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The Beauty of Hatred: The McDonogh Three's Untold Stories

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The Beauty of Hatred: The McDonogh Three's Untold Stories

by

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of Doctorate in Education

Hamline University

St Paul, Minnesota

November 14, 2014

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Dedication

The dissertation is dedicated to the McDonogh 3: Mrs. Gail Etienne, Mrs. Leona Tate, and Mrs. Tessie Prevost, because without you and your experience I would not have had the pleasure of meeting and telling your stories. Thank you for welcoming me into your lives and your hearts.



Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration outside of McDonogh 19 Elementary



McDonogh Three and their US Marshals at the 50th Anniversary Celebration

Acknowledgments

If you can show me how I can cling to that which is real to me, while teaching me a way into the larger society, then and only then will I drop my defenses and my hostility and I will sing your praises and help you to make the desert bear fruit.

- Ralph Ellison

This research project is dedicated to all who supported me along this journey, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One Introduction.....	1
Chapter Overview.....	1
New Orleans and School Desegregation.....	1
Rationale for the Study.....	4
Significance of the Problem.....	6
Boyer’s Scholarship.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
Summary.....	13
Chapter Two Review of the Literature.....	15
Introduction.....	15
Historical Background of the Desegregation Movement in the United States...17	
Educational Desegregation.....	20
Desegregation on a National Level.....	22
Brown v. Topeka Board of Education.....	24
Regional Desegregation.....	25
Louisiana.....	29
New Orleans, Louisiana.....	29
Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957.....	35
Charleston and Williamsburg Counties, South Carolina, 1963.....	39
Wichita, Kansas, 1964.....	43
St. Louis, Missouri, 1975.....	45
Birmingham, Alabama, 1963.....	49

Summary of Common Factors Among School Desegregation Movements.....	50
Chapter Three Research Methodology.....	55
Research Framework.....	55
Settings and Participants.....	56
Contextual Foundations.....	58
Data Collection.....	60
Focus Groups.....	61
Document Analysis.....	62
Ethical Considerations.....	63
Approval to Conduct Research.....	64
Limitations to the Study.....	64
Summary.....	65
Chapter Four Results and Analysis.....	67
Introduction.....	67
Interview Analysis.....	67
Focus Group Interview I.....	70
Focus Group Interview II.....	80
Document Analysis of News Articles and Correspondence.....	82
Interpretation of the Results.....	84
Reoccurring Themes.....	86
Summary.....	87
Chapter Five Conclusions and Implications.....	88

Introduction.....	88
Review of the Purpose of the Study.....	88
Summary of Findings.....	89
Implications for Practice.....	92
Recommendations for Future Research.....	94
Conclusion.....	95

Figures

Figure 1.1 Print of “The Problems We All Live With” by Norman Rockwell.....	2
Figure 2.1 Historical Marker on the Neutral Ground in Front of McDonogh 19.....	26
Figure 4.1 Tessie and Her Father Walking Towards McDonogh 19, <i>Times Picayune</i> , November 15, 1960.....	73
Figure 4.2 Negro Girl, Mother Enter McDonogh 19 with Marshals, <i>Times Picayune</i> , November 15, 1960.....	74
Figure 4.3 Federal Marshal Wallace Downs with Negro Girl. <i>Times Picayune</i> , November 15, 1960.....	75
References.....	97

Appendices

Appendix A Participant Permission Form.....	104
Appendix B Interview Questions.....	106
Appendix C Document Analysis Forms.....	108
Appendix D Photographs of Both Schools and Historical Marker.....	110

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“That when we reject a single story, when we realize there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.” - Chimamanda Adichie (2009)

Chapter Overview

For this dissertation, I researched the desegregation of New Orleans public schools. The primary research question was, “How do three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of New Orleans public schools?” This chapter details my interest in desegregation of New Orleans public schools during the civil rights movement and some of the main participants in the movement. It also provides a rationale for the study, explains the significance of the research questions, describes the connection with Boyer’s scholarship of integration as it relates to informing educational practice, and defines important terms.

New Orleans and School Desegregation

My interest in the desegregation of New Orleans public schools during the civil rights movement came when my father introduced me to a friend who had researched the movement. He then told me he worked with Gail Etienne-Stripling, one of the women who pioneered the movement as six-year-old girl in 1960. Who are Gail Etienne, Leona Tate, and Tessie Prevost? Will you find them in your history books? No. If you “Google” their names, what will you discover? You may discover a picture and a brief article about them, but will you discover more of their story? No, you will not, because their whole story has not been told. If asked, “Who is Ruby Bridges?” some educators and many native New Orleanians can answer that question. Why? Because the stories

of Etienne, Tate, and Prevost have not been given the thorough exposure that Ruby Bridges received. In the 1960s headlines of the *Times Picayune*, a local New Orleans paper, they are referred to as the New Orleans 4, but nationally one has risen above the others. Why has their story not been told? Gail Etienne, Leona Tate, and Tessie Prevost desegregated McDonogh 19 Elementary the same day Ruby Bridges desegregated William Frantz Elementary School in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana. They each were assigned a U.S. Marshal who escorted them to and from school daily. Norman Rockwell's 1964 oil painting shown below, *The Problem We All Live With*, depicts the desegregation movement in New Orleans in 1960. The painting is of a single, young, Black, female child in a white dress with braids in her hair. She is carrying school supplies. What makes this painting stand out is the young girl is centered between four United States Marshals in light-colored suits with bright yellow armbands identifying them; two in front of her and two behind her. In my opinion, this painting speaks loudly of the importance and the significance of this social movement.

Figure 1.1 "The Problem We All Live With" Norman Rockwell



But what is known about Tate, Prevost, and Etienne, collectively referred to as "The McDonogh 3"? It was not until 1983 that many New Orleanians heard any of their names. According to Weider (1987), in 1983 Ernest "Dutch" Morial, New Orleans' first

Black Mayor, gave their names significant meaning in New Orleans history by acknowledging and honoring their role as major participants in the token integration process of Orleans Public Schools. November 14, 1960, was a significant day for more than just first-grader Ruby Bridges. This date held important significance for three other six-year-old girls who experienced the token integration in New Orleans: Etienne, Tate, and Prevost. The token integration process in New Orleans was established to eliminate a large number of Black children from integrating the school system at one time because the number of Black children enrolled in the parish significantly outnumbered the White children. The board decided to begin the desegregation process one grade level at a time. "The board felt that black applicants would need careful screening, if the first desegregation would be accomplished without trouble" (Rogers, 1982, p. 174).

According to Rogers (1982), the school board established a policy for integration. One part of the policy was an application, another was a test, and the last was an interview with the families once the previous criteria had been met. The board also decided to integrate only two schools and one grade level per year. Of the 147 applicants registered, only five were chosen. Three of the six-year-old girls were to integrate McDonogh 19 Elementary and the other two girls were to integrate William Frantz Elementary. These young girls, who desegregated McDonogh 19 in 1960, were asked to perform the same act of courage five years later to desegregate another New Orleans public school. My research project will bring their experiences to others through their words.

Rationale for the Study

Sixty years after *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, has the current state of public education from the historical perspective of desegregation changed in New Orleans or in other cities across the United States? Blacks and Whites were affected by historical changes of the desegregation movements in many cities across the United States. Has the quality of teaching children of color improved? My research focused on the token desegregation by Prevost, Etienne, and Tate in the Orleans Parish School System during the Civil Rights Era in its efforts to reverse “separate but equal.” Bell (1980) believes the desegregation movement of the public schools in the South fits within Critical Race Theory’s (CRT) interest convergence principle. Bell (1980) has described *Brown* as a prime example of the interest convergence principle. According to Bell (2004), the principle of interest convergence has two parts. Bell stated that the first part,

was the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policy-making positions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief than the degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character of proof offered to prove that harm. (p. 69)

The second part of interest convergence holds that “even when the interest-convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policy makers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites” (p. 69). Bell refers to these tacit agreements that occur when interests converge as “silent covenants” (p. 70). The principle behind interest convergence is

there is a benefit for all involved, not just the targeted group--in this case, children of color attending schools identified as White-only schools. Dixson and Rousseau (2006) support Bell's interest convergence theory by adding, "Interest convergence offers an explanation not only for the *Brown* decision itself by also for the effects of the desegregation that followed the ruling" (p. 44). Dudziak stated,

Derrick Bell has suggested that the consensus against school segregation in the 1950s was the result of a convergence of interests on the part of the whites and blacks, and that white interests in abandoning segregation were in part a response to foreign policy concerns and an effort to suppress the potential of black radicalism at home. According to Bell, without a convergence of white and black interests in this manner, *Brown* would never have occurred. (2000, p. 107)

Bell describes *Brown* as a "magnificent mirage" – an example of the "unfulfilled hopes of racial reform" (in Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 43.)

According to Kein (2000), New Orleans is a city that has many different cultural backgrounds, unlike other cities in the United States. People from several different European countries settled in New Orleans. Interracial marriages across centuries made it difficult to clearly identify Whites from Blacks. Baker (1996) adds to the claim by acknowledging some Blacks passed for White in order to gain a fair chance in life. It was a well-known fact in New Orleans that for those who were able to "pass," many opportunities arose. These included shopping in stores with White Only signs, sitting in the front of the buses, and attending events at the theatres designated for Whites only. It was not uncommon for Black families to have relatives pass and blend in with the Whites of New Orleans and not acknowledge their darker-skinned kin. However,

many fairer-skinned Blacks also chose not to “pass,” but instead fight for the equal rights of Blacks in New Orleans. My research recognizes the efforts put forth by some of the Black leaders in the New Orleans community to improve the quality of life for Blacks in the city along with many of the White community leaders who supported the effort to make integration possible. With the support of Whites, who believed that everyone was created equal, many changes occurred to equalize the quality of life for Blacks but in particular, change in the educational system. “The first step was integrating the public libraries” (Rogers, 1982, p. 172).

Significance of the Problem

My central research question, How do three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of New Orleans public schools?, focused on the lived experiences of three women of color who desegregated New Orleans Public Schools, on the experiences of three women who were pioneers in school desegregation in New Orleans as young girls, and on retelling their stories.

This topic drew connections about how education has changed, or remained the same, in New Orleans. I grew up in a segregated community and experienced a different form of token integration in my own educational experiences that was more accepted in the community. Black families who could afford to send their children to private or parochial schools did so, however we were a small percentage of the population. This prompted me to want to learn more from a historical viewpoint. Thus, the significance of my research is telling the counterstories of the three women who embarked on a journey to desegregate the New Orleans public school system and how it

shaped the continued desegregation of the public schools in New Orleans (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Qualitative studies can provide detailed descriptions and analyses of particular practices, processes, or events (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This research led to inquiry of some of the principle ideas of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Bell (1983), one of the founders of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), addressed desegregation from a legal standpoint and uses *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* to examine the importance of the desegregation movement and determine if Black children could have been educated equally within their own community if the same opportunities were granted.

As I began my research and the formulation of my research questions and design, I discovered there were three other girls who pioneered the desegregation movement of Orleans Parish Public School System in 1960 along with well-known Ruby Bridges. Their story has not been documented to the same extent. I wanted to research the historical accounts of Gail Etienne Stripling, Tessie Prevost Williams, and Leona Tate and to give their stories meaning within the educational foundations of desegregation.

I learned of these three women through a conversation with my father. He was inquiring about my research topic for my dissertation. I mentioned having an interest in the academic opportunity gap and its correlation to desegregation. My inquiry into local New Orleans history occurred through researching educational leaders within the Black community for a doctoral class project. Initially, I wanted to research Ruby Bridges, who I knew was well known in the local New Orleans community, but discovered there was not enough research about her experience desegregating William Franz Elementary School in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward for my class project. My

father suggested I contact a friend of his who would be able to assist me in my research. He connected me with Brenda Square, who was then one of the primary researchers at the Amistad Research Center of African American History in New Orleans. It is the nation's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive independent archive specializing in the history of African Americans and other ethnic minorities. In my conversation with Mrs. Square, I mentioned to her that my interest in researching the Orleans School District and the experiences with school desegregation. She asked if I knew about the McDonogh 3 and suggested this would be a more interesting project since no one had done extensive research on them. She explained that in 1960 five six-year-olds and their families were to embark on the social movement of desegregating Orleans Parish. Mrs. Square put me in contact with Leona Tate through email, who happily agreed to be part of the research. My father worked with Gail Etienne Stripling at Bell South for a period of time and was able to get her contact information from a mutual friend. When I talked to Mrs. Etienne-Stripling on the phone and explained my research topic, she was also eager to support me on my educational journey. She was ready to share her story. Mrs. Etienne-Stripling agreed to speak with Mrs. Tate and Mrs. Tessie Prevost -Williams about getting together to conduct interviews in New Orleans.

Through investigating my primary question of how three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of New Orleans public school, a secondary question evolved: How has the education of students of color has changed in the past fifty years? The first gathered information from focus group interviews; the second through document analysis. By connecting the desegregation experiences of Etienne, Prevost, and Tate in New Orleans Public School

System to the current state of education in New Orleans with the Recovery School District (RSD), I am attempting to create a more clear understanding of education in southern urban cities for children of color.

Boyer's Scholarship

Boyer (1990) defined "four separate, yet overlapping, functions" (p. 16) of scholarship. These four elements of scholarship allow the scholar to step back from the investigation, look for connections, build bridges between theory and practice, and effectively communicate this knowledge to others. Boyer's scholarships of application and of integration fit my research problem and questions. Scholarship of application engages the scholar in discovering new understanding. The scholarship of integration involves synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time (Boyer, 1990). This research used Boyer's definition of application to explain change in government policy through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Boyer (1990) identified three questions that promote engagement of application: "How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions?...Can social problems themselves define an agenda for scholarly investigation?" (p. 21). These questions provided guidance to connect my research from a historical perspective to investigate the social construct of the education of Black children in New Orleans.

This research connects the historical perspective of desegregation in an attempt to connect it to current trends of resegregation and voluntary integration policies in the public education system affecting public schools. Boyer defines scholarship of integration as giving meaning to isolated facts and putting them in perspective" (p. 18)

and “fitting one’s own research---or the research of others—into larger intellectual patterns” (p. 19). Through focus-group interviews with Tate, Prevost, and Etienne and gathering historical information from their perspective, Boyer’s scholarships application and integration were employed to create meaning from an atypical perspective and connect the meanings to the current educational policies in New Orleans, Louisiana and other cities.

Definition of Terms

It is important to understand the use of these terms because many are defined and understood differently to people outside of Metro New Orleans area. The terms also refer to a particular era of time during the civil rights movement and are directly related to events that occurred in the South.

Creole: to a Caucasian, a Creole is a native of lower parishes of Louisiana, in whose veins some traces of Spanish, West Indian or French blood runs. A person of color will define Creole as a native of Louisiana, in whose blood runs mixed strains of everything un-American, with the African strain slightly apparent. The true Creole is like the famous gumbo of the state, a little bit of everything, making a whole, delightfully flavored, quite distinctive, and wholly unique (Kein, 2000). In this dissertation, the second definition is followed.

De facto segregation: segregation enforced upon by society through social habits. (Retrieved August 6, 2013, from <http://dictionary.reference.com>).

De jure segregation: segregation enforced by law.

Desegregation: the elimination of laws, customs, or practices under which different races, groups, etc., are restricted to specific or separate public facilities,

neighborhoods, schools, organizations, or the like. (Retrieved August 6, 2013, from <http://dictionary.reference.com>).

Discrimination: consists of unjustifiable negative behavior toward a racial or ethnic group and its members. It expresses itself in distinctions and decisions made on the basis of prejudice (Pine & Hillard, 1990, p. 2).

Interest Convergence: Thesis pioneered by Derrick Bell that the majority group tolerates advances for racial justice only when it suits its interest to do so (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 149).

Jim Crow: set of legal and systematic regulations established by Southern states to uphold segregation (Lewis, 2006).

Massive Resistance: White response to desegregation during the Civil Rights Movement. Term coined by U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd Sr. of Virginia, to oppose any and all desegregation laws and cut off funding to any institution that integrated in Virginia (Lewis, 2006, p. 3).

Master Narrative: Ignore or reject different ways of perceiving truth and reality. "Overarching message behind the conglomeration of concepts, stories, images, and narratives that serve as the bases for, and aid in the maintenance of, a culture, institution, or system's claim to know what is (and what is not) truth and reality" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p. 83)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP): is an African American civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909. Its mission is "to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of

all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination” (Retrieved August 6, 2013, from <http://www.naacp.org/>).

Passing or Passé Blanche: Arthe Anthony explains that the concept of racial passing “is used in cultural studies as a metaphor for masking the real-and most often marginalized-self” (Kein, 2000, p. xxii). Trading your identity for the dominant Other.

Passive Resistance: “a method of nonviolent protest against laws or policies in order to force a change or secure concessions; it is also known as nonviolent resistance and is the main tactic of civil disobedience” (Lewis, 2006, p. 8)

Prejudice: “consists of unjustifiable negative feelings and beliefs about a racial or ethnic group and its members. It is characterized by reconceived opinions, judgments, or feelings that lack any foundation or substance” (Pine & Hillard, 1990, p. 2).

Racial Integration: includes goals such as leveling barriers to association, creating equal opportunity regardless of race, and the development of a culture that draws on diverse traditions, rather than merely bringing a racial minority into the majority culture (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Racial Segregation: the practice of restricting people to certain circumscribed areas of residence or to separate institutions (e.g., schools, churches) and facilities (parks, playgrounds, restaurants, restrooms) on the basis of race or alleged race. Racial segregation provides a means of maintaining the economic advantages and superior social status of the politically dominant group, and in recent times it has been employed primarily by white populations to maintain their ascendancy over other groups by means of legal and social color bars.

(Retrieved August 6, 2013, from

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488135/racial-segregation>).

Recovery School District (RSD): The Recovery School District (RSD) is a special school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. Created by legislation passed in 2003, RSD is designed to take underperforming schools and transform them into successful places for children to learn. (Retrieved November 1, 2013, from <http://www.rsdl.net/Home.aspx>).

Resegregation: “process by which over time an all white school opened to all races during the civil rights movement, over time has reverted to segregated population of non white students” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 43).

Summary

Chapter one identified the primary and secondary research questions, explained the genesis of interest in the research topic, presented a rationale for the study and significance of the topic. It described Boyer’s scholarships as applied to the research topic. Important definitions were defined to assist readers in understanding some of the language used during the period referenced.

Chapter two provides research on the educational desegregation from a national level beginning with the decision of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*. The literature review moves from the national level to a regional level, discussing four different desegregation movements in the South. This is followed by discussion at a local level: the desegregation movement in New Orleans in 1960. The review provided a context of a historical perspective of the effects equity had on the United States as a nation. This

perspective provided a framework and foundation for developing interview questions and the decision to conduct in person interviews.

Chapter three defines and outlines the research framework, including Boyer's scholarship and its connection to this research project that focused on how three women of color described their experiences as primary participants of the Orleans Parish schools' token integration process. The chapter includes information on the research framework, setting and participant selection, contextual foundations, data collection and analysis, limitations of the methodology, and ethical considerations. It outlines the research design and methodology used to develop a narrative for retelling some of the details that occurred during integration for Gail Etienne-Stripling, Tessie Prevost-Williams, and Leona Tate.

Chapter four focuses on the results of the data from the information gathered through qualitative interviews and document analysis. The chapter builds the connection to the methodology with the results of my interview and identified themes, providing a more detailed description of their experiences during their first year of integration and the subsequent years when they made the decision to integrate a second school. Included in chapter four is a narrative of their experiences from McDonogh 19 Elementary and T.J. Semmes Elementary.

Chapter five reviews the study's purpose, summary of the findings, implications and recommendations for practice and supports the primary research question. This chapter also concludes with three areas of change that occurred because of desegregation; personal change, community, and organizational change.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

-Chief Justice Earl Warren, May 17, 1954

Introduction

The literature review provides information on desegregation in different cities in the United States. Background for the research question of how three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of New Orleans public schools is presented. It provides information from historical events in New Orleans that were documented in books and newspapers to tell about school desegregation. Also described in this chapter are the desegregation events of other cities that desegregated schools after the *Brown* verdict. The research included depicts some of the historical foundations that generated the desegregation movement and court decisions, which ended segregation in U.S. public schools.

Different events included in this chapter inspired civil rights movements in southern states. These events are important to understand, as is the grounded reason the desegregation movement occurred during the 25-year period following World War II. It will be made clear to the reader that in other parts of the world, in some European countries, the legitimacy of the United States as an example of freedom and liberties was questioned because of the racial divide among Black and White U.S. soldiers fighting in Europe during World War II in addition to racial segregation in U.S. society.

The main focus of this literature review was on the token desegregation of New Orleans's public schools that occurred in 1960, by depicting a description of the process involved in the desegregation of New Orleans Public School System (NOPS).

As the research question includes the phrase token integration, it is important for the reader to understand the term. Token integration refers to the method in which integration occurred in the South. Baker (1996) explains the process in Louisiana was to begin integration with first grade by admitting a limited number of Black children into two of Orleans Parish's public schools the first year. The process was to continue by adding a grade level and one or two new schools each year until the district was fully integrated. In other southern states, mentioned later in the literature review, there were processes for limited or token integration (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). Most began with enrollment into post-secondary institutions or with high school like in Little Rock, Arkansas. In the examples used to document school desegregation in parts of the United States, the researcher noticed there were never more than a dozen Black students enrolled in the initial stages.

This chapter also discusses formative explanations for desegregation on a national, regional, and local level that occurred before and after *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education 1954*. It makes comparisons of five school desegregation movements that also occurred during the same time period, such as Little Rock, Arkansas, Wichita, Kansas, Charleston, South Carolina, St. Louis, Missouri, and Birmingham, Alabama with the events occurring in New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition, this chapter includes an alternative opinion for reversing *Plessy v. Ferguson* "separate but equal" with a focus on the equal instead of the separate created by Derrick Bell and his interpretation of the

results of *Brown I* and *Brown II* as they stand today. The final section of the literature review includes a brief description of the current educational status of Black children in New Orleans. It contains a brief description of the implementation of the Recovery School District (RSD) along with the current state of the Orleans Parish public schools post Katrina to examine the changes or maintenance of school segregation. Comparing the current state of the Orleans Parish School system with its prior educational system can yield findings to explain the lack of changes in integration.

Historical Background of the Desegregation Movement in the United States

The literature reviewed on the historical background that inspired the inception of the Civil Rights Movement produced two central foci. The first referred to the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War (1866-1877) and the second to the period after the end of World War II (1945-60). Stephan and Feagin (1980) described the desegregation of schools as “one of this country’s most explosive social issues for more than a century” (p. 3). These authors expressed a deep concern of linking today’s controversy of school desegregation with U.S. historical events. Stephan and Feagin (1980) have identified the institution of slavery, in 1619, as the most important historical antecedent contributing to segregation and racial relations in the United States. The education of slaves was prohibited in most states, though there were a few vocational schools for Blacks beginning in the 1800s.

Before the Civil War, less than seven percent of free Blacks were educated (Stephan & Feagin, 1980). The Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in the Confederacy, and the Southern States began establishing “Black Codes” as a new form of discrimination against Blacks (Stephan & Feagin, 1980). Stephan and Feagin also stated

that at the conclusion of the Civil War, there were many differences across state borders about segregation regulations, in both the North and the South. Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1866 along with the establishment of the Freedman's Bureau to counteract the Black Codes. While active from 1865-1872, Freedman's Bureau created more than four thousand schools for Blacks (Stephan & Feagin, 1980). According to Gossett (1965), in 1871 the State Supreme Courts of Ohio and Indiana ruled separate schools legal as long as they were equal. Freed people of color were encouraged to speak out against discrimination of the Jim Crow regulations under The Reconstruction Act in March 1867. The Reconstruction Act of 1867 abolished black codes that refused to allow Blacks equal liberties under the law (Gossett, 1965). The Equal Protection Clause under the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 supported equal treatment of all people (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). This clause protected people against discrimination based on race, nationality, or religion. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was passed to prevent freed people of color from being deprived of minimal rights as citizens, not to reverse the thinking that Blacks were inferior to Whites (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). By the turn of the century, Jim Crow regulations had been established in most of the Southern states. These regulations segregated the races in public and private sectors and continued to create hatred and distrust between Blacks and Whites (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). Blacks and White were not permitted to work together in some states. There were separate hospitals and in Mississippi White nurses were not allowed to attend to Black patients (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). These regulations also limited educational resources that would give Black people the opportunities to better their lives. Jim Crow regulations prevented Blacks from voting if they were not literate.

In the 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) decided to begin the process of eradicating segregation by filing suits within the court system (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). According to Cushman and Urofsky, the goal was to establish equality in segregated schools allowing for Black children to receive equal opportunities in education. However, with the beginning of World War II, their efforts were halted, and their focus changed from equal education to equal employment opportunities during the war. The events that took place during this time became the inception of the Civil Rights Movement (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). The movement began when the Black soldiers returned from overseas (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). The United States could no longer be considered *The Leader of the Free World* “fighting intolerance abroad” when at home there was a major racial divide (Bell, 2004, 12). Dudziak described discrimination in the United States: “In the years following World War II, racial discrimination in the United States received increasing attention from other countries. Newspapers throughout the world carried stories about discrimination against non-white visiting foreign dignitaries, as well as against American blacks” (in Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 85). Dudziak (1988) suggested this is as a major reason the U.S. took a more serious look at the race relations at home. The move towards equality continued and expanded from employment to education.

The period of school desegregation in New Orleans from 1945 -1975 and US school desegregation from 1950-1970 are important eras for my research. From 1980-2000 the education of students in the United States research focuses on changing curriculum to one that promotes multicultural aspect as well as educational equity.

Some research during this period also addresses the re-segregation movement due to abandonment of funding by the federal government for desegregation assistance (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Educational Desegregation

The basis of the *Brown* case of May 17, 1954, set forth by head legal counsel Thurgood Marshall, was to answer the question “Whether the public schools under the Constitution could operate on a racially segregated basis?” (Bell, 2004, p. 47). After thorough consideration and investigation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the Supreme Court Justices had to answer the question: “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, p. 56) Chief Justice Earl Warren replied to that question by announcing the court’s decision, “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” when handing down the *Brown* decision (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004, p. 29). Cushman and Urofsky (2004) interpreted the Chief Justice’s message as a constitutional violation of the *Equal Protection Clause of 1868* and any public facilities upholding racial segregation were in violation, which meant *Plessy v. Ferguson* could be overturned. Justice Warren believed that as time changed so do people and circumstances under which they were drafted (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). The court’s reversal of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was based on their beliefs that people were changing their thoughts about living in a heterogeneous society and we needed each other to continue building strong supports.

The *Brown* verdict set to put in place opportunities for children of color to receive equal educational opportunities through desegregation. This verdict sparked many opinions in the White and Black communities. According to Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman, (2011) “The premise behind integration rests on a belief that moving students into white schools without transforming the school organization, classroom policies and practices, or curriculum and instruction is sufficient” (p. 47). However, Bell believed Black children could have been served in segregated schools if the focus of *Brown* had been on the *equal* basis of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and not the *separate*. Wells and Crain (1997) also support the idea that if educational policy makers had focused their efforts on curriculum and resources separate schools for Blacks and Whites would be “equal.”

Bell (2004) also argued that educational desegregation was a major example interest-convergence. Bell (1980) defined interest-convergence as “the interests of Blacks in gaining racial equality have been accommodated only when they have converged with the interests of powerful Whites” p. 5). In support of his argument, Bell suggests an alternative scenario or solution to the *Brown* opinion. His solution focused on the courts providing the same equal facilities to educating Black and Brown children within their communities. This meant physical facilities as well as instructional materials along with qualified educators to support the instruction and maintain a culture. In support of Bell’s argument that desegregation follows the tenet of interest-convergence Rosenberg (2004) discusses the impact Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act had on desegregation:

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act permitted the cut-off of federal funds to programs that practiced racial discrimination and the 1965 Elementary & Secondary Education Act provided a great deal of federal money to poor school districts, many in the South. (p. 206)

This act provided an incentive for the southern states to move forward with integration. In order to continue receiving additional federal funding in schools, the districts needed to comply with the Title VI Civil Rights Act. The motivation was not for equal education but for the White students to continue receiving funding to maintain quality educational programs. This is an example of CRT's tenet of Interest Convergence. Dudziak (1988) supports Bell's belief of interest convergence for educational desegregation. Dudziak's approach was from a more historical stance on the Cold War and desegregation. She maintained a need for taking a closer look at the reasons the federal government moved forward with *Brown*.

Included in this chapter are educational issues on a national level but focus more closely on the city of New Orleans. Using information from the articles written on the desegregation movement in New Orleans, this section provides background on reasons given for continued segregation in New Orleans by making connections to critical race theory from an educational and a legal perspective.

Desegregation on a National Level

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court declared educational segregation unconstitutional. Many southern Whites opposed this decision and set forth to prevent desegregation from occurring in states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. To show their

disdain for the verdict, by 1957, the southern states began creating laws to uphold segregation. In 1960-61, Louisiana met in five legislative sessions and passed 92 laws and resolutions to maintain segregation (Rosenberg, 2004). The White Citizens Councils and other political groups were established on state levels to uphold White supremacy. Their main goal was to keep the south as it was and not allow desegregation to happen. This was done through intimidation, economic hardship, and physical violence (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). Those that openly supported integration, Black or White, were threatened with loss of jobs or death. According to Metcalf (1983), without full support of the President on this issue, desegregation was difficult to enforce. For example, neither Presidents Eisenhower nor Kennedy would take a stand to express their thoughts on desegregation because it was an emotional issue, but they upheld the constitution and laws set forth by the Supreme Court. In cities such as Little Rock and Birmingham, federal law was enforced in the matters regarding educational desegregation.

Supporters of the *Brown I* decision believed the Supreme Court Justices had made a morally conscious decision. “[R]acial segregation under government auspices inevitably inflicts humiliation” (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004, p. 31). This statement is undeniable when segregated systems are inherently unequal, as they were in most segregated states. Karst, in his support of *Brown*, believed the impact of the *Brown* decision demonstrated the country’s willingness to change by making a caste system unconstitutional and therefore the most important decision of the twentieth century.

Brown v Topeka Board of Education

Third-grader Linda Brown was one of 13 plaintiffs in *Brown V. Topeka Board of Education*. The Brown family lived in a diverse neighborhood in Topeka. Patterson (2001) explained because the schools were racially segregated, Linda could not attend the school that was four blocks away. She had to cross a set of railroad tracks and take a bus to the Black school. Patterson (2001) further explained the families were asked by the NAACP to enroll their children at the neighborhood school, Sumner Elementary. When the families were turned away and denied enrollment, the NAACP with Thurgood Marshall at the helm, filed a discrimination suit against the school district (Patterson, 2001).

Cushman and Urofsky (2004) explain *Brown* opened the doorway to racial equality. First because of the actions taken by the Supreme Court of the United States, racial boundaries were forcibly stopped through legal amendments. Second this verdict gave the NAACP the opportunity to fight for equal rights under the law in all areas, such as voting, public transportation, and using other public facilities. *Brown I* established the unconstitutionality of separate but equal in public education. What *Brown I* was not able to accomplish was establishing a clear directive for educational desegregation (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004).

However, the *Brown II* verdict handed down by Chief Justice Warren in 1955, stated desegregation in public schools should begin “with all deliberate speed” in order to give states the opportunity to develop desegregation plans for public schools without forcibly demanding it to happen immediately. The expectation was for each state to create a process for school integration to begin. According to Cushman and Urofsky

(2004), the Supreme Court Justices believed this would allow states to make careful preparation and within a year or two be ready to adopt integration. As history revealed this did not happen. Many states in the North and the South did not establish timely integration plans to extend fully equal opportunities for children of color. The cities included in this literature review show the length of time between *Brown* and the actual implementation of school desegregation plans; some as short as three years while others as long as nine years or greater. After reading the literature, it is clear that during this time span some of the school districts made legitimate attempts to put desegregation plans in place, while other districts were forced to implement plans and still others had the political backings of devoted segregationists to avoid desegregation at all costs.

Regional Desegregation

Some states did not wait for the decision to come down from the Supreme Court and began desegregation. Some cities moved forward immediately with plans to desegregate the public schools. In Baltimore, a freedom action plan was adopted for the fall 1954, to enroll 3,000 Black children in schools, which had been previously designated White only (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). In 1954 following the *Brown* decision, the city of Louisville moved forward within the semester and opened enrollment to Black students and St. Louis set up a two-year plan in to support successful desegregation of their public schools (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004).

Other southern states such as Virginia and Mississippi strongly opposed the changes and continued to enforce the segregated Jim Crow regulations (Lewis, 2006).

Lewis (2006) also stated other southern states held off with any desegregation plans to see what would be the final court decision.

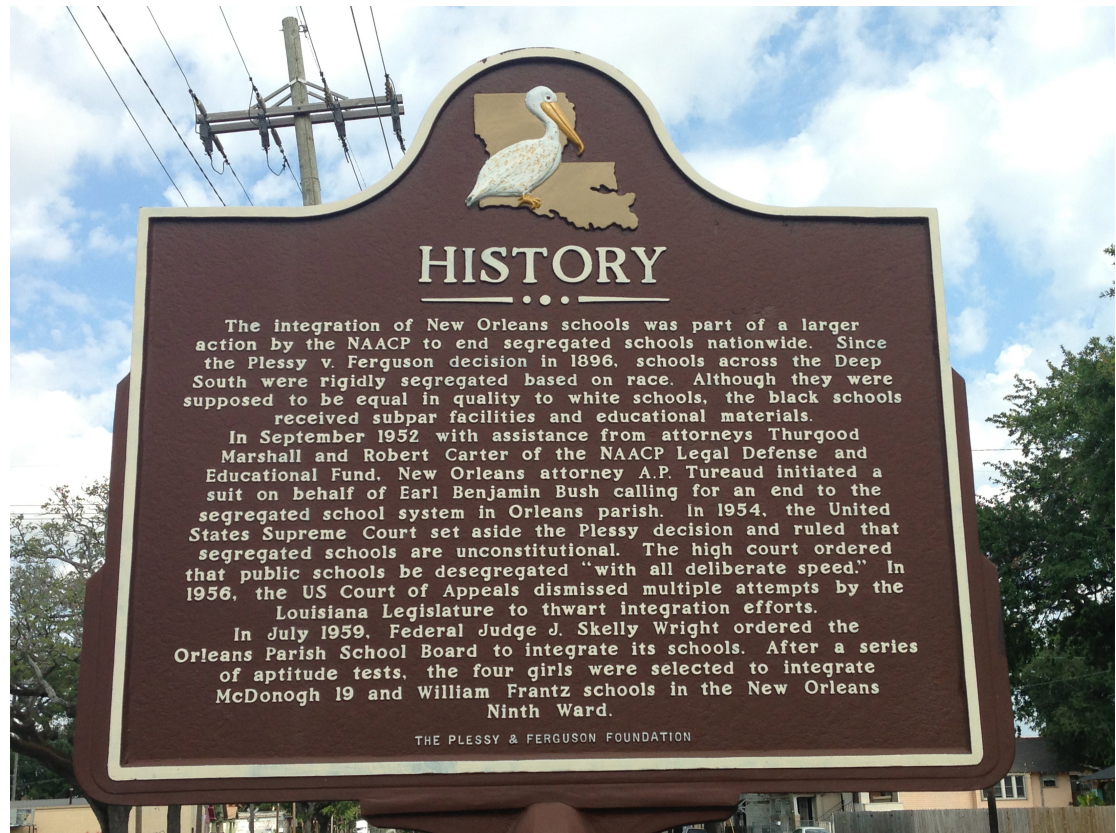


Figure 2.1 Historical Marker on the neutral ground in front of McDonogh 19

Once the final opinion was handed down, some of the southern states continued to refuse implementation of desegregation in public facilities (Lewis, 2006).

Many federal court judges across the South were determined to uphold their oaths and follow the Supreme Court's ruling. Cushman and Urofsky (2004) reported on nineteen cases of desegregation brought to the Fifth District Federal Court within the following year of *Brown II* and all were ruled to adhere with the Supreme Court's decision of desegregating public schools. Others who did not support the ruling treated

supporters of the Court's ruling negatively. According to Cushman and Urofsky (2004) state and city officials who did not support the Brown ruling verbally expressed their discontent openly in public and private forums. In particular Judge J. Skelly Wright, set in motion the beginning of school desegregation in New Orleans in the summer of 1955 and by the Spring of 1960 Judge Wright ordered the Orleans Parish school board to put in place a desegregation plan (Rogers, 1993). Judge Wright stated,

But the magnitude of the problem may not nullify the principle. And that principle is that we are, all of us, freeborn Americans, with a right to make our way, unfettered by sanctions imposed by man because of the work of God.

(Cushman & Urofsky, 2004, p. 35)

Rogers (1993) explained Judge Wright had grown up and been educated in New Orleans, but because of this decision, family and friends ostracized him and his wife. They received hate mail, threatening phone calls, and were no longer welcomed in places they frequented. Rogers (1993) continued to explain that other judges who were devout segregationists continued to hold off on local rulings or refused to acknowledge the Supreme Court's decision, so the NAACP sent several more cases to Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to have rulings overturned. For example, the NAACP asked the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling on *Brown* in Dallas, Texas as Judge William Atwell refused to rule on allowing Blacks to integrate the Dallas public schools (Baker, 1996). Other politicians declared the Supreme Court's ruling unconstitutional. Senator Harry J. Byrd asked for "massive resistance" from the White segregationists and to hold strong against desegregation (Lewis, 2006). Louisiana and Alabama endorsed interposition to protect its White citizens from having to integrate

(Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). They decided *Brown* had “no effect,” was “an encroachment of central government,” and was therefore “null and void” (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004, p. 37). This massive resistance not only gave rise to political venues to support segregation but also reawakened the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) (Lewis, 2006). With the rise of the Klan came beatings, cross burnings, murders, and bombings of those that supported desegregation especially civil rights activists (Lewis, 2006).

Cushman and Urofsky (2004) believed little progress was made in school desegregation for a few years for two main reasons. The first reason cited was because of local control by school boards, which enacted district policies that did not abide by the court rulings. Many of the southern states turned over control to local school districts and because each district had different rules lawsuits had to be filed in each local district. Some southern states passed laws in their state constitutions to disband public education and support education through private funding, while others passed laws declaring integration a felony and punishable by imprisonment. According to Cushman and Urofsky (2004) in September 1956 two years after *Brown*, only 723 school districts had begun desegregation measures, which left 2,400,000 Blacks across the south still attending segregated schools. The second reason described by Cushman and Urofsky (2004) was court costs. Most Black communities could not afford the fees and even with the support of the NAACP the expenses were still costly. At times the NAACP attorneys had to file subsequent suits because of local school boards and districts (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004).

Louisiana

Prior to the *Brown* opinion, Blacks in Louisiana, like other states, had been fighting for equal education under the law. Cushman and Urofsky (2004) also gave an account that Louisiana began their fight for equal education on the university level, as did other others. The premise was there would be less resistance on a post-secondary level then on a K-12 level. As a result of this plan, Ernest “Dutch” T. Morial, who later became the first Black Mayor of New Orleans, found himself at the head of a lawsuit to allow him and two other Black men admittance into the Louisiana State University (LSU) Law School (Baker, 1996). He was, consequently, one of the first Black men to attend LSU’s law school. What makes the case of Etienne, Prevost, and Tate, stand out from all the others is that they were six years old at the time they pioneered this desegregation movement for New Orleans public schools. They were the youngest civil rights activists to participate in an active movement. All other desegregation plans had involved high school or college students. Embarking on this journey would change the lives of all involved in the way people would react to desegregation. Because I am grew up in New Orleans and attended parochial schools, the story of the McDonogh 3 is very important to me as native New Orleanian and as an educator.

New Orleans, Louisiana

After the Civil War and during Reconstruction, New Orleans public schools were fully integrated until 1877 (Rogers, 1993). With the state’s constitution being written and Black Creoles having a place in the state legislative office there was a glimmer of hope (Rogers, 1993). Rogers (1993) reported from 1868 until 1875 Black and White children coexisted in the public school system. Baker (1996) supports this information

with facts that White families who could afford the one- to four-dollar-a-month tuition fees and sent their children to private or parochial schools in Louisiana. When private or parochial schools were no longer affordable, Whites returned to public education. The transition back to public school remained nonviolent. It seemed as though Article 135 of Fourteenth Amendment would be successful and both the state and the country could move forward and coexist (Baker, 1996). The primary objective of the article, according to Baker (1996), was to end all White-only schools throughout the parishes. The article stated, "All children of this State between the years of six and twenty-one shall be admitted to the public schools...without distinction of race, color, or previous condition" (1996, p. 20). According to Baker (1996), Blacks in Louisiana had been granted a two-fold promise. The first was a promise of an education legally, and the second was being educated along with Whites. Louisiana had elected its first Black lieutenant governor, Oscar J. Dunn. Dunn, supporting the newly staturesd article, enrolled his three daughters in the Madison Girls' School (Baker, 1996).

In the eastern periphery of the Vieux Carre, Seventh Ward was home to many descendants of the Creole 'gens de couleur libre,' men and women who had maintained a well-deserved reputation as independent, spirited blacks determined to protect their rights as citizens before and after the Civil War. (Landphair, 1999, p. 42)

The downfall of this integration movement was the rise of the White Leagues. The White Leagues were organizations that prided themselves on maintaining the ways of the old south and the separatist way of life (Landphair, 1999). In 1874, three former

Confederate officers published the *Alexandria Caucasian*. The main stance of this publication was:

There will be no security, no peace, and no prosperity for Louisiana until the government of the state is restored to the hands of the honest, intelligent, taxpaying masses; until the superiority of the Caucasian over the African in all affairs pertaining to government is acknowledged and established. (Baker, 1996, p. 23)

Baker (1996) continued to explain by the summer of 1874 White Leagues rose in parishes across the state. The Leaguers were violent and incited riots in schools. They were also responsible for the lynching and massacres of Blacks who continued to support the integrated way of life in Louisiana (Baker, 1996). They were going to return Louisiana to its “rightful heirs” and in order to do this they needed to have a united front; one race against the other (Baker, 1996). As stated by Baker (1996) when Reconstruction ended in 1875 so did integration of the public schools. This in turn brought with it the following according to Baker (1996). The Black community could not risk fighting against the hatred of the White Leagues. It would put their lives at risk. The White leagues threatened lynching and bombing and burning of their homes (Baker, 1996).

Consistent with the change, the 1920’s census noted New Orleans continued to embrace integrated neighborhoods in certain areas of the city (Baker, 1996). During this time, descendants of free Black Creoles were fighting against racial discriminatory regulations in education, housing, and transportation (Baker, 1996). There was no cause of concern that Black and White children played together but the idea of

educating them together would not be tolerated. Many of the members of the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) were segregationist and did not want the public schools desegregated. By 1933 the Ninth Ward Civic League had secured construction for Johnson Lockett School for the Black community. Blacks living in the Ninth Ward filed petitions to keep the segregated schools equal (Baker, 1996). Judge J. Skelly Wright was the federal district court judge who ordered immediate desegregation of the Orleans Parish schools (Baker 1996).

Prior to *Brown I*, many Black residents of New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward filed several complaints with the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) about improving the conditions of the Black schools in the area (Rogers, 1993). Rogers (1993) continued to explain in 1952, the New Orleans branch of the NAACP filed *Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board* on behalf of Earl Benjamin Bush and 72 other families for equal educational facilities. The McCarthy School; one of two Black elementary school in the Lower 9th Ward was the main focus of many of the complaints (Rogers, 1993). Rogers (1993) described the physical conditions of the facility were dilapidated and needed grave improvements. McCarthy was severely overcrowded and the OPSB's solution was to institute the platoon system Rogers (1993). In a platoon system students would attend school in shifts.

In their research, Rogers (1993) and Baker (1996) stated New Orleans would be the first of the major Southern cities to test integration in the public school system. Both authors agreed other southern cities anticipated the change would be positive and smooth because of New Orleans' mixed cultural heritage. New Orleans had been depicted in a picturesque way because of its rich culture of food and music and its

historic foundations of both French and Spanish influence (Rogers 1993). Because of this idealized depiction of New Orleans, it was deemed a perfect place to establish that integration could happen successfully and peacefully; at least this assumption (Rogers, 1993). On the contrary, some Whites in New Orleans fought hard for eight years to hold steadfast to their Southern segregationist views and regulations (Rogers, 1993; Baker, 1996). More Jim Crow regulations were sanctioned through legislation to prevent desegregation from occurring. Desegregation in New Orleans was to be avoided at all costs, even to the extreme of closing the entire school district (Baker, 1996).

Baker (1996) described the events that occurred on November 14, 1960. New Orleans showed the nation and the world its bigotry as four six-year-old Black girls desegregated two of Orleans Parish schools in the Ninth Ward, McDonogh 19 Elementary and William Frantz Elementary. Chanting of "*Two, Four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate!*" (Baker, 1996, p. 2) roared loudly in the streets of the Ninth Ward among the crowd of lower class Whites, who could not afford private education for their children. Baker (1996) continued to describe the feel of the crowd as the events on November 14, 1960, took place. This mob consisting of mostly irate White women would rather not educate their children than to have them educated with Black children (Baker, 1996). By the end of the day only Etienne, Tate, and Prevost remained in the first-grade classroom at McDonogh 19. By the end of the week, they were the only students in the entire building (Baker, 1996).

Women activists organized Save Our Schools (SOS) in order to keep public schools open and encourage families to keep their children in attendance of the two schools being integrated (Baker, 1996). According to Baker (1996) the organization

even suggested beginning the integration process in the Uptown Garden district where there was more support and allowed for an easier transition. The school board refused believing that if they integrated two schools in the Ninth Ward desegregation would be unsuccessful and they would not have to comply with the federal court ruling (Baker, 1996). This idea was mainly based on the ignorance and inferiority complex of the Whites currently living in the area (Baker, 1996). Baker (1996) noted many of the Whites in the area were first and second generation Irish immigrants. They were not welcomed in the Uptown area of the city where the more established and prominent Whites lived (Baker, 1996). Rogers (1993) stated these lower class Whites lived in neighborhoods with working class Blacks and thought themselves better than Blacks. However their ignorance came in to true form in the fall of 1960 as mobs of White women and teenagers harassed the three Black six year old girls attending McDonough 19 Elementary every day for an entire year (Rogers, 1993). White families immediately pulled their children out of school (Rogers, 1993). Many White families enrolled their children in neighboring parish schools in St. Bernard Parish (Baker, 1996). Governor Leander Perez made this option available for families who did not want their children educated with Negro children (Baker, 1996; Rogers, 1993). Etienne, Prevost, and Tate remained the only three children in the empty building of McDonough 19 for the remainder of the school year (Rogers, 1993).

The protesting continued every day of the school year (Baker, 1996; Rogers, 1993). The protestors decreased in size but many who viewed integration of the races in schools as a disgrace to the southern way of life remained outside both schools (Baker, 1996). Each day the Federal Marshals escorted the girls to their school. Rogers

(1993) and Baker (1996) affirmed the three girls remained at McDonogh 19 for another school year and some students did return and a few more Blacks entered the first and second grades. After the second year at McDonogh 19, the majority of the students were Black and the three families were asked to integrate another school in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward (Baker, 1996). As third graders Prevost, Etienne, and Tate entered Thomas J. Semmes Elementary. Baker (1996) stated this experience was very different from the McDonogh 19. Whereas the families at McDonogh 19 removed their children from school, the families at T.J. Semmes remained (Baker, 1996). The children were encouraged to be cruel to the Black children who had integrated. Along with many of the White children who were cruel, the teachers and administrators were cruel, and ignored the children's pleas for help (Baker, 1996).

Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957

In September 1957, nine Black teenagers were chosen to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The superintendent of Little Rock School District board (LRSD), Virgil Blossom, agreed to comply with desegregation once the Supreme Court established structured means to desegregate schools (Gordy, 2009). Gordy (2009) also discussed a plan devised by Gordy (2009) stated Superintendent Blossom called the Blossom Plan to move forward with educational desegregation. This plan, also referred to as The Little Rock Phase Program, comprised of desegregating Central High School first and then filter down to the lower grades over the next six years (Gordy, 2009).

Under the plan, students would be permitted to transfer from any school where their race was in the minority, thus ensuring that the black schools would remain racially segregated, because many people believed that few, if any, white

students would opt to attend predominantly black schools. Federal courts upheld the Blossom Plan in response to a lawsuit by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

(<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/>)

Gordy (2009) explained the process of how students were chosen and the events that occurred. The students chosen under the guise of Daisy Bates and the NAACP were hard working, had good grades, and needed to have the right personality in order to handle the situation to which they were being asked to subject themselves. Originally there were 37 students chosen. Believing the school would never allow 37 Black high school students into one school the list had to be shortened (Gordy, 2009). Some families chose to remove themselves from the list and others were asked to wait. The remaining eleven families agreed to participate. The night before integration would happen, two students changed their minds and chose not to participate. Then to prevent desegregation from occurring, Governor Orval Faubus sent in the Arkansas National Guard to block any Blacks from entering Central High School on September 4, 1957 (Gordy, 2009). The students were to meet at the home of Daisy Bates and go to school together. However, they were unable to contact one student, Elizabeth Eckford, she took the bus to Central High School and was greeted by a mob of angry Whites yelling racial slurs and obscenities. She described the lonely walk as, "the longest walk of my life" (www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/). Gordy (2009) described the scene as Minnejean Brown walked away from the school, because the National Guard would not permit her to enter, she tried looking for a friendly face in the angry crowd. She made eye contact with an elderly White woman, who returned her gaze by spitting in

Elizabeth's face. The Arkansas National Guard continued to turn away Black students until their dismissal seventeen days later. In the meantime to make sure the students kept up with their classes, Daisy Bates made arrangements for them to meet daily at her home and conducted classes. On September 23, also referred to as *Black Monday*, nine students were escorted by local police and 22 paratroopers to Central High School. Minnejean Brown, one of the nine, stated, "For the first time in my life I feel like an American citizen" (Little Rock Nine Documentary, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MksNGcNzKc>). Gordy (2009) described the crowds of protesters outside of the school as irate and violent and feared the students would be injured, the students were escorted out of a side door of the facility. President Eisenhower appalled by the blatant disregard of the federal mandate and the injustice of civil liberties, expressed his disgrace for the people of Little Rock by threatening, "whatever force may be necessary to enforce the law and the federal court order" (Gordy, 2009, p. xxv). President Eisenhower issued an order to cease and desist all actions preventing the nine students enrolled in Central High School. Because the order of cease and desist was ignored by Governor Faubus, President Eisenhower took control of the Arkansas National Guard and disbursed an additional one thousand troops into Little Rock (Gordy, 2009). Federal troops remained at Central High School for the duration of the school year and two guards were assigned to personally escort each of the nine students to their daily scheduled classes and other guards were stationed outside surrounding the building (Gordy, 2009). Gordy (2009) recalled there were several recorded incidents of violence and retaliation where both Black and White students were suspended or expelled. One that was mentioned in detail was about

Minnejean Brown, one of the Nine, was expelled for several repeated acts of retaliation. Her white attackers were suspended but not expelled. On May 27, 1958, Ernest Green became the first Black student to graduate from Central High School (Gordy, 2009). The following fall, Little Rock voted to close all four high schools to avoid further desegregation (Gordy, 2009).

Analysis of the token integration of the nine students in Little Rock, Arkansas, was chosen as a comparison to the token integration in New Orleans, Louisiana, because the situations are similar. First, there were a limited number of Black students chosen to integrate one school. The students were carefully chosen based on criteria established by the local school board. These children were also verbally attacked by crowds of angry Whites for their pursuit of an equitable education. In both instances the governors of both states were strong supporters of segregation and tried to create difficulties in allowing these children admittance into a previously White only school. It should be noted that the children in each selection were escorted to school daily by federal marshals for their safety and protection. This process continued to cause a racial divide in the cities. One significant difference is Little Rock, Arkansas, decided to close their schools the year following Ernest Green's graduation from Central High School (Gordy, 2009). The citizens of New Orleans would not allow their schools to be closed (Gordy, 2009). They voted to keep the schools open in the face of integration, though many Whites moved out of Orleans Parish to avoid having their children educated with Black children (Gordy, 2009).

Charleston and Williamsburg Counties, South Carolina, 1963

In 1945, high school students in the Black community organized a protest against inequalities in segregated schools and Black teachers went on strike. With the support of the NAACP the families began a suit to fight segregation in public schools (Baker, 2006). The U.S. District court ruling on *Briggs v. Elliot* did not overturn the state's segregation laws, but it did mandate equalization and led state officials to create a \$75 million school-equalization program" (Baker, 2006, p. 88). This initial suit filed in 1950 against the school board president was for equal transportation. The school board approved 30 new buses for White students while the Black families raised money to purchase a used bus to transport their children to school (Baker, 2006). Parents were tired of being ignored and decided to file a suit against segregated facilities. According to Baker (2006), this suit forced the state to begin spending money on equal educational facilities for Blacks and Whites. However, it did not open the arena of desegregated educational facilities (Baker, 2006). Baker (2006) continued to explain once *Brown* paved the way to school desegregation, Black teachers in South Carolina voiced their opinions in support of desegregation for school age children and in the midst of the *Brown* decision, the Black community prepared for change. However, the local politicians denied change by reporting this was not what the Black community wanted (Baker, 2006). Black teachers were fired from their positions for supporting the move to desegregating K12 schools (Baker, 2006). The school boards threatened school district closings. According to Baker (2006), Thurgood Marshall realized this problem was bigger than what the court could solve. White flight in Clarendon County began. White families with school-age children began moving out of the city and into

suburban areas to avoid desegregation (Baker, 2006). According to Baker (2006) this trend persisted until 1963. The movement in South Carolina, like Birmingham, was saved by student activists and protestors. Their drive for educational equality and equity provided the needed stamina to allow the NAACP to persist in the battle of school desegregation in South Carolina (Baker, 2006). In October, 1960, the NAACP filed a suit for fifteen Black students who had applied to attend an all-White school in Charleston (Baker, 2006). The Charleston school board immediately denied all applications giving the reason that first the students needed to submit to an intelligence test and a cultural test (Baker, 2006). Baker (2006) also explained the process set by the Charleston school board before the students would be allowed to take either of the exams their parents had to complete a written application asking for a desegregation application for their children. If the parent request was denied, they could have the application appealed to the school district's subcommittee on admissions. Reasons for denying applicants that were well qualified because they were geographically closer to another non-White school or because of satisfactory academic performance the student would not do well in a strange environment (Baker, 2006). After lofty appeals with the school district, in May 1962, a school desegregation suit was filed (Baker, 2006). By 1963, South Carolina conceded and agreed to begin desegregation plans to avoid federal interference and violent outbreaks of protestors that had occurred in neighboring states like Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia (Baker, 2006).

Desegregation began on the university level first. Clemson admitted its first Black student, Harvey Gantt, into its institution. The following year another Black student was admitted into Clemson (Baker, 2006). "Dean James L. Williams told reporters that

'Clemson would accept anyone who could meet entrance requirements' " (Baker, 2006, p. 149). Baker (2006) indicated though these two students did not receive the physical assaults as those who attempted to integrate Ole Miss and University of Georgia, they were isolated from peers and did not participate in social activities put on by the institution. This allowed the NAACP to continue its pursuit of desegregation in high schools and in elementary schools (Baker, 2006).

Baker (2006) declared 11 years after the *Brown I* decision that the Williamsburg County school district started "freedom of choice," which allowed students to choose either a White or Black school to attend. In 1965 Black students began enrolling in all-White schools (Baker, 2006). There was initial tension about desegregation, but the county was able to begin using Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) guidelines and limited litigation (Baker, 2006). Historically as in many places Baker (2006) affirmed, discrimination was present, but there was minimal resistance. Whites who opposed desegregation and could afford private education enrolled their children in private or parochial schools and avoided desegregation (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). In 1970, HEW began negotiations for furthering desegregation and the Williamsburg County district began pairing schools for desegregation (Baker, 2006). This was successful without school closings because in this rural area, the people knew each other well and coexisted within the community (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004).

In the area of educational quality, some research reported increase while others reported a decrease (Baker, 2006). Baker (2006) reported four points occurring during this time. First dropout rate of all students decreased. Second there was more community support for achievement during this time. Success was achieved because

the Black community in South Carolina wanted better for their children. Third they realized a quality education was the only means by which families would move beyond poverty. Fourth, by improving teacher training and curriculum provided by the additional forty percent of federal funding received during the 1970s also measured the success rate of desegregation of South Carolina schools. On an elementary level, the system was restructured and called the Continuous Progress Program (Baker, 2006). Baker (2006) stated students were able to progress at their own ability level in each subject despite educational background and the community was pleased as they could measure success and academic growth, and so this minimized potential hostilities between the Black and White communities. In the middle and high schools, the curriculum was changed to include Black History and literature (Baker, 2006). Baker (2006) reported another aspect that contributed to the success of Williamsburg County was the faculty. Fifty percent of the teaching staff volunteered to transfer into different schools to make desegregation work (Baker, 2006). There was a 20 percent loss of staff both Black and White in both districts due to changes in enrollment (Baker, 2006). Federal funds were given to provide sensitivity training to prepare teachers for desegregation (Baker, 2006). Lack of support from media, religious, political, and business leaders were factors that prevented full integration throughout the state (Baker, 2006).

This example was chosen as a comparison to the events that occurred in New Orleans because it denoted the efforts put forth resulted in minimal transition and success. As New Orleans continued its efforts to desegregate the Orleans Public School system, the White families in the Lower Ninth Ward continued their exodus to St.

Bernard Parish. In South Carolina, the school district put forth efforts to provide training for their staff and support for their families to support the success of the transition to integration (Frystak, 2009).

Wichita, Kansas, 1964

Kansas was admitted into the Union as a free state. By 1906 Wichita set up a dual system of education even though it was not required by the state. According to the US Commission on Civil Rights (1977), this system remained in place until 1952. In 1954, W.C. Little opened as the first desegregated school in Wichita.

The US Commission on Civil Rights (1977) reported there was resistance to desegregation in different arenas. For example, a major factor limiting desegregation was real estate. Some companies would not sell houses to White families with school age children because the neighborhood was predominantly Black. When the demographics of the neighborhoods changed the schools changed and did not always remain desegregated. By the 1960's schools were reverting to segregation (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). In 1966 efforts were made to reverse racial isolation; however, NAACP stepped in and filed complaints against violation of Titles IV and VI of 1964 Civil Rights Acts (US Commission on Civil Rights, 1977). In order to continue in compliance with desegregation, in 1969 Kansas developed a plan to desegregate secondary schools first. The plan according to US Commission on Civil Rights (1977) did not include a plan for desegregating elementary schools. In order to prevent full desegregation the boundaries for elementary enrollment were changed. Students were reassigned to schools outside their neighborhood schools (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977).

A decade later, in the late eighties, elementary schools in Wichita still were not desegregated. The US Commission of Civil Rights (1977) reported the NAACP began filing suits in support of Title VI Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and by 1971 desegregation was underway and set up through a lottery system. It was initially met with some resistance but not violence. Additionally there was support from the business community in favor of segregation (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977). During this transition only 45 children were out of school during the initial change (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977).

After the first year of desegregation, families volunteered to return to the school in which they were placed because it had been a smooth transition (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977). Families reported their students received a quality education and had made new social relationships with other students (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977). Even though the desegregation was reported negatively through the media, the community supported the change towards desegregation (US Commission of Civil Rights, 1977).

This example was included to demonstrate the influence the media has on historical events. Even though there was initial resistance by the community for change from a dual system of education of Blacks and Whites, with community support desegregation in Wichita became successful. The media events in New Orleans exposed the ugly truth about the racial relations in New Orleans and the lack of support to integrate public school system.

St. Louis, Missouri, 1975

St. Louis is described by Wells and Crain (1997) as a place that symbolizes the past and present problems of urban America. They describe it as a crossroads where “southern politeness meets northern refinement, where East Coast tradition encounters West Coast individualism, and where the muddy Missouri River converges with the mighty Mississippi” (p. 23). Because the Missouri Compromise of 1820 admitted Missouri into the Union as a slave state and declared the surrounding states above its southern border as free states, Missouri was surrounded with racial tensions (Wells & Crain, 1997). After the Civil War Blacks migrated from rural parts of the state into the cities. According to Wells and Crain (1997), St. Louis is one of the United States largest segregated cities. With the absence of state sanctioned desegregation, the White residents established their own de facto system of segregation regulations by delegating specific public places as White Only (Wells & Crain, 1997). By the late 1920s Whites began migrating to the suburban areas of the state. Wells and Crain (1997) declared the last and most significant migration of Blacks into St. Louis between 1940 and 1950 as based on census information. This migration occurred during World War II. As the population of Black families increased within city limits, the number of White families decreased providing an influx of White families into the suburbs (Wells & Crain, 1997). The residential zoning laws in the state prevented Black families from moving into certain neighborhoods; the color line had been established (Wells & Crain, 1997).

The Geyer Act of 1839 created a public school system in Missouri. This elementary through postsecondary system was not available to Blacks. “In 1846, Missouri passed a law explicitly prohibiting the education of ‘Negroes’” (Wells & Crain,

1997, p. 75). Blacks in St. Louis set up underground schools in church basements to establish some sort of educational system for their community. It was not until 1866, years after the law banning the education of “coloreds” had been revoked did Missouri open a school for Black children (Wells & Crain, 1997). By 1975 Missouri had 12 separate facilities to educate Black children. The buildings were not located in Black communities because most of them were older school building that had been abandoned by Whites for more modern facilities (Wells & Crain, 1997). According to Wells and Crain (1997), this meant Black children had to travel further to get to school, passing newer White-only schools. In addition there was only one high school for Black students. Some students traveled from the suburbs to attend. To avoid admitting Black students to the state universities, Missouri provided funding to Lincoln University to establish a law school and a school of journalism (Wells & Crain, 1997). Missouri had no intention of desegregating its educational system before the *Brown* decision. It continued to operate under a dual system of separate educational facilities for Black and White students (Wells & Crain, 1997).

Following *Brown*, St. Louis school board made plans to change its dual system of education to a single system incorporating the use of neighborhood schools. The plan was to operate in three phases. The first phase was to desegregate and merge the junior colleges. The second phase was to desegregate the adult education programs high schools except for the technical high schools. The third stage was to finally desegregate all K-12 public schools including the technical high schools (Wells & Crain, 1997). The board accounted for the de facto segregating housing regulations and redesigned the attendance area school plan to exclude Black neighborhood

communities from participating in the desegregation plan. A small percentage of the White elementary schools were included in the change to include a small percentage of Black students for enrollment. However the new design did not allow for matriculation to the previously White only high school. The population continued to change. (Wells & Crain, 1997). Within a five-year period the percentage of White children attending a public school in St. Louis decreased from seventy-six percent to thirty-seven percent (Wells & Crain, 1997). In 1975 *Liddell v. St. Louis Board of Education* was filed to increase the number of minority teachers in the public schools in hopes to revive the desegregation plan in St. Louis. The court ruled in favor of the defendants. The courts believed the St. Louis Board of Education had acted in good favor by establishing a desegregation plan in the 1950s and should not be held responsible for the change in demographics. The plaintiffs appealed to the Eighth District Circuit Court in 1980 (Wells & Crain, 1997). The Appellate Court reversed the ruling and declared the city and state had not fulfilled its duties of ensuring a desegregated school system and eliminating racial discrimination and “consistently held that merely establishing a racially neutral school assignment system is not sufficient to eliminate the constitutional violation caused by past intentional discrimination” (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 92). The court supported its ruling with other cases that had come to pass in other states in violation of the *Brown* decision. By the summer of 1981 a new voluntary desegregation plan was set in motion by the Board of Education and approved by Judge Meredith. To present date, St. Louis school district is currently segregated mainly due to the demographics of the people living in the city limits. The voluntary plan is still in

place, however many families have preferred not to have their children bussed out of district.

St. Louis demonstrated a nonviolent transition in its attempts to desegregate its school system, however, many other factors involving the failure of not achieving full integration (Wells & Crain, 1997). It is important to be aware that

educational achievement alone does not solve economic inequality among different racial groups. School desegregation must do more than raise black students' test scores and close the black-white achievement gap; it must also break the cycle of segregation that leaves blacks and whites worlds apart. (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 83)

In comparison, St. Louis has a large population of Black families like New Orleans. Both cities have sections where the neighborhoods were segregated and supported by community leaders. The major distinction between the cities involves the two different types of segregation established by the states. Missouri was able to allow an easier transition because the state was not overrun by Jim Crow regulations, whereas Louisiana being in the deep South, de jure segregation played a significant role in desegregating the schools and the city. The demure transition and lack of resistance in St. Louis to change and be accommodating made it appear as though desegregation could occur without forcible means but at what cost? (Wells & Crain, 1997). "While segregation may seem tolerable from within caring communities like the Ville, segregation is usually built on discrimination and too often nurtures the concentration of poverty and isolation from opportunity that destroys even the strongest black neighborhoods" (Wells & Crain, 1997, p. 37)

Birmingham, Alabama, 1963

On September 10, 1963, three Birmingham public schools were desegregated along with one school in Mobile and one in Tuskegee, following Executive Order 11118, titled "Obstruction of the Justice in the State of Alabama" issued by President Kennedy. Nine years after the *Brown I* verdict, Birmingham schools were still desegregated, but the Black residents of Birmingham, had long been protesting against segregated laws. Months earlier, the city had agreed to desegregate stores in downtown Birmingham after protests and sit-ins from the Black community. According to The Washington Observer August 19, 1963, the school board began its desegregation plan. Their plan was called *Freedom of Choice Plan* and was set to begin in September at the start of school (Press, 1963). Under this plan, families could choose where they wanted their children to attend school. Prior to this plan taking action, Governor George Wallace, a segregationist, ordered all the schools cited to participate in integration across the state closed. A riot broke out when White supremacists discovered two Black children had registered at a previously all-White school in Mobile (Kennedy Blocks Use of Troops By Wallace Alabama Schools Integrated, 1963). However in Huntsville, a peaceful integration process took place as 12 White children integrated a previously Black Roman Catholic school. Governor Wallace used the Alabama National Guard to prevent integration, so President Kennedy federalized over 200 National Guardsmen and sent them to follow the Supreme Court's decision and the local school board's plan to commence integration in the state. What makes the desegregation movement here significant to my research is the Children's Crusade. School-age children in Birmingham accompanied older siblings to a peaceful protest in downtown Birmingham, to take an

active role in protesting against desegregation and fighting for equal rights. In contrast with New Orleans, the adults organized the desegregation plan, but four six-year-old girls implemented the plan for two years.

Summary of Common Factors among School Desegregation Movements

The review of literature on school desegregation found six common factors among the desegregation movements:

1. Each case referenced in this study used token integration. There were no more than three schools integrated at once. The system of token integration was used, where fewer than a dozen Blacks were allowed to integrate any one institution. Many of the participants involved in desegregation suffered social isolation by White peers.

2. Federal Marshals were sent to the areas where desegregation was to occur in order to protect the students. Federal Marshals were also sent because the Governors of the states would not permit the students to enter the schools assigned for desegregation. They would rather have closed schools than permit desegregation.

3. Residential segregation evolved. White Flight occurred in all of the areas associated with educational desegregation. Whites moved from the cities to the suburbs. Some real estate companies would not sell homes in areas where schools were to begin integration to White families with school-aged children.

4. Desegregation was permitted when Whites could see a benefit for their children. This is identified as Interest Convergence. In some cities where integration took place, school boards built new facilities outside of the integration areas for White children to attend. Through integration, grants and federal monies were put towards improving segregated schools in White neighborhoods.

5. Poor Whites felt more threatened by integration because of the status they held above Blacks in American society. This is an example of Whiteness as Property. The only thing separating poor Blacks and Whites was the color of their skin. Middle- and upper-class Whites had less of a problem with integration. Segregation was the only obstacle keeping Blacks from being on an equal field of opportunity. Poor Whites needed to keep the advantage because middle- and upper-class Whites did not associate with lower-class or poor Whites.

6. Racial educational equity within our public schools has not been achieved. Middle-class Black students are still being outperformed by poor Whites. Children of color are still performing below standard. There are many educational opportunities being denied to children of color to reach their full potential and develop into well-rounded, educated, students.

It is true that any child is permitted to attend any school district in the United States based on district guidelines and parameters, regardless of the color of their skin. In the past 59 years, educational desegregation has remained stagnant. Metcalf (1983) expressed that a “weak President and docile Congress” (p. 56) allowed this to happen. Metcalf stated that from Eisenhower until Johnson there was not great support to end segregation from the executive branch. Kennedy reacted to the nonviolent protests of Dr. King and other Civil Rights leaders because of the violent responses from the supporters of segregation. After President Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson ensured the passing of civil rights laws and the end of Jim Crow regulations (Metcalf, 1983).

I believe if we had followed through with focusing on the equality of the “*separate but equal*” doctrine, then the separate component would have been an easier transition for those opposed to integration. Instead of focusing on the harmful effects separate facilities have on Black and Brown children, focusing on equalizing these facilities for all children would have brought a more amicable outcome. I believe this would have provided an additional perspective for segregationists to see the importance of equality for all educating all children. Providing all children with current materials, modern facilities, and highly qualified educators would give evidence of the necessity for equal education for all. Wells and Crain (1997) perceived that school desegregation was seen charity by the White South to make amends for years of injustice. Integration would have still required the full support of Thurgood Marshall, A. P. Tureaud, and other lead attorneys of the NAACP during this period for true success. My opinion is supported through the writings and teachings of Bell and other Critical Race Theorists. Some people would have you believe “separate but equal” is an unattainable reality. Why can’t Black and Latino children attend homogenous educational facilities and receive the same quality of education as White children? It is not because it is unconstitutional. What is unconstitutional is not providing the same, equal opportunities for all children no matter where they choose to attend school. The accomplishment of the landmark case of *Brown* has afforded people of color the opportunities to attend any K-12 and post-secondary public educational facility. What *Brown* did not accomplish was mandating equal standards in separate educational facilities or providing equal opportunities for those who remained within the Black community. In *Abbot v. Burke V 1998* (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004), the Supreme Court

ruled to provide extensive reforms to improve educational opportunities for minority students in segregated schools. These reforms included funding, not integration to balance the needs of the urban learners. In 2002, former President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation for educational accountability. NCLB did not include integration as part of the reform for improving underperforming schools in urban areas.

The content desegregation in this literature review was included to provide evidence that desegregation in the United States was not achieved through amicable means nor was it fully supported. It was primarily forced because the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. The selections chosen included some narrative accounts by primary participants of integration movements in the cities. These accounts provided historical information from an alternate perspective. The city of New Orleans has reverted to desegregated public schools in many areas of the city. According to Cohen (2010, p. 1),

Of the 91 public schools operating in New Orleans in 2009, 16 of them had black enrollments of 99.5 or higher, according to school system data collected by Greater New Orleans Data Center. By comparison, 58 percent of the students at private or parochial schools in the city are white, according to Agenda for Children.

Ninety percent of the Black students in New Orleans attend public schools, which are primarily segregated (Cohen, 2010). Parents are still opting out for a better quality of education by enrolling in private and parochial schools. In addition, when White Flight occurred in parts of Orleans Parish in 1960, many never returned from St. Bernard

Parish. Cohen interviewed Laura Mogg, research director for Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives, who is quoted in the article as stating, “What we’re left with is a system that is segregated by class and income and that, in large part, has contributed to the lowering in school performance” (Cohen, 2010, p.1). She views segregation as contributing factor of lower performance in schools. I see the neglect of the district to support the equity of quality education by putting the needed funds into facilities, curriculum, professional development, and family support. This has become the demise of the Orleans Parish public schools. I believe there would not be a need for a *Recovery School District*, if the OPSB had acted in accordance with funding distributed from federal, state, and local levels.

The literature review chapter outlined the historical events involving school desegregation and the obstacles achieving educational equity. It also provided a working definition and examples of token integration and focused on the desegregation of Orleans public schools and compared four other school desegregation movements to determine reasons for success and failure. The focus of the literature review was to provide a clearer understanding of the process and events that occurred in New Orleans in 1960 in regards to desegregation. In this chapter, literature was reviewed and introduced a connection to the methodology of Critical Race Theory’s framework for exploring social inequities in educational foundations with historical recount of lived experiences of participants that will be discussed in chapter three.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.
– Chimamanda Adichie (2009)

Chapter three defines and outlines the research framework including Boyer's Scholarship and its connection to this research project that focused on how three women of color described their experiences as primary participants of the Orleans Parish schools' token integration process. This chapter also connects the secondary research question of how media documents from the period support the information provided by the participants. The chapter includes information on the research framework, setting and participant selection, contextual foundations, data collection and analysis, limitations of the methodology, and ethical considerations.

Research Framework

This section explains the research design, how it relates to the primary and secondary research questions, and provides a rationale for the qualitative approach. Qualitative research provides first-hand information, which is gathered directly from the source (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher define qualitative research design as centered on individual lived experiences within society and culture. The experiences need to have a purpose and a connection that creates importance on a larger scale. This dissertation focuses on the childhood lived experience of the desegregation of New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) in Orleans Parish. (Note: The terms New Orleans Public Schools and Orleans Parish Schools are used interchangeably in the dissertation.) Qualitative methods were used to explore

how three women of color described their experiences as primary participants in desegregating that school system and to gain a deeper understanding of the token integration process that occurred in New Orleans in 1960.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative research emphasizes gathering data as it naturally occurs, rather than in controlled settings. Creswell's (2007) definition of qualitative research as "an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes pattern or theme" (p. 37) supports McMillan and Schumacher's. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that qualitative research is interpretative and authentic, and the study should occur in a natural setting for the researcher to make sense of the meaning people bring to the world.

Creswell (2007) explains several reasons qualitative research methods that best apply to this research project. Those that best applied were "to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants...address a problem or issue" (p. 40).

Setting and Participants

The research setting was New Orleans, Louisiana. In order to make this study as authentic as possible, the interviews and document analysis were conducted there. The interviews were conducted in the home of a mutual friend. This setting was chosen to allow the participants to feel more comfortable and relaxed. The participants were brought together in a comfortable setting to talk about what they remembered and also

shown old photographs and news clippings. The three interviewees were very excited to see one another, which made the interview process go smoothly.

The research sample in this study was comprised of three participants: three women who pioneered the initial integration of Orleans Parish schools as six year-old girls, entering the first grade of a previously “White only” school in November 1960. They were Gail Etienne, Leona Tate, and Tessie Prevost, who agreed to have their names used in the study.

The research sample is small because of the 137 applicants for the 1960 desegregation process only five six-year-old girls were chosen based on the criteria set by the Orleans Parish School Board (Lacy Rogers, 1993). Of those five chosen, four participated in the 1960 desegregation of the two chosen schools (Lacy Rogers, 1993). The three who participated in this research project integrated McDonogh 19 Elementary. Their story was untold and unfamiliar. There was no documentation available about the criteria used by the school board to determine how or what standards needed to be met in order to qualify as a candidate.

Three girls were enrolled at McDonough 19 Elementary and the other two were enrolled at William Frantz Elementary. At the last minute, one family chose not to participate, leaving one little girl to integrate Frantz Elementary. Her story has been told several times under titles: *Through My Eyes (1999)* co-authored by Ruby Bridges and Margo Lundell; *The Story of Ruby Bridges (1995)* written by Robert Coles; and *Ruby Bridges Goes to School My True Story (2009)* written by Ruby Bridges.

The story we have not heard is the story of the three, tiny, six-year-old girls, who were escorted to McDonough 19 every day by federal marshals. Their parents

entrusted these men to protect their daughters from the mobs of angry White women who yelled racial slurs, threatened to poison them, and threw rotten food at them. Fifty-three years later these women agreed to share their untold story and experiences with me so others will know what they endured, so that all children could be educated together.

Contextual Foundations

There were two contextual foundations for the dissertation: Boyer's scholarships of integration and application (1990) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Boyer defined scholarship of integration as giving meaning to isolated facts and putting them in perspective (p. 18) and "fitting one's own research--or the research of others---into larger intellectual patterns" (p. 19). Scholarship of integration integrates the historical perspective of desegregation. Boyer's scholarship of integration was employed to create meaning from an atypical perspective and connect the meanings to the current state of public education in New Orleans, Louisiana. His scholarship of application engages the scholar in discovering new understanding through historical literature and conversation.

Critical Race Theory is a theoretical lens used in qualitative research that focuses attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded within the framework of American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) identified eight constructs in Critical Race Theory that scholars use to analyze race and racism: "(1) Whiteness as property; (2) Intersectionality; (3) Critique of liberalism and colorblindness; (4) Interest-Convergence; (5) Racial realism; (6) Restrictive vs. expansive notions of equality; (7) Voice/Counterstory; and (8) Social Change" (p. 43).

The constructs that connected with this research topic are Voice/ Counterstory, Interest-Convergence, and Social Change. The main construct for the research is Voice/Counter storytelling. The importance of hearing the first-hand experiences from a non-dominant perspective brings to light additional perspectives to gather a more complete story. Ladson-Billings (1998) explains voice “as a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial redress” (p. 14). The second construct of Interest-Convergence highlights how Critical Race Theorists view *Brown* and the effects on educating Black children, which leads to the effect *Brown* has had on social change in United States education system for people of color. This second construct is supported by Bell’s (2004) as he argues the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policymaking positions” (p. 69). Once White stakeholders in the school boards were given federal funding to enhance the growth and educational development of White children in public schools, there was less tension in allowing Black children to integrate their facilities. The third construct, Social Change, argues whether or not social change can be brought about through legal means. The primary example used in this research is the *Brown* verdict. Rosenberg (1991) outlines the *Brown* decision and the court cases that followed that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. In this dissertation the constructs were used in these ways. Voice and counterstory were used to provide the interviewees the opportunity to share their memories and feelings about participating in integration and allow their side of the story to be heard and bring about a different perspective. Interest-Convergence used as a construct here supports the

information discussed in the literature review. When integration was seen as profitable for educating White children, then the parochial and private sectors of education supported integration publicly. Finally, including Social Change as the third construct in the dissertation explains the need for change in the dynamics of equal rights for United States citizens. The construct of Social Change illuminates how the Civil Rights Movements and the *Brown* decision helped bring about change for all children to be educated equally. The argument of whether *Brown* has met its full intentions or potential is not being argued.

Data Collection

Data were collected through focus group interviews and document analysis. Focus group interviews were used to gather information from the participants in the study. Document analysis was used to gather additional information from local sources about the integration process in the New Orleans public schools. National Archive forms were used to analyze photographs and newspaper articles. The forms are designed with specific questions that guide the researcher to look for certain information in the media (photograph, article, etc.) to assist in uncovering research (See Appendix C). After looking at each photograph from *The Times Picayune*, a document sheet was used to record observations, questions, and feelings about each photograph. The same process was used with the newspaper articles. The information gathered using these forms was added to support the research about desegregation in New Orleans. These articles and photographs also informed the literature review.

Focus Groups

An in-depth interview style, as suggested by Seidman (2006), was used in this study. Merriam (2009) explains focus groups as:

Unlike a series of one-to-interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. (p. 94).

This dovetailed with comments from Gail Etienne-Stripling, the initial subject contacted. She explained when the three of them get together and begin talking; it helps trigger memories and stories that one person may have forgotten. Originally, one focus group was planned, to be followed up with individual interviews. However, after reflecting on the first focus group, the researcher decided to conduct a second focus-group interview. The conversation amongst the three women had become quite in-depth and richer due to the strong bond they shared. The two focus group interviews were conducted in New Orleans in person and recorded electronically.

The interview questions for the first focus group had three categories: Pre-desegregation, school desegregation experiences, and post-desegregation experiences. The questions in the follow-up focus interview focused on the reflection of their post desegregation experience. The follow-up questions focused on how they view themselves as part of history and how the experience has impacted their lives. (See

Appendix B for interview questions.) The direct quotes used in this research are coded by the minute and second of the beginning of the participants statement to the end. The participants initials are used at the beginning of the coded segment before the minute and second.

The interview process was conducted over a two-day period. This a modified version of what (Seidman, 2006) suggests. Seidman recommends conducting three separate interviews. The first interview asks for the participants to recall life experiences up to the present day. The second interview is to provide details of the experience being focused on in the study. The third interview requires the participants to reflect upon the meaning of experience being focused.

The researcher changed the process as follows. The focus of the first interview conducted with three participants combined Seidman's (2006) first two recommendations; the follow-up interview focused on the participants' reflection of the integration experience. The interviewees were asked a series of questions to reflect on the experience, share stories about what they remembered, and asked to give their opinions about how the experience changed education for Black children in New Orleans.

Document Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe document or artifact analysis as a "noninteractive strategy" (p. 360) for research. Types of documents are "personal, official, and objects" (p. 361). This dissertation used official documents that were communicated externally. Bélanger (2006), Marianopolis College in Quebec, also includes in his definition of documents: paintings, monuments, maps, photographs,

statistical tables, films or videos, anything from the past that helps us learn what happened, and why. Documents used in this study were similar to ones used by Bélanger. In addition to these sources, data sheets from the National Archives were used to collect and document information to analyze the articles and photographs. (See Appendix C.) These data sheets allowed the researcher to extract important information that might be useful in explaining themes from the time period (Bowen, 2009).

The main sources of document analysis were newspaper articles and photographs from two New Orleans' newspapers--*The Times Picayune* and *The Louisiana Weekly*. Both set of artifacts were archived at Tulane's Amistad African American History Center. Articles were written about the time it took for integration to occur in New Orleans and about the effects of integration on the neighborhoods. The articles supported some of the information recalled from the interviewees. These articles also support the information gathered in chapter two about how integration occurred in different cities, what changes occurred because of integration, and the effects it had on the people involved.

Ethical Considerations

There needed to be trust between researcher and the participants. These ladies have been forgotten in a significant part of United States and Louisiana history. It was important to make clear the intentions in gathering information from them and how that information would be used. The three participants have been involved in discussions before and have been exploited. Therefore, it was extremely important to gain the trust of these women and to make sure they had a clear understanding of the purpose of the study. Once that trust was established, the participants appeared to be

more at ease and willing to share their experiences. The other reason focus group interviews were chosen was to ease some of the uncertainty the participants had about being interviewed because of past experiences of others taking advantage of by others who wanted to write about them for monetary purposes. Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) describe this as interpersonal interaction, which influences the expectations about others act or behave in the setting. They needed to share other feelings that they asked not to have included in the study. It was important to respect and agree to this in order to build the trust of the participants. The information shared was not necessary information needed for the study.

Approval to Conduct Research

I received permission from the three participants and the Hamline School of Education to conduct my research. The researcher staff at Tulane University's Amistad African American History Museum provided documents from the era for analysis. Transcripts are not included in this study because permission was not asked to include full transcripts. Permission was granted to use real names and events to authenticate the study.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study include key participants, location of information, limited perspectives, and time to conduct focus group interviews. The first limitation was identifying still-living key participants other than Etienne, Tate, and Prevost. There were only a few other key participants in the token integration of Orleans Public Schools. Many of them are elderly or deceased. There were initially five families involved, and one family decided not to participate, leaving only four families involved

in the actual participation of the two schools desegregating. The second limitation in the study was locating information on the subjects and the topic. Many outside sources only discuss Ruby Bridges and her participation in the token integration process of New Orleans public schools. There was limited information located in the local newspaper, *The Times Picayune*, about the four participants in the 1960 integration. For their protection, their names were kept from the press. The third limitation in the study is getting multiple perspectives and connecting history with present day education in New Orleans. This limitation is in connection with the first, limited key participants. Having another perspective from the marshals or school officials to support the stories would lend different perspectives to the research. The fourth limitation was time given to conduct the interviews. Due to travel and work, the participants were only available in the evening. One participant was flown in from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and had limited time.

Summary

Chapter three contains information about the research framework. The qualitative method used in this research project to gather data was interviewing using focus groups. The style supported and the needs of the participants involved in the study. The major limitations have also been addressed in this chapter. In conjunction with qualitative interviewing, three constructs of Critical Race Theory; voice and counterstory, interest convergence, and social change were used to deepen the understanding of using storytelling as a means to explain the experiences of the participants and build a connection to the literature review chapter. The review of

documents from the period supported the information given by the participants during the two interviews.

Chapter Four

Results and Analysis

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

– Chimamanda Adichie (2009)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the results of the data from the information gathered through qualitative interviews. Part of this chapter is retold in narrative story collected from these interviews. The interview analysis concludes by correlating the findings of this study with information from the literature review. The focus of the research was to determine how the three primary participants described their experiences. This chapter describes the process and findings of the research. The main themes are identified and discussed in detail then connected to related research of the literature review. The themes were extracted based on constructs of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that emerged from the literature review. The CRT constructs were used to guide and focus the information gathered as the interviews were conducted and guided the researcher to extract emerging themes.

Interview Analysis

The purpose of the focus groups was to learn from the personal experiences of the three ladies who had first-hand participation of living through educational integration in a token situation as children. Five themes were identified as a result of interview and data analysis. First, the frustration of being ignored and brushed aside was prominent because the women felt devalued by society as their story had never been shared in lieu of the experience of changing history through pointing out social

injustices. Leona mentioned that for a long time after they integrated McDonogh 19 and Semmes Elementary schools, no one talked about it. It was not until many years later they realized they had done something historical and life changing. Second, the pride in their accomplishment was evident. When asked how they felt about the experience and if they thought it made a difference, the women responded positively. Being recognized by the city's first Black Mayor, Ernest "Dutch" Morial and celebrating the 25th anniversary of integration gave them the feeling of importance. Reuniting with some of the Marshals at the 50th anniversary and having the opportunity for them to reconnect and talk about the events that occurred so long ago gave them additional support to know the significance of their accomplishment. Those were some of the positive things they referenced. Third, they did not have a sense of fear about desegregation. Each participant spoke about not being afraid for different reasons. Each family was protected by the federal marshals, the NAACP, and the Black community. If something had happened to any of them during the initial movement, they felt it would have made national and international news. Gail recalled one night being out on the porch with her parents and a car drove through the neighborhood. She said,

I don't remember if it stopped in front the house, but the Marshals that were in their cars stopped the car and they made the man get out of the car. They had this White guy and they arrested him and handcuffed him. Then they opened up the trunk of the car. They pulled out a rifle or shotgun. (GES,1:11:26-1:11:56)

Leona told about a neighbor woman who threw a rock at her mama while she was sitting on the porch. They were forced to move out of the neighborhood that night.

Fourth, there was sadness that what they accomplished was not important nor did it

have a lasting effect within the community. Desegregation remains in the law but within the community many of the schools are still segregated. This is mostly because of the social economic factors. In the areas of the city where the neighborhoods are integrated now, there are children of different races attending the same school, but in racially segregated neighborhoods the schools are attended by predominantly one majority race. And fifth, there was the feeling of being unimportant and not getting recognition for the major change desegregation had in the city. It was mentioned during the initial focus interview that when they spoke about integrating the school sometimes someone in the conversation would say they had done the same thing. There were also hurtful statements like, "Why do they keep bringing that up? I'm so sick of hearing about that. It wasn't all that special what they did." A co-worker of Gail's made this statement. She did not know that Gail was a major participant in the school desegregation movement in 1960.

A child's earliest memories of school should be of learning to read and write, making friends, playing on the playground and of countless other things that happen when you are six years old. But for three young girls entering the first grade in New Orleans in the midst of the Civil Rights movement these are not the memories they shared. The memories carried by Gail, Leona, and Tessie were different and far from typical. So different it is hard to imagine. Instead of interacting with other six year-olds academically and socially in school, they were isolated in an empty building void of laughter and conversation with other children. They spent first grade together, in a classroom with the windows covered with brown paper, and daily escort to and from school by two federal marshals to ensure their safety.

Focus Group Interview I: Counterstories

The information gathered from the first focus group interview is presented in a narrative form. It is presented in this format to give the reader descriptive details about what occurred during this period from the voices of the participants. Direct quotes from the interview provided content for creating a narrative. The information was collected from the first focus group interview.

The Story

In 1960, five six-year-old girls were chosen to pioneer the desegregation movement of New Orleans Public schools. After several attempts by the local government to prevent desegregation in the schools, Judge J. Skelly Wright ordered the Orleans School Board to have a plan in place by the fall of 1960.

In the fall of 1960, Gail Etienne entered first grade at McCarty Elementary School, a segregated school, located in the lower ninth ward of New Orleans. Tessie Prevost and Leona Tate entered the first grade at Harding Elementary School, also a segregated elementary school, located in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward community. Harding was set on the platoon system because of overcrowding. The children went to school in shifts. As the fall semester pressed on, the school board still had not complied with court's order to integrate. Judge Wright had given the final extension to the board of having a plan in place to smoothly transition the city for the change. Orleans Parish would integrate two schools. The Garden District volunteered to participate; however, the school board turned the members down. The Board decided to choose two schools in the lower ninth-ward area. The people living in this area of the city were lower- to middle-class, blue-collar families, very different from the middle- to upper-class white-

collar families living in the Garden District, who were willing to participate. The families living in the lower ninth ward were close knit families though they were not affluent like those families living in the Garden District. The school board believed that beginning desegregation in the lower ninth ward would be unsuccessful and put an end to the desegregation movement in New Orleans. The school board was not prepared for the unity and support within the Black community to make desegregation successful.

On the night of November 13, 1960, each of the girls had been told by their parents that they would be attending a new school the next day. The families had been informed in writing, their daughters had passed the special test given to see how well Negro children would attain academic achievement along with White peers, and would be transferring to McDonogh 19 Elementary, an all- White elementary school, which had been chosen as one of two sites for public school integration. One of the grandmothers announced it at her church. Tessie said, "My grandmother went to one of the largest Baptist Churches in the Lower 9th Ward. Got up that Sunday morning at church and told everybody, 'Pray for her granddaughter because she is going to be one of those going to the integrated school'" (GES, 40:07–40:28). Gail remembers her Pastor holding her up in church and announcing she would be attending the integrated school on Monday.

McDonogh 19 staff was informed the night before that the school would be integrated and they were expected to report to work and conduct themselves as professionals. On Monday, November 14, 1960, New Orleans would integrate its public schools one grade at a time beginning with first grade in two schools. The families prepared for the move to the new school. Dresses were pressed, breakfast was made,

and bows were tied to plats. Leona recalls it was like a holiday at my house. “That particular morning, well I had been told I was going to a different school and I was going to meet new people” (LT, 25:10-25:23). I was excited to get a ride to school. My grandmother and I used to pray together every morning. This morning the prayer was different, “ But that particular morning my grandmother prayed and she prayed for the teachers, she prayed for the other children, and she prayed for me” (LT, 25:28-25:39).

Each of the girls were told by their mothers at the breakfast table to finish their breakfast and get ready to go. Leona and her mother waited for the marshals to arrive. Then the Marshals came. Before leaving the house, two federal marshals were assigned to each of the children and escorted them to and from school. Tessie and her father were the first to arrive, her daddy leaned in close to her and said, “Put your hand in my hand and look straight ahead” (TPW, 26:55- 26:10). Tessie held her daddy’s hand and walked with him and the marshal towards the school, through crowds of Whites holding signs in protest of integration and yelling racial slurs and chanting, *“Two, four, six, eight, we don’t want to integrate!”*



Figure 4.1 Tessie and her father walking towards McDonogh 19.



Figure 4.2 Leona and her mother were escorted to McDonogh 19 Elementary.

Gail and her father arrived at the school first since they were the closest. Gail recalls,

My daddy said it only made sense for me to go to that school because it was three blocks away from our house. That's why he agreed to let me be tested. As we drove up I saw the crowd of people out there and I thought something was going on. I think that's when a photographer snapped my picture. We were told not to look out the window. My mama was some mad when she saw that picture in the paper. (GES, 1:17:23-1:17-31)

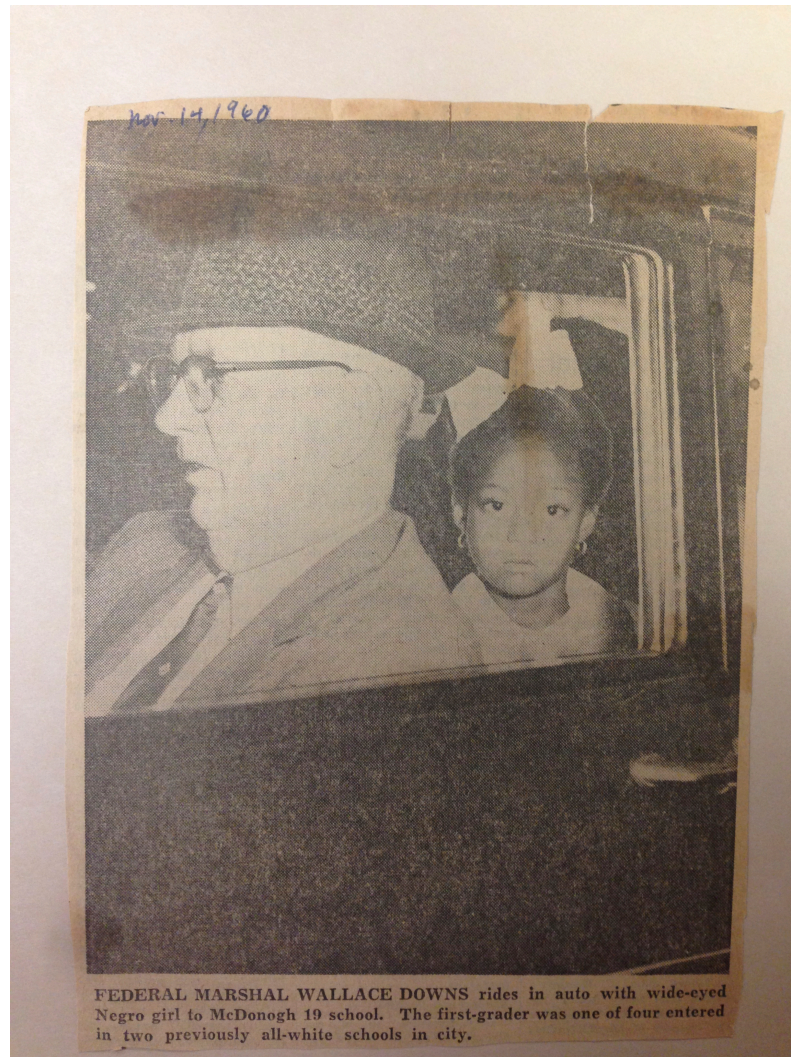


Figure 4.3 Federal Marshal Wallace Downs with Gail Ettiene heading to McDonogh 19

Beyond the mob of hatred and vitriol was a crowd from the Black community cheering proudly in support as each girl and her parent climbed the front steps of McDonogh 19 and entered the school. All the windows in the building had been covered with brown paper to ensure the safety of all the children and staff in the building. Gail recalled,

I thought it was Mardi Gras with all the crowds and yelling. There were police on horses. I was scared of all the noise, but it didn't stop me from looking out of

the window. I wanted to know, why did I have to go to school, when there was a parade coming. It wasn't until later that I realized the crowd was yelling at me and I didn't know what I had done to make them mad with me. (GES, 27:25-27:40)

There was a lot of waiting once all three girls and their parents arrived at the main office of McDonogh 19. The office staff wasn't prepared to place them in a classroom. Administration had to decide which teacher should take them. It was finally decided that the girls would be placed in Ms. Meyers' class. She welcomed the girls into the class and tried to make them feel comfortable. Once they were placed in a classroom, the girls recalled children being taken from the room by their mothers through the coatroom. Some children were dragged from the class by their mothers, many didn't want to leave. By the end of the day, they were the only students in the entire school. Tessie recalls asking her mother when she got home why she had sent her to school that day with all those people out there and why didn't she come to get her like everyone's else's mom? Some people couldn't believe, "Grown folks would make such a fuss about three little girls going to school" (TPW, 1:18:42).

Every day forward for the rest of the school year, they remained the only children in attendance at McDonogh 19 Elementary. The federal marshals brought them to school and returned at the end of the day to bring them safely home. Tessie's mother told the marshal on the second day of school, "Look, this is my baby I'm giving you." He responded, "Look Miss, this is my job. I'm a do my job. You don't have to worry about this baby" (TPW, 9m 00s - 9m 30s). Each girl brought her own lunch because authorities were not sure if someone would try to poison their food. Water

fountains also remained off for the fear of the same. The girls and their teacher traveled from room to room on different days for lunch and other curricular activities as to not get bored with the same routine. The girls thought it was a game and it made the day go more smoothly. The girls and their families got to know the marshals very well. There was round the clock protection at their homes by federal officers. There was an empty lot across from Gail's home. The marshals would sit in their cars and shine a spotlight on the house. Patrol cars patrolled the neighborhood constantly. When one car was low on fuel, another car was brought in its place to make sure the homes were always well guarded.

For a year and a half, they remained the only children in the school building. Some White children eventually returned to school and more Black students were allowed to attend, but only in the grades below the girls, as integration would progress with them. By the end of the second year, McDonogh 19 had become predominantly Black and the girls were asked to desegregate a second school in the lower ninth ward. Gail's father asked her if she wanted to continue being part of the movement and integrate another school. They would only make the move together. Other Black children integrated Semmes with them but not in the same grade.

In the fall of 1962, Gail, Leona, and Tessie entered Thomas Jefferson Semmes Elementary. This time without the protection of the federal marshals because integration had been a fairly smooth transition at McDonogh 19 the same was expected at T.J. Semmes. This was, however, the contrary.

We didn't have problems, we had the federal marshals and it was just us. We didn't know we were going to go to a school full of people; students, teachers,

principal... all the hatred and everything. We didn't get that at McDonogh. We got it at Semmes and then some. (LT,46:35-46:46)

The White students at Semmes did not abandon the school as the White families at McDonogh 19 had. Tessie recalls her time at Semmes, "A living hell."

"We weren't prepared for that," says Gail.

"We didn't have the protection anymore, we were on our own," replied Tessie.

"They didn't leave and neither did we. We just had to endure it because it wouldn't have worked and there was a lot of positive talking to our families to get to that point."

"All they needed to do was to break one of us. We tried to do everything and our families were close. They made decisions together. If they had broken one of us it wouldn't have worked because the rest of us would have backed out. As long as we all toughing out together," (LT, 47:21-47:46).

For the next three years, the girls were the targets of cruel and sometimes violent acts. Their third grade teacher would bring brownies and other treats to school and pass them out to the White students and not give the girls any. The children were encouraged by the teachers and parents to do mean things as well.

Gail recalled:

A boy named Ronald hit me in the head and the stomach with a baseball bat. I'll never forget that. I had to get stitches. Then I remember getting into a fight and the children trying to rip my dress off in the classroom. (GES, 50:50-51:10).

"The teachers would look the other way and pretend they didn't see what happened," said Leona. "One teacher would stare at you with her piercing blue eyes and

when she would walk pass you, she would cover her nose with a Kleenex, like she smelled us. She was horrible.”

“If we ate in the cafeteria, students would spit in our food or knock your tray out of your hand,” recalled Leona. So we never went in the cafeteria.

Every day it was something. Tessie and Leona rode the bus to school. Boys would make spitballs. Leona stopped riding the bus after a White boy spit in her hair and kicked the seat and broke it. He told the driver she broke the seat. Leona recalls that being the worst thing that could have happened. “I think I would have rather that they’d beat me up but they spit in my hair and it was like till today I can smell this” (LT, 53:52-54:00).

It was as if these children had hatred embedded in them. The playground at Semmes was divided boys and girls. At recess the girls would huddle together around a little tree or hide in a corner. It was bad for the girls, so the boys got it even worse. They were tired of being beat up daily. For every incident that occurred, Tessie’s father would write a note to the principal, she would deliver it to the office, and he never got a response. The last day of fifth grade Tessie was on her way out of the school to catch her bus and a teacher yelled for another student to get her. She ran up behind Tessie and popped her in the back the head. “I looked at her and I looked at that bus and I looked at her and back at that bus. My mama told me don’t you do a thing to miss that bus” (TPW, 58:11-58:40). Her daddy was working and her mother would have to catch a bus to get to school and get her.

The girls had enough and began to fight back. It was their last year and they were tired. The teachers and administrators would tell the girls if they got into any

trouble they would put a dot on their records and after three dots you got expelled forever. Those three dots didn't stop the girls from writing a nasty letter to a girl who kept picking on them. Leona and Gail sat under the tree at recess hiding and minding their own business, when a girl walked up and pushed Leona's head into the tree. "That's when we decided to write the threatening letter," recalled Leona. "I don't remember what it said, but I know it got us suspended."

After leaving Semmes, the girls were asked to participate one more time in junior high. They were tired and wanted to be normal. Tessie did not want to do it a third time after the horrid experience at Semmes. She attended Rivers Fredrick for junior high and Joseph S. Clark High School. Neither school was integrated. Tessie stated,

At that point, I wanted out and I believe and I really truly believe this in my heart, that if I would have continued that I would not be the person I am today. I really and truly believe that, because it was bringing so much anger out. When I got to seventh grade, I was angry and wild. I guess I had so much in me I didn't know what to do. (TPW, 1:08:05-1:08:32)

The trio reunited in high school at Joseph S. Clark.

Focus Group Interview II

The second focus group interview was set up to gather additional information after subsequent questions arose after the first focus group concluded. After analyzing the initial focus group, it was important to link it to the literature review, including the participants' reflections of their experience participating in desegregation. The major themes in the literature review that connect with this research were token integration,

White flight or residential segregation, poor Whites felt more threatened by desegregation, and racial educational equity.

Token integration was a consistent theme found within the research. New Orleans began integration with four six-year-old girls who desegregated two schools in the Lower Ninth Ward just as other cities had small numbers of Black students integrate one or two schools. The major difference is New Orleans had the youngest activists participate in integration. This strategy to begin integration one grade level at a time beginning with young children proved to be effective as New Orleans integrated schools in a nonviolent manner. Other cities had not been successful in integrating peacefully.

White Flight also proved to be a consistent theme across the studies. Many Whites who could afford to move out of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward crossed over into St. Bernard Parish, those that could not afford to move still removed their children from school and had them attend school in St. Bernard Parish. This led to residential segregation. Residential segregation made it difficult to integrate public schools with boundaries.

As segregation spread throughout the city over the years, affluent Whites were more accepting of integration because they found benefits for their children as well. There was increase and change within federal funding for schools that had integrated. This occurred in other cities that integrated their schools. As noted in chapter two, interest convergence came to the forefront. Poor Whites saw integration as denying them more opportunities to advance.

Educational equity continues to be a concern for children of color.

Desegregation happened but not to its' fullest potential. Black students in particular are still not making the educational gains as White students. There is a prominent gap in the opportunities afforded to students. Along with this, many Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs when integration expanded (Gordy, 2004).

Document Analysis of News Articles and Correspondence

The newspaper articles and correspondence from the events that occurred before, on, and follow November 14, 1960, were used to develop questions for the focus group interviews. The newspaper articles and other correspondence were used to gather additional information about the desegregation. They were also used as supporting evidence of the information provided by the focus group participants.

The newspaper articles written about the first few days the girls attended McDonogh 19, described in detail the events and mood of the crowd outside the school. For example, one article depicted a young girl and father heading up the stairs to enter the school building. (See Appendix D.) When asked about the photograph, one of the interviewees identified herself and her father in the photograph. She remembered her father saying to her, "When you get out, hold my hand and look straight ahead, you see I'm here. I've got you. I got your hand" (TPW, 26:40-26:56). Tessie said she held her father's hand the Marshals escorted them up the steps from the back of the school. The article connected with this photograph (Figure 4.1 Tessie and Her Father Walking Towards McDonogh 19, *Times Picayune*, November 15, 1960] is titled *Desegregation of Public Schools is Carried Out Without Violence*. The article describes the scenes at

both schools as desegregation commenced. It describes the crowds of people protesting, but it is important to note that focus of the article is on the nonviolence. There are two adjoining photographs in the article. The photograph on the left captures White families exiting William Frantz Elementary and the photograph on the right captures Tessie Prevost and her father walking towards McDonogh 19 Elementary. Another photograph, which was also pictured on the cover of Time Magazine, captured Gail Etienne peering out the window of the Marshal's car. (See page 81.) When shown this photograph, Gail smiled and recalled how her mother fussed when she saw the photograph in the paper. "We were told to sit in the cars and not look out the windows." Gail recalls she thought it was Mardi Gras with all the people shouting and police on horses, so she looked out the window to see.

It is important to know that in all photographs printed in both papers no names were ever given. For the safety of the families to leave them anonymous, so names of the selected children were never released to the public. Included are photographs of the girls entering McDonogh 19 Elementary on the first few days of school as well as the protestors outside the school. The photographs showed the girls in route or entering the school building.

Other newspaper articles discussed events that led up to the day the girls were to attend McDonogh 19 and William Frantz Elementary. The information was about the policy and procedures set in place from the federal court, groups that offered support of desegregation in the schools, and school board procedures of what was to happen and expectation of all Orleans Parish staff.

Interpretation of the Results

The interview analysis section was focused on sharing the stories of the participants. As the interviews concluded it was easy to determine the personality of each interviewee. Through tone, voice, and inflection the researcher was able to retell important parts of the events that occurred during the time the girls participated in the initial integration process. The researcher was also able to link events from the literature review to the actual events retold during the interview sessions. Newspaper articles and other texts depicted the situation described by the three participants in the same manner.

At the start of the interview the participants were quiet and reserved in their responses. They had explained that others had inquired about their experience and often felt exploited. As the first interview proceeded, the participants became more relaxed and openly shared their stories and feelings. Letting their defenses down allowed for free flowing discussion about their experience. The emotions evolved from tense and reserved to laughter and sadness. There was even a sense of sorrow and anger. There were significant interpersonal interactions amongst the participants. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) describe interpersonal interactions as communication that involves the exchange of information, feelings, and meaning by using both verbal and non-verbal messages. When including this type of information within the research it is important to note the participants' nonverbal messages along with their verbal responses. For example, when Tessie would speak, she would often pause and look out into the room as though she was remembering the exact moment and recalling the feeling of the experience. Her tone would change and it became obvious she was

speaking from her heart. There were many moments of empathy expressed as she recalled encounters with people from her childhood as an adult. It was as though she felt sorry for the ones who could not or had not changed their views about integration and she had forgiven those who had wronged her and tried to make amends.

The participants also exhibited group cohesiveness. These women have developed a life long bond. Because of this cohesiveness, the interview style was most appropriate. Gail, one of the participants, had explained early on that often when they get together and begin talking about what happened from 1960 to 1963, it triggers memories that one of the other two might have forgotten. This was observed during the interview as one would begin talking about an incident and the others would chime in or ask a question about the situation.

“Remember the day the cars were late. We went outside in the yard,” said Gail.

“We hadn’t been outside for a long time,” said Tessie.

“We were playing and I was pointing my umbrella at something,” Gail recalled.

“We were jumping around. When the Marshals pulled up in the cars and saw us outside” Leona chimed in. “When my mama saw that photo in *Jet* she tore me up” laughed Leona. They each chimed in about something different they remembered. Then they laughed about it. “It was in *Jet Magazine*.” “I remember racing home to get to the TV. I wanted to see myself on TV.”

“It all wasn’t bad,” said Leona. “We had each other and we had some good times.”

Reoccurring Themes

The themes that presented themselves the most often throughout the interview process were: Pride in their accomplishment; no sense of fear about desegregation; anger about being forgotten; sadness that what they did was not important or had a lasting effect within the community; and feelings of non importance and lack of recognition.

When asked about positive outcome of having accomplished such a great feat, each woman talked about how they have spoken at different school events and church functions to share their story. It makes them feel good that people are interested in hearing their experience. The main subject that came through was that even though they had a reason to hate White people, they don't. They talked about how their parents did not raise them to hate or to be hateful. Even though their daily encounters as children with White people as children were not so kind, other encounters with White people were pleasant. They received letters of support and prayer from mothers across the country and around the world about how proud they were of the girls and what they were doing to change the city, in hopes of changing the country. As adults they have met people who wanted to support and help them get their story told. They developed relationships with the federal marshals. The marshals took care of them every day. Even though it was their job, some of them had children and would not want their children to experience same racial hatred.

Summary

It was six years after *Brown* before integration would come to the city of New Orleans. Was it because New Orleans needed these three ordinary little girls to do something extra-ordinary? During the entire educational desegregation movement, New Orleans was the only city where young children were involved in the integration movement. When integration came, it came peacefully. This chapter expressed in a standard form as well as a narrative form of the researcher's interpretation of events. The participants' recall of events connected information from the literature review about the events that occurred in New Orleans as desegregation commenced. The recurring themes from the two interviews also supported the information found through document analysis.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications

“Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change- personal change, community, and organizational change”
-Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 3)

Introduction

This chapter reviews the study’s purpose, summary of the findings, implications and recommendations for practice and supports the primary research question: How do three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of New Orleans public schools? The significance of the research as it connects to educational equity will be addressed and what future research could be accomplished as a result of this line of inquiry.

Review of the Purpose of the Study

The primary research question involved learning about the experiences of three primary participants in the Civil Rights Movement in the area of education in the city of New Orleans in 1960. Discovery from the information was to gain a better understanding of desegregation during this period. The historical significance is educational desegregation and connecting this event to the more prominent event of the *Brown I* decision that reversed the separate but equal ruling, which declared racial segregation unconstitutional in the area of education (Cushman & Urofsky, 2004). Its significance to society and culture of Louisiana also identifies school districts policies in the United States, designed to improve educational equity of all children.

Qualitative research through two focus groups and document analysis were chosen to explore how three women of color describe their experiences as primary

participants in desegregating New Orleans Public School System and to gain a deeper understanding of the token integration process that occurred in New Orleans in 1960 to desegregate the public schools through a narrative approach. Qualitative research allows the use of open-ended interview questions and examination documents to support multiple perspectives of this research and the events that occurred in 1960.

As a result, the dissertation title, *The Beauty of Hatred*, reflects my interpretation of desegregation. Segregation was created to keep people of color inferior to Whites. In the South, some Whites were afraid of change so as *Brown I* became a reality it became difficult to hold on to values and traditions of segregation. The peaceful desegregation movement of the four innocent girls in New Orleans to bring about change and the support of the local Black community and many other people across the nation displayed the beauty behind the hatred. The way the participants have chosen to live their lives based on their experiences in the desegregation movement and the years that followed has shown courage but most of all beauty.

Summary of Findings

The focus of this research contained the narratives of the three women involved in changing history through pioneering the desegregation of Orleans Parish Schools. In addition, documents from the period were also analyzed in order to support the recollections of the data gathered from interviewing. It was important to recreate their stories with the depth and significance of the era. The narrative was developed from a broad prospective and then focused on each individual to provide a detailed imagery of the events as told from the memory of each woman.

The importance of change in society in this research was to acknowledge and honor another historical perspective from three who took part actively in a significant movement that changed history. The perspective is told through eyes of the interviewees as they remember events of desegregating McDonough 19. These stories determined the direction of the research and how it was analyzed. Using their stories as counter stories to the mainstream stories about school desegregation, established the foundation for my research. Delgado (2000) argues the importance of storytelling by including the counter stories of the nonmarginalized population involved. He describes counter storytelling as focusing on community building;

Stories build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings, and a deeper, more vital ethics. But stories and counter stories can serve an equally important destructive function. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power. They are the other half-the destructive half-of the creative dialectic.

(Delgado, 2000, p. 61)

Gathering first-hand information through interviews was the main avenue for obtaining historical perspective. The use of photographs and articles from the time period also supported the information needed to create a story. Creating oral history narratives as a means of connecting the individual to society, and thereby tell a side of the story too often dominated by a singular and narrow perspective, is one method of delivery for disseminating information gathered from subjects. This perspective falls within the qualitative category of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Creswell

(2007) explains that our U.S. legal system has been shaped by racism and, therefore, how privilege is understood and interpreted under the law.

As a researcher, I believe it is important to learn multiple perspectives of historic events. Having multiple perspectives of historic events allows the researcher to see events from various viewpoints and make more than one interpretation of events. It also helps researchers maintain an open stance and can mitigate from having biased opinions in reporting their research findings. The narratives of the participants should unfold and emerge as counter narratives. Through multiple perspectives the researcher or reader is able to piece together the goals and objectives of all persons involved in the events while creating a deeper story. Qualitative research supports the interest in counter storytelling and searching for multiple perspectives. (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe one way to get another perspective: “the methods that investigate behavior, as well as the explanations, need to be sufficiently complex to capture the true meaning of what has occurred. This leads to researchers to examine multiple perspectives” (p. 324).

The application of the three constructs, Voice/Counterstory, Interest-Convergence, and Social Change, used from Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided guidance and structure when focusing on the research question. The use of voicecounterstory was the most important to the study. The other two constructs were chosen because they were dependent upon voice/counterstory. The research was conducted from a different viewpoint; the perspective of the participants. The research depended on the information gathered during the interviews to provide another perspective of the experiences of desegregation. The construct of interest convergence

was identified through the resources used in the literature review. In each instance, Whites supported desegregation when they discovered the benefits for themselves. The construct of social change was chosen to explain the results and effects of desegregation as the years progressed.

These constructs were useful guides as to determine how some educational decisions were made. As an educator and prospective administrator, it is important to understand the evolution of the educational system and what laws and policies inform social change. With a clear understanding of these constructs, it has become easier to identify certain problems in a school building and at a district level. I am able to ask more informed questions about how certain policies or initiatives will affect the students, parents, and community. This will allow me to make better choices and decisions in the position I have in my career.

Implications for Practice

As stated in chapter one, Boyer's scholarships of application and integration appropriately suited this research topic in the field of education. Scholarship of application engages the scholar in discovering new understanding; through historical literature and conversation. Additional perspective can be gained from the master narrative, which is often told about desegregation. The master narrative is the story reported throughout history from mainstream media by those in authority to describe the events through the lens in which those in authority feel is more desirable to remember. The mainstream story, or master narrative as referred to in this study, is typically the recount of events of a period of time recorded from one aspect. The counter narrative, or counterstory, provides an alternate perspective of historical

accounts through the lens of a different culture or ethnic group. Boyer (1990) identifies three questions that promote engagement of application: “How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions?...Can social problems themselves define an agenda for scholarly investigation” (Boyer, 1990, p. 21). These questions have provided guidance in connecting this research from a historical perspective to investigating the social construct of the education of Black children in New Orleans and in different parts of the South. The first question, “How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems?” (Boyer, 1990, p. 21) can be simply answered, as conning history to research. Being knowledgeable about the different facets of situations, like desegregation, and realizing as much effort was placed in preventing desegregation as there was in making change occur helps to put in perspective the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as it applies to social constructs in the United States based around race and the theory that racism is “engrained in the fabric and system of American society (Delgado, 2001, p. 51). This leads into the second question, “How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions” (Boyer, 1990, p. 21). It is helpful to individuals because it allows them to make needed connections with history as it applies to their education, culture, and liberties to which they have been entitled. It is helpful to educational institutions to provide systemic change in order to not repeat the misgivings of our predecessors. More importantly, understanding the significance *Brown* was to have on the education of children of color and the difficulties Black families had to endure to ensure the promise of *Brown* was kept. Bell, originator of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in which CRT is derived has answered the third question, “Can social problems themselves define an

agenda for scholarly investigation” (Boyer, 1990, p. 21). Educational segregation is a social problem. Telling the counterstories of the journey placed in the hands of three-six-year-old girls is an important aspect of scholarly investigation from the perspective of CRT. It provides an added perspective not traditionally shared in the mainstream about the day-to-day stressors placed on these young children.

Boyer (1990) defines scholarship of integration as giving meaning to isolated facts and putting them in perspective (p. 18) and “fitting one’s own research---or the research of others—into larger intellectual patterns” (p. 19). Scholarship of integration integrates the historical perspective of desegregation and connects it to current trends in education such as neighborhood schools, which in some areas means resegregation. It also addresses voluntary integration policies in the public education system affecting New Orleans schools and other cities like the East Metro Integration District (EMID) located in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Through interviews with Tate, Prevost, and Etienne and gathering historical information from their perspective, Boyer’s scholarship was employed to create meaning from an atypical perspective and connect the meanings to public education in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Recommendations for Future Research

To continue the journey of this research project, it would be important to conduct more interviews with the three participants and gather more details. Gathering information from others, for example any of the US Marshals who are still alive to see things from their perspective. Using the information gathered, the integration of New Orleans schools could show a trend from 1960 to present day. Also expanding this research to a national level may identify educational patterns in

educational equity and the current need to close the educational/racial achievement gap. It would also be interesting to discover what if any major changes occurred in New Orleans because of desegregation.

Conclusion

This section summarizes the information gathered and examines how humans understand and interpret information in a social setting based on the research conducted by Delgado and Stefancic (2012). From this research on CRT the research also explained how the information is connected to this research through personal change of the participants, community, and organizational change of school system structure.

Richard Delgado wrote, "My premise is that much of social reality is constructed. We decide what is, and, almost simultaneously, what ought to be." (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 11). He explains how he and others who study CRT think humans perceive information based on their understanding and experience. We understand our own reality and interpret information differently. As in the premise of this research, the reality is desegregation happened but not to the full potential as expected by those who fought for educational equity for all children. The truth remains that White Flight occurred during desegregation and many Whites left the cities moving to suburbs to avoid educational integration. I agree with Bell, if we had focused on the equal and the separate initially educational integration would have been more successful (Trei, 2000). Discussing the importance of race and education within our educational communities is a step towards changing the social construction of the educational system.

Personal Change

The participants discovered personal changes that made them into the women they are today. They are strong, intelligent women, who learned to speak out about social injustice. The most significant change all three women talked about was their feelings towards Whites. Given they have a lot of reasons to hate Whites for many of the things that happened to them during their participation, they talked more about the Whites who helped and supported their families to make life better for everyone.

Community

Desegregation brought the Black community together to support the families who participated in the school integration process. It also brought supporters of desegregation into the community. Local women's organizations supported the change and even suggested integrating schools in other areas. The nonviolence of the desegregation made national news and brought supporters from across the country. The women remembered receiving letters, cards, and gifts from many different supporters.

Organizational Change

It began as a school movement, but desegregation expanded to more areas, public and private. In the public sector, libraries and theatres were integrated, along with transportation. Private and parochial schools began desegregating after 1960. Downtown businesses also desegregated in both hiring Blacks and having them as consumers. One of the most significant changes came later in the 1980's with New Orleans's first Black Mayor, Earnest "Dutch" Morial.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Dear Research Participant:

This is an informed consent agreement to participate in a dissertation study conducted in the Graduate School of Education of Hamline University.

The following is a list of parameters for participation:

1. This research is for the purpose of a dissertation for Hamline University.
2. The research is a work of public scholarship and will be printed and stored at Hamline University's Bush Library, with an additional copy given to the chair of the dissertation committee.
3. The research participant will agree to participate in an interview that will last approximately two to three hours. The interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed.
4. The focus of the interview is to describe the research participants' experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of Orleans Public Schools.
5. The interviews may be conducted in-person or by phone.
6. Participation in this study is voluntary.
7. The research participant has agreed to have her name used in the study.
8. The research participant has the right to terminate participation in the research at any time with no penalty.

Please sign the following page and return to:

Leslie Hitchens

Doctoral Candidate

If you have further questions please feel free to contact me by telephone or email.

To Whom It May Concern:

I give my written consent to participate in Leslie T. Hitchens's dissertation research project at Hamline University.

I understand that Ms. Hitchens wants to interview me because her dissertation topic is about the desegregation movement that occurred in New Orleans, LA in 1960.

The interview will focus around her primary research question: How do three women of color describe their experience as primary participants in the token desegregation of Orleans Public schools?

I have had preliminary written communication with Ms. Hitchens and hereby give my consent to participate as a research subject in the dissertation.

Participant

Date

Appendix B

Focus Group Interview Questions

Initial Focus Group Interview

Pre-entry to School:

Do you remember anything about the process or the test you were given?

Why were you (3) chosen? How did your parents feel about the integration?

Did you want to do this?

What support did you or your family get from the community during this experience? How was your family treated by others in the community? Was there any adversary?

In-school Experiences:

Describe one of the most vivid memories you have of the desegregation movement at McDonough 19 and at Semms Elementary?

What do you remember most about your experience?

How did you feel about all the attention?

Did you ever make friends with any of the white children in the schools?
Have you had any interactions with them as adults?

Why was the decision made to have you integrate a second school instead of bringing in a different group of children?

How was the experience different at Semms Elementary school than at McDonough 19? How long were you at this school?

How long did you stay at McDonough 19? Describe your experience attending this school? How did it change in the time you spend there?

How long did you stay at Semmes Elementary? Describe your experience attending school there? How was it different from McDonough 19? Were there many changes during your time there?

How were you all treated by staff at the schools?

How did the children respond or react to your presence?

What resistance did you come across during this period?

Post-Events Experience:

When did you realize you were doing something special “historical”?

How does it feel to know you’ve paved a way for change but it is still being resisted in some areas?

Why did you choose to send your children to segregated schools?

What happened to the 5th girl that was supposed to desegregate with you?

How do you feel what you’ve done has changed education for students of color in New Orleans?

What else do you think is needed to improve education in New Orleans and in the U.S. for children of color?

Do you feel like you got a quality education from this experience?

Did you ever receive any apologies from people who mistreated you?

What do you think about parents who would rather keep their children out of school than to have them educated with Black children?

According to historical references, poor Whites felt more threatened by integration than any others. Do you think this is an accurate statement?

Second Interview

Follow-up Questions:

If there is one thing you would want to pass on to others about your experience what would that be?

Hundred years from now how would you want the children (people) of New Orleans to remember you?

What are your memories of childhood in terms of your encounters with segregation and discrimination? What was your awareness of the segregated social system?

Tell me something about those vivid memories of this era. Vivid experiences.

Appendix C

Document Analysis Worksheet



WRITTEN DOCUMENT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. Type of document (check one)
 Letter
 Report
 Newspaper
 Speech or public address
 Report to Congress
 Map
 Political cartoon
 Advertisement
Other (describe) _____
2. Date(s) of document _____
3. Author _____
4. For what audience was the document written? _____

5. Document information
 - A. List important pieces of information presented in the document.

 - B. Why was the document written?

 - C. What evidence in the document helps you to determine why it was written?
Quote from the document.

 - D. What historical event(s) does this document refer or pertain to?

 - E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document.

Appendix D

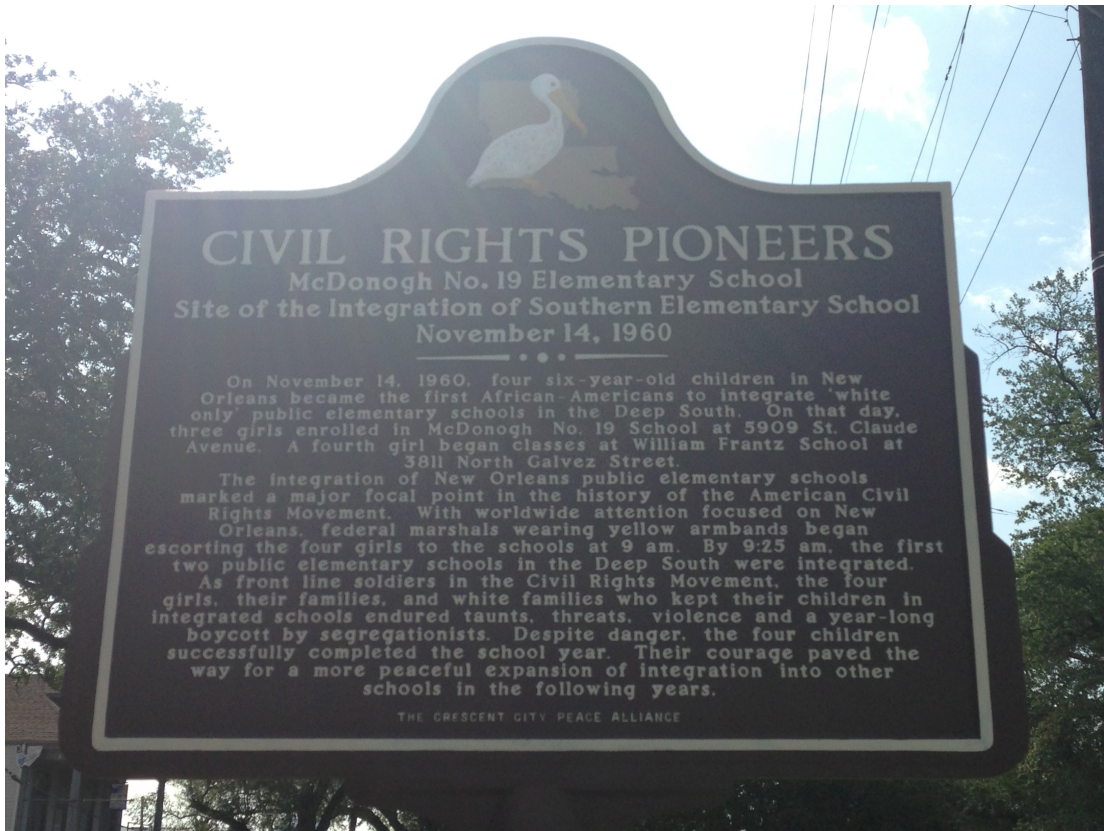
Photographs



McDonogh 19 Elementary



Thomas Jefferson Semmes Elementary



Historical Marking on neutral ground outside of McDonogh 19.