

**Participants' stories in this table focus primarily on their commuting experiences to Howard High School (Wilmington) and Louis L. Redding (Middletown).*

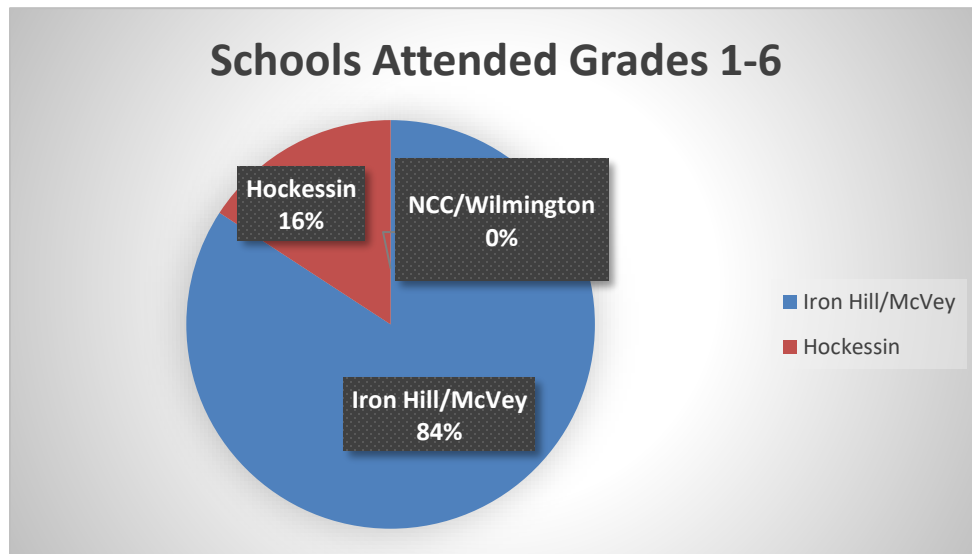


Figure 1 This chart shows the locations and percentage of participants in the sample who attended elementary schools in Delaware between grades one and six.

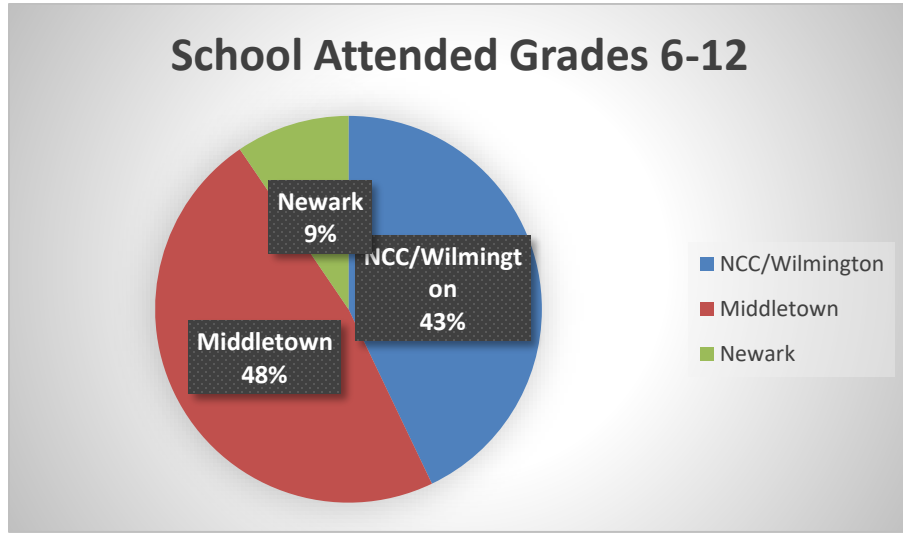


Figure 2 This chart shows the locations and percentage of participants in the sample who attended junior high and high schools in Delaware between grades six and 12.

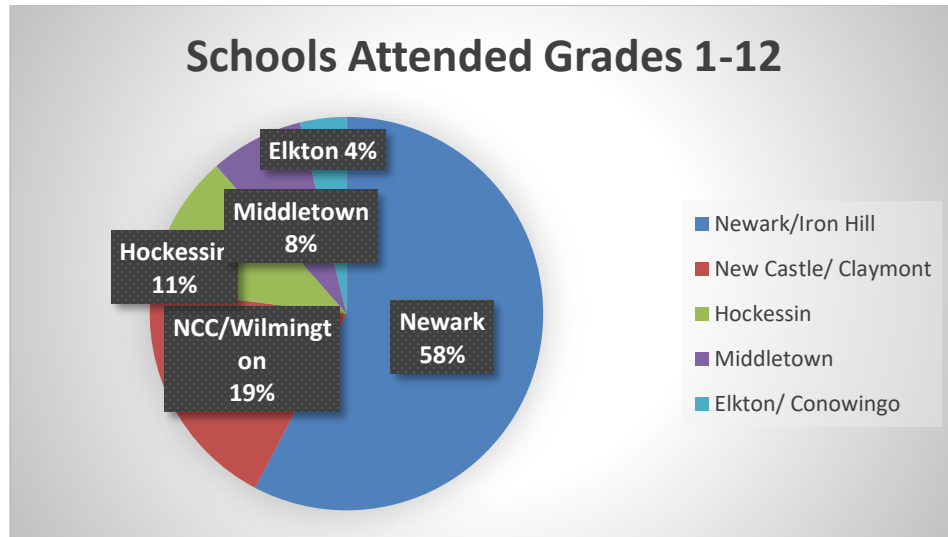


Figure 3 This chart represents the sample population who attended at least one school in Delaware/Maryland from grades one through 12.



Figure 4 Map of Delaware