

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF AN INVOLUNTARY BUSING PROGRAM

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This study examines the perceived advantages and disadvantages to an involuntary busing program that is employed by the school district in order to desegregate schools. The participants who were interviewed in the study are black parents whose children participate in the busing program, and the findings of the study specifically reflect the views of these black parents. The study utilizes a legal storytelling framework, which allows for the narratives shared by the participants to be contextualized using the existing literature on the topic of school desegregation. The analysis of the findings is done by comparing the stories of the participants to the literature, with attention to similarities and differences as well as new findings and potential topics for further research.

Results of the study indicate that black parents perceive that there are considerably more disadvantages to the involuntary busing program than advantages. The concerns of participants include limited opportunity to attend school events, financial hardships caused by transportation costs and missed work hours, student attendance issues, student achievement concerns, and increased parent stress and inconvenience. The primary advantages listed related to the diverse learning environment that school desegregation provides.

The results of the study do inform the existing body of literature on the topic of school desegregation by providing the perceptions and views of black parents whose children are involved in a mandatory busing program. The voice of the black parent regarding these topics has not been addressed in great depth within the existing literature.

In addition, the results of the study may provide valuable information for the school administrators and policy makers who continue to work with the issues surrounding school desegregation.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

1.1 Context of the Study

The South Bend Community School Corporation is an urban school district in northern Indiana. Though it is relatively small for an urban district, it is the fifth largest district in Indiana (IDOE Compass, 2017). In the early 1980s, the United States Department of Justice began working with the district when it was discovered that the schools in South Bend were not racially desegregated (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981). The district, subsequently, entered into a consent decree, an “agreement entered by consent of the parties” that is not “properly a judicial sentence, but is in the nature of a solemn contract or agreement of the parties” (*Black’s Law*, 2017). The consent decree dictated that the SBCSC use the “Fifteen Percent Rule,” bringing the total percentage of black students in each of its twenty-three schools within fifteen percent of the overall percentage of black students in the district (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981).

In order to accomplish the goal of school desegregation, the SBCSC developed “Plan Z,” which utilized a combination of busing, magnet programs, and controlled school choice to balance the demographics in the schools. The district redrew boundary lines and began to bus students from predominantly black neighborhoods across the district to previously predominantly white schools. The five high schools each developed a magnet program to entice and draw students from outside the designated school boundaries. Students who were accepted into a magnet program were bused across the district voluntarily. With controlled choice, students could apply for transfer to another

school within the district only if the transfer would maintain the proper demographic balance (Schmidt, 2014).

South Bend Community School Corporation Today

In 2018, nearly forty years later, the SBCSC is still under the consent decree and is being monitored by the United States Department of Justice. The plan has been slightly amended since the original plan, but the district continues to employ mandatory busing as the main mechanism for desegregation. According to Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) data, the SBCSC had a 2017 enrollment of 18,680 students, a significant decrease from the figure in 1981 (IDOE, 2017). Increasingly, students within the SBCSC boundaries choose to attend other schools. Specifically, in the 2017-2018 school year, twenty-eight percent of all school-age children who had legal settlement within the SBCSC boundaries opted not to attend SBCSC schools (“Public,” 2018).

As data suggest, the SBCSC is a school district that has undergone some significant shifts in demographics since the initial implementation of the consent decree. For example, in 1981 twenty-three percent of the students in the district identified as black. In 2017, thirty-six percent of the students in South Bend schools were black while thirty-one percent were white (IDOE, 2017). White students from South Bend have left the district in large numbers to attend adjoining school districts, charter schools and private schools in what has often been termed “white flight.” According to national databases, there are two charter schools within the SBCSC boundaries and twenty private schools (NCSRC, 2018; NCES, 2018). The following graph indicates the steady decline in enrollment in the district and an increase in the percentage of black students in the district since the consent decree was put into place.

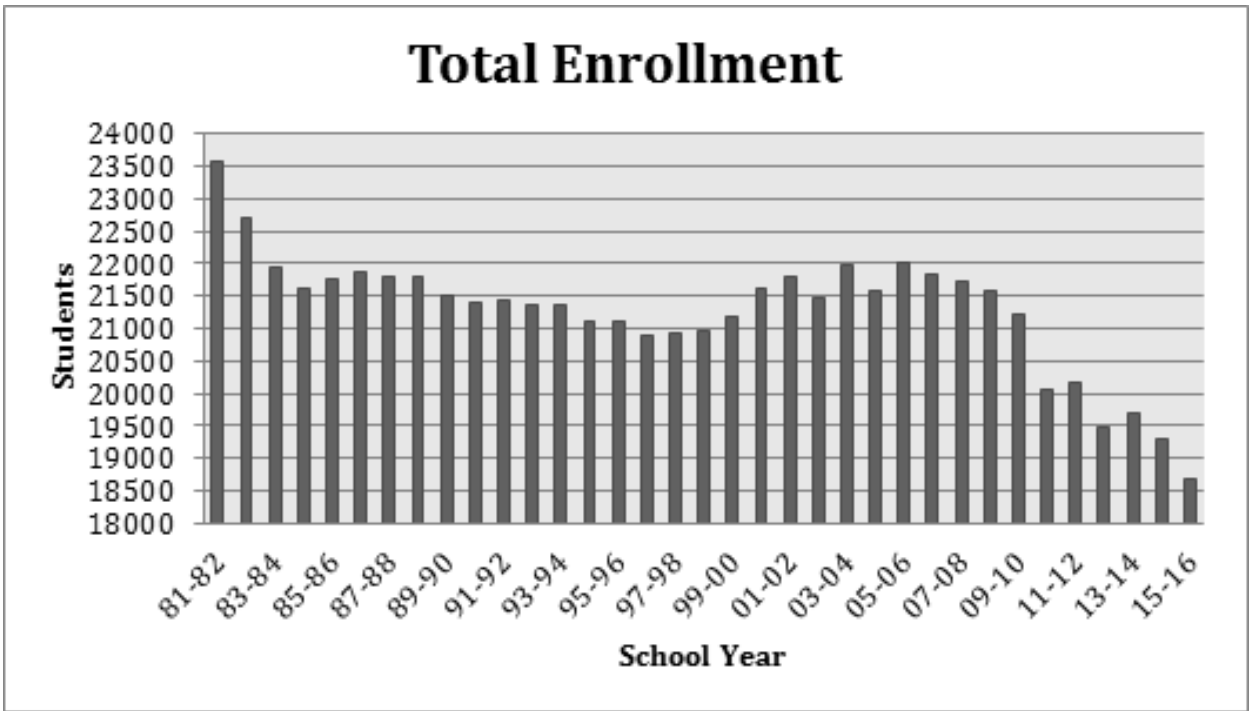


Figure 1. Total student enrollment in the SBCSC

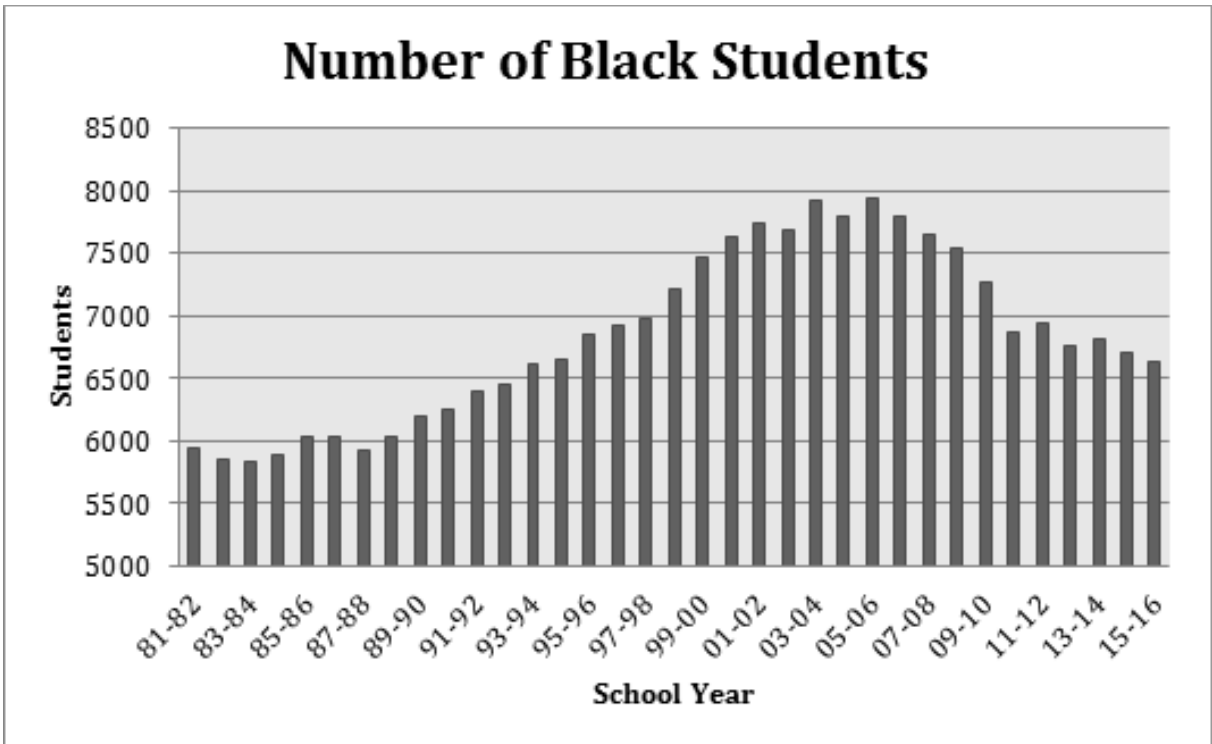


Figure 2. Total number of black students attending the SBCSC

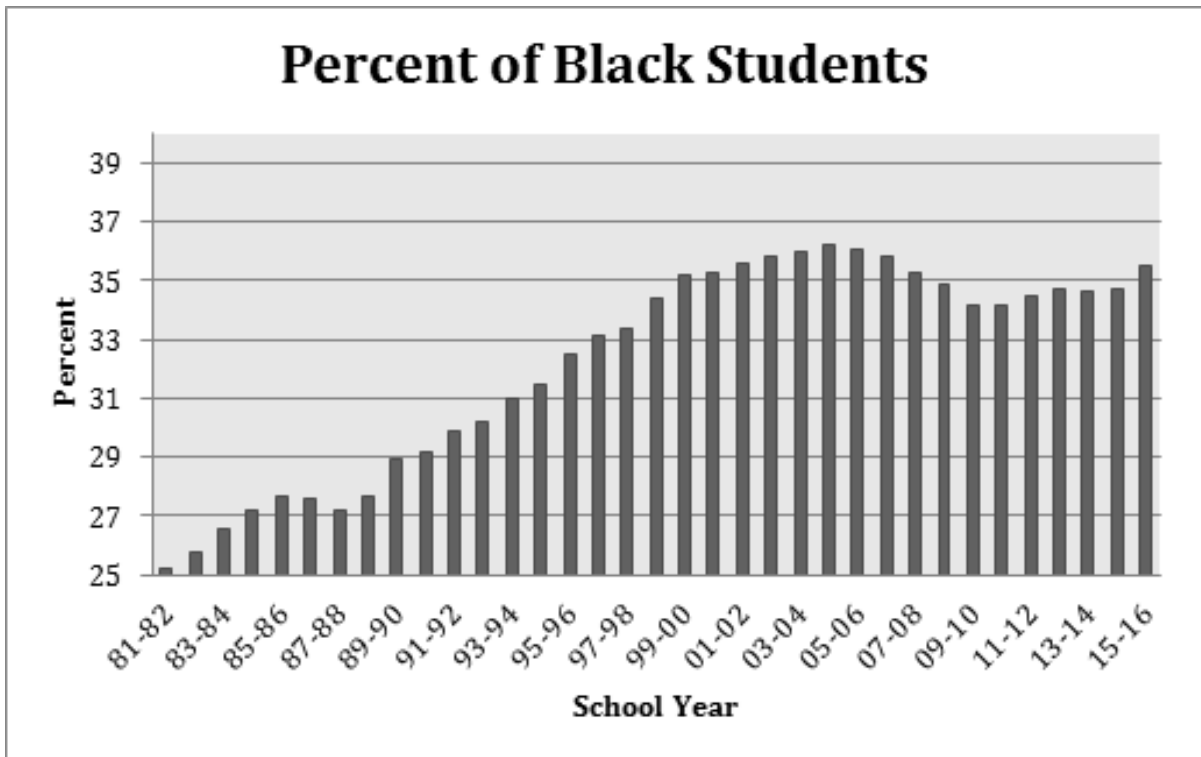


Figure 3. Percent of students enrolled in the SBCSC who are black

In 2002 the school district submitted an amended version of “Plan Z,” which allowed for the students in primary schools (grades K-4) to attend their neighborhood schools regardless of race (Schmidt, 2014). The Department of Justice approved the plan, so currently only the ten intermediate schools (grades 5-8) and the five high schools (grades 9-12) are forced to comply with the fifteen percent rule (Schmidt, 2014). For the 2016-2017 school year, thirteen of the eighteen primary schools were within the fifteen percent rule, all ten of the intermediate schools, and three of the five high schools were compliant (Spells, 2016).

In 2018 some black students who live within the SBCSC boundaries are bused to schools that are more than ten miles from their homes into neighborhoods that are more than ninety-five percent white (Census, 2010). For example, Greene School, one of the

few SBCSC schools outside the city limits, is situated in a rural farm community. The neighborhood in Greene Township is more than ninety-five percent white (Census, 2010). However, in 2017 Greene School had the highest percentage of black students among all intermediate schools in the district at nearly forty-five percent (Spells, 2016).

Just over two hundred students attend Greene in grades five through eight (IDOE Compass, 2017). The enrollment of the school has continued to decrease significantly each year since 1981 when the enrollment was over five hundred. The demographics of the current student population are forty-four percent black, twenty-eight percent Latino, eighteen percent white, and ten percent multiracial (IDOE Compass, 2017).

Greene's population is primarily comprised of students with low-socioeconomic status; eighty-four percent of all Greene students receive federal lunch assistance (IDOE Compass, 2017). The school is struggling with achievement and has been on the IDOE priority list for school improvement for several years. During the 2016-17 school year, only fifteen percent of Greene students passed both the math and language arts portions of the state-mandated test (ISTEP) compared to the state average of fifty-one percent. The 2016-2017 state accountability letter grade for Greene was an "F" (IDOE, Compass, 2017). Greene does have an environmental magnet program that has been in place for four years, but very few students from outside the Greene boundary choose to attend Greene strictly because of the environmental program.

1.2 Research Question

The study examines parental perception as it relates to current transportation and school assignment policies used to achieve racial integration in the SBCSC. It

specifically addresses the perceptions of black parents whose children currently attend SBCSC schools. The guiding research question in this study is as follows:

According to black parents, what are the perceived advantages and disadvantages to the practice of involuntarily busing students to schools outside of their neighborhood zones?

1.3 Methodology

The research was conducted using data collected during a series of semi-structured interviews with black parents whose children are part of the busing program in the SBCSC. The interview protocol addressed the research question. Interviews were recorded and transcribed then coded to reveal patterns and themes. These themes were analyzed and interpreted as the important findings from the study. The methodology will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

1.4 Significance of the Study

There is a great deal of research on how black students perform academically after a desegregation measure has been implemented; achievement scores, dropout statistics, and discipline data on this issue are easy to find. Few studies, however, address the attitudes, feelings, and beliefs of the families that are affected by such desegregation measures. This gap in the research will be further explored in the review of literature.

Additionally, this is an interesting time in history for a study of this nature. After *Brown v. Board of Education*, there was a sharp focus on desegregation in many areas of the country. Over the years, the enforcement of the federal mandate to desegregate schools has arguably dwindled, although under the Obama administration there was some renewed emphasis on this topic. For example, between 2009 and 2012, the U.S.

Department of Justice examined forty-three desegregation related cases (USDOJ, 2017). Likewise, courts continue to hear cases related to school desegregation efforts (e.g., *Cowan v. Bolivar County Board of Education*, 2016) or district proposals that may actually lead to *increased* segregation (e.g., *Stout v. Jefferson Cty. Bd. of Educ.*, 2017). Within these investigations and court decisions, though, the parent perception is rarely considered.

This study, therefore, fills three gaps in school desegregation literature. First, the study addresses the parent voice in today's urban environment. When school desegregation measures began in the 1950s, the voices were scared, uncertain, and cautiously optimistic. Much has changed since then, and it is time to observe what parents of black students today are feeling and thinking on the matter.

Secondly, the study makes the topic relevant again at a time when only some school districts are still being monitored by the federal government. Since 1990 many districts have been granted unitary status by the courts (Lutz, 2011). Unitary status occurs when a school district eliminates the effects of past segregation, and the decree is lifted. In 1991, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, that once a district had proven itself to have a unitary rather than dual system that does not purposely segregate students, it no longer has to be under court supervision (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). There is a need to explore the impacts for students who are still attending schools that are attempting to desegregate in a time when the mandate now only applies to some. It also comes at a time when families have several school choice options, such as charter schools and voucher programs, that may influence opinions about

this topic and when school accountability data is announced publicly and may also influence parent decisions.

Finally, it is time to begin the work of critically examining the policy of involuntarily busing students as a desegregation method and its effects on black families. The assumption is that equity can be attained by restructuring school boundaries and placing students from different neighborhoods and racial groups in the same physical building. This study informs the discussion about whether there might be unintended impacts as a result of the busing policy and what those impacts might be.

1.5 Potential Limitations of the Study

Since the study focuses on one group of parents from one school district, it will require additional research to ensure that the results reflect a widespread attitude. It is certainly a starting place and reveals some patterns and trends that can be explored more thoroughly in further research.

It is important to note, however, that the research question in this study evolved as a problem of practice for me. While serving as principal at Greene Intermediate Center, I began to realize some of these issues at work. I noticed that often when I called a parent regarding the need for a meeting for them to pick up their child at school, the parent seemed to be frustrated. There were times when the parent told me that they simply had no way to get to the school, leaving both the family and the school in a difficult position. I began to visit the homes of students to deliver report cards and have parent conferences. While in my students' homes, I started to realize the depth of the level of poverty that was reality for many of the Greene families. As I drove by other intermediate schools on my way from Greene to the neighborhoods where my students lived, I began to ask

questions about the school assignment boundaries and this led me to discover the district policies involving the consent decree.

Based on my own personal experiences and my perception of what I believed might be a genuine issue for black parents, I decided that a formal study was needed to explore the actual views of black parents regarding the impacts of the mandatory busing policy which required their children to attend a school outside of their neighborhood. While the findings of this study may lead to more generalizable results that can be explored further in other communities, the findings are absolutely relevant for the SBCSC and for the families whose children are bused to Greene School.

Because I am the former principal of Greene School (two years ago), I did have an existing relationship with some of the participants that I interviewed. It was extremely important for me to stay conscious of my bias and to regulate it through the research process. It is also possible that the participants may have felt inclined to say what they thought I “wanted to hear” or, conversely, that they were overly guarded in their comments.

Considering that the research topic addresses the issue of racism and discriminatory practices, and the participants of the study are black, it may also be significant that I am white. As with any cross-cultural research, there is a chance that the participants may have viewed me as an outsider and not trusted me enough to entirely share their true feelings. It might also be the case that because of cultural differences or even language nuances that I misunderstood what the participants were truly communicating. This issue of cross-cultural research is explored further in the methodology section.

1.6 Guiding Framework

In order to organize the learning from this study, it is important to utilize a plan to coordinate all facets of related knowledge. The literature review that is presented in chapter two is a way to organize the prior research, and a guiding framework is then used to reframe some of the issues. A framework is often used to demonstrate how the many pieces fit together, and it can offer a plan of investigation. More specifically, the framework grounds the study in the previous work, but, at the same time, alerts the reader to the approach used to address the research question. My framework provides a blueprint and positions the work within the larger field of research.

The guiding framework for this study is “legal storytelling.” Legal storytelling has been used by legal scholars, sometimes as a method and at other times to frame a study (Farber & Sherry, 1993). Legal storytellers are often concerned with hearing the voices from oppressed groups. According to Farber and Sherry (1993), individuals who are members of an oppressed group have a voice that is distinct from the majority group’s voice. The stories of oppressed persons can be useful in counteracting the prevailing “mindset” of the dominant group and can “shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (Delgado, 1989, pp. 2413-2414).

Narratives from members of an oppressed group are useful when evaluating the impact of legal decisions because they allow a view into the lives of the people affected by the law (Massuro, 1989). The process acknowledges that “individual, concrete human voices and abstract, general legal rules often conflict” (Massuro, 1989, p. 2101). Ignoring the individual voice could lead to an emphasis on “logical consistency and predictability over compassion and substantive justice” (Massuro, 1989, p. 2101).

Legal storytelling will inform both the research question and methodology. The guiding framework recognizes the relationship of the many factors at play when analyzing the voices of individuals who have historically been marginalized and oppressed.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The body of literature that relates to this topic includes federal court cases, local history, databases, census materials, and both qualitative and quantitative academic studies. In order to give appropriate context for the study, it is important to begin first with the history of school desegregation in the U.S., Indiana, and South Bend specifically. Then, the most common topics in desegregation literature are explored. Finally, there is a discussion of the gaps in the existing literature and how this study might, in some way, fill some of those gaps. Applying the legal storytelling framework, the review of literature will serve to inform the study about both historical and contextual aspects of desegregation policy as compared to the narratives of the participants.

2.1 History of School Desegregation

2.1.1 History of School Desegregation in the United States

There has been a great deal written about school desegregation since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The literature on the topic ebbs and flows with the important court cases on the issue. There was much to be written immediately after the Supreme Court ordered the racial desegregation of American public schools. Also, during this time, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted.

The next wave of writings on the topic came in the late 1960s and early 1970s after the Supreme Court ruled, in three separate cases, that voluntary methods of desegregation were not effective and that school districts needed to take other measures to balance the racial demographics in the schools.

The first of these cases was *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* in 1968. A school district in Virginia, which consisted of approximately fifty percent black students, had been operating with a “freedom of choice” plan since the *Brown* decision. Under the freedom of choice plan, students were allowed to choose the school that they wished to attend. The plan, however, failed to effectively desegregate the schools. No white students opted to attend the primarily black schools, and very few black students opted to attend the predominantly white schools (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 1968). Accordingly, the Court ruled that the freedom of choice plan was ineffective in producing desegregated schools (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 1968). The school district was ordered to create a new plan, requiring school authorities to eliminate racially identifiable schools with regard to facilities, extra-curricular activities, transportation, students and faculty.

A year later, in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (1969), the U.S. Supreme Court heard a similar case. As with *Green*, school districts in Mississippi had been using a choice plan to no effect. When the black student plaintiffs filed a lawsuit, the lower courts ruled that the school district needed to devise a better plan but allowed that this would take time. The date for the final submission of a new plan continued to be pushed back. Thus, by the time the case finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the Court held that the desegregation needed to take place immediately. The Court cited

Griffin v. County School Board (1964), highlighting that, “The time for mere 'deliberate speed' has run out.” The Court ruled that the changes must be made immediately (p. 377). This decision illustrated that the U.S. Supreme Court was willing to weigh in on some issues normally reserved for local officials.

Another case that advanced the Court’s determination to enforce the *Brown* decision was *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971). In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court made it clear that the district courts would be supervising some schools’ desegregation plans to make sure that they were effective and not just empty policy. In this case, the Court highlighted appropriate mechanisms to desegregate schools such as redrawing attendance boundaries, the use of racial quotas, and busing (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, 1971). Significantly, both *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968) and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971) addressed the remaining vestiges of de jure segregation. De jure segregation is state-sponsored segregation as opposed to de facto segregation which occurs through practice (e.g., people choosing to live in segregated neighborhoods).

In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled in *Keyes v. School District Number 1* that the burden to prove that the school district was attempting to comply with the desegregation measures was on the school district itself. In this case, the Denver area district, in an attempt to defend itself against claims of segregation in one school, pointed out that just because one of their schools was not desegregated did not mean that the entire district was purposely racially segregating students. The Court made a bold stance on the issue of intent, stating, in its decision in favor of the black plaintiffs, that the district needed to

prove that its policies were not “motivated by segregative intent” (*Keyes v. School District Number 1*, 1973, p. 207).

In many of these cases between 1955 and the late 1960s, school districts were simply trying to find ways to avoid desegregation, and the freedom of choice plan was one common way districts attempted to do this (Eckes, 2004). School and community leaders had heard the decision in *Brown* but had employed various strategies to avoid desegregation. Crenshaw explains further that,

Anti-discrimination discourse is fundamentally ambiguous and can accommodate conservative as well as liberal views on race and equality. This dilemma suggests that the civil rights constituency cannot afford to see anti-discrimination doctrine as a permanent pronouncement of society’s commitment to ending race subordination (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1335).

The policy to desegregate was just a topic to discuss for some at the time. As the litigation suggests, in some areas there was initially no real movement or motivation for school districts to change their racist policies. However, the Court’s rulings in the *Green*, *Alexander*, *Swann*, and *Keyes* decisions made it evident that it was prepared to enforce the mandate to desegregate schools.

Issues related to the *Brown* mandate continued to be examined in subsequent litigation. Significantly, in 1977, the Court seemed to reverse course, to some extent, with the *Milliken v. Bradley* decision. To illustrate, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a complaint on behalf of a group of black parents, accusing the Detroit Public Schools of operating a segregated school system. The federal district court found that Detroit did indeed have policies in place that

led to increased school segregation, and it ordered the school district to form a plan to desegregate that would also include eighty-five metropolitan districts in the solution. The Court of Appeals agreed, but the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the decision. The Court ruled that the other districts outside of Detroit should not be brought into the remedy, and it emphasized that local control of the solution would be best. They also relaxed the standard for desegregation, stating that, “desegregation, in the sense of dismantling a dual school system, does not require any particular racial balance” (*Milliken v. Bradley*, 1977, p. 418). This decision was significant because the Court observed that a school district was not responsible for desegregation across district lines unless it could be demonstrated that the district had intentionally employed a policy to segregate.

After the newness of court-mandated and court-supervised plans faded, there was another period of relative quietness on the topic until the early 1990s when the Court seemed to shift its approach even more with regard to school desegregation matters. To illustrate, in *Board of Education v. Dowell* (1991), the Court upheld that once a school district had proven that it had accomplished one part of its desegregation plan, it was unnecessary for courts to continue to monitor the school district in that particular area in the future. In *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992), a similar case, the Court ruled that if a district had made a “good faith” effort to desegregate its schools, and if it could prove that there was a unitary system, as opposed to a dual system, in place, it was freed from the initial injunctions and desegregation plans (p. 21). The decisions in these two cases suggested that the Court might be withdrawing from the enforcement and full supervision of school desegregation plans.

Keeping with this pattern, in *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995), the U.S. Supreme Court actually limited the powers of the district court to remediate problems of school segregation. This was a split decision, but in the majority opinion, Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that the district court needed to, “Restore state and local authorities to the control of a school system that is operating in compliance with the Constitution” (*Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1995, p. 247). The message received by many was that even though the school district in Kansas City was still segregated, the *efforts* of the school district and state were enough to meet the legal requirements.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has not addressed another unitary status case in recent years, many federal district court and circuit courts continue to address this topic (*Anderson v. School Board of Madison County*, 2008; *Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 2001; *Coalition to Save our Children v. State Board of Education*, 1995; *Keyes v. Congress of Hispanic Educators*, 1995; *Little Rock School District v. Pulaski County Special School District Number 1*, 2002).

2.1.2 History of School Desegregation in Indiana

In 1838, Indiana law called for the creation of the common school. However, these schools were specifically created for “white inhabitants” (Ind. Acts, 1938, p. 509). It was not until 1869 that Indiana addressed the education of black students. In this year, the law provided for the creation of separate schools for black children. If there were not enough black students within a certain area to warrant the creation of a school, these students would need to be “educated by other means” (Smart, 1876, p. 23). Then, a year later, the state legislature mandated that if no black school existed in an area, black

students would be allowed to attend a white school (Ind. Acts, 1877). This was the beginning of the struggle for desegregated schools in Indiana.

For the most part, the history of desegregation in Indiana follows the path of the nation's struggles and successes (Moon & Krull, 2017). Landmark court decisions around the country set the tone for the way that Indiana schools would react. An Indiana school district, however, *was* one of the first in the North to publicly acknowledge its commitment to equality (Cohen, 1986). In 1946 the school board of trustees of the Gary Public Schools announced that students would not be discriminated against based on race. This early attempt was a powerful gesture, but the district remained segregated because of residential areas until many years later (Cohen, 1986). The Gary proclamation may have added some momentum to the cause in Indiana because a few years later, in 1949, the state legislature mandated that schools be desegregated and gave districts until 1954 to address the issue (Ind. Acts, 1949).

The first significant school desegregation case in Indiana occurred nine years after the *Brown* mandate with *Bell v. School City of Gary* in 1963. The NAACP sued the Gary Schools, claiming that the schools in the district were still segregated in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The federal district court ruled that since the Gary School Corporation was not segregating intentionally and the outcome was simply due to residential factors, the district was not at fault. Upholding the decision, the Seventh Circuit reasoned that as long as the district was not purposely preventing integration, there was no legal violation (*Bell v. School City of Gary*, 1967). An opinion from the Seventh Circuit is binding in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

In 1967 two Indiana lawsuits were filed against districts that were allegedly using the location of school facilities to maintain racial segregation. In *Copeland v. South Bend Community School Corporation*, the families of some of the black children who attended Linden school, which was located in a predominantly black neighborhood, sued the school district claiming that it was proposing to repair the dilapidated building in order to continue to racially segregate the school in violation of their Fourteenth Amendment equal protection rights (*Copeland v. SBCSC*, 1967). At the Linden School, part of the roof had collapsed, and the school had been closed in order to repair it. The parents sought injunctive relief; they wanted to avoid having their children attend a school that was both structurally unsafe and segregated. The district court ruled that the building was safe for students and that no movement of students was needed, and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed (*Copeland v. SBCSC*, 1967). Several years later, in 1972, the SBCSC decided to close the school, and this allowed for those black students to be integrated into other schools (IUSB Civil Right Heritage Center, 2017). The court's decision in 1967 to allow students to return to a segregated environment that was potentially unsafe raised doubts about the court's commitment to enforce the desegregation mandate.

Despite the *Copeland* decision, there was some indication that the court was on the verge of changing its position. In the same year, in a much less urban area, a similar case was argued. In *Collier v. Kokomo-Center Township Consolidated*, the NAACP filed a lawsuit alleging that the district was intentionally failing to phase out an old elementary building that was in disrepair because it was the school where the highest percentage of black students in the district were assigned. In effect, they argued, the district was

avoiding desegregation by keeping the building open. The federal district court ruled that this inferior facility be promptly phased out, and this resulted in those students being reassigned to predominantly white schools (Danns, 2011; Moon & Krull, 2017).

The 1970s in Indiana also brought mixed messages from the court regarding school desegregation. In *Banks v. Muncie Community Schools* (1970), there seemed to be a step back for proponents of desegregation. The district had proposed to build a new high school in a predominantly white area, and the black community argued that this would further increase segregation. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the school district and indicated that the community members could not anticipate segregation (*Banks v. Muncie Community Schools*, 1970). However, a few years later the court ruled in the *Martin v. Evansville-Vanderburgh* decision that the district could not amend its desegregation plan, which would have made the district more segregated, and that it needed to eliminate “the last vestiges of racial segregation” (*Martin v. Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation*, 1972, p. 820). All of these cases were very fact specific, which may explain the inconsistent outcomes.

The confusing 1970s also marked the very beginning of the highly significant Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) case that continued until very recently. In 1971 the U.S. Department of Justice sued IPS, accusing it of segregation and violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The federal circuit court found that the district was “operating a segregated school system wherein segregation was imposed and enforced by operation of law” (*U.S. v. Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis*, 1971, p. 678). IPS responded by devising a plan that utilized busing within the city. Then, in 1981, when IPS had still not been successful with its desegregation efforts, the district

began busing students to the township schools (Cavazos, 2016). This plan continued until 1999 when the court revisited the case and agreed that schools were adequately diverse and that IPS could begin phasing out the busing program. By 2016 there was no longer a busing program to help desegregate the schools (Cavazos, 2016). As a result, the IPS elementary schools are more segregated today than they were in 1971 (Cavazos, 2016).

Two of the most recent cases of importance in Indiana originated in the 1980s, and in both of these cases the districts had agreed voluntarily to devise a plan to desegregate their schools (see *Parents for Quality Education with Integration v. Fort Wayne Community School Corporation*, 1986; *U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation*, 1981). In *U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation* (1981), the NAACP's motion to intervene in a desegregation lawsuit was denied, and the court approved a consent order with amendments. This case is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. In *Parents for Quality Education with Integration* (1986), a class of citizens and students alleged that the school district had violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by maintaining a racially segregated school system. In the end, these plaintiffs and the school district agreed to a class action settlement where a decree was developed to address the equitable treatment of students. This approach was considered to be more beneficial to both sides because it would prevent long and costly litigation.

2.1.3 History of School Desegregation in South Bend

South Bend was established as a city in 1865, but there are records of African-Americans living in St. Joseph County as early as the 1830s when free black men applied

to purchase land. The 1850 census recorded five black families living in the area, in a settlement near what is now Potato Creek State Park, which is close to the location of Greene School. In the late 1800s, most black families moved to the city in order to find jobs in industry (“Local,” 2017). The black population continued to increase, and today approximately twenty-six thousand African-Americans live in South Bend, twenty-seven percent of the total population of the city (U.S. Census, 2010).

South Bend Community School Corporation never had an actual policy in place to segregate schools, but the location of students’ homes and clusters of segregated neighborhoods created a de facto school segregation situation (“Look,” 2016). The first time that the black community took a stand against this segregation was in 1966 when the Linden School’s roof collapsed on a classroom of students. Linden School was located in a predominantly black part of town, and the school demographics reflected this (“Look,” 2016). After the roof collapsed, the district planned to repair it, but the NAACP filed suit, hoping to persuade the district to retire Linden, which was in serious disrepair. Specifically, if Linden closed, it would force the SBCSC to move the Linden students to other schools which would effectively integrate the other schools (*Copeland v. South Bend Community School Corporation*, 1967). The district court ruled that there was nothing structurally wrong with the building, and that the school district could repair it and send the Linden students back to the same school. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the decision (*Copeland v. SBCSC*, 1967). Ten years later, Linden was finally closed and the students were integrated into the Kaley School, which was located in the newly constructed Kennedy School building (IUSB, 2017). Only a few years after the SBCSC agreed to integrate Linden and Kaley in 1977, the most significant lawsuit in

South Bend's desegregation story was filed. This litigation would be the catalyst for much more widespread change.

2.2 Relevant District Court Decisions in South Bend

2.2.1 *U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation – Part I*

In February 1980, the United States filed a lawsuit against the SBCSC under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974, accusing the defendants of discriminatory practices with the intent to segregate on the basis of race (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981). The school district, acknowledging its responsibility to move toward desegregation, agreed to the consent decree issued by the district court. There was, therefore, no admission of guilt, and the outcome seemed most desirable for all parties because it avoided drawn out and costly litigation (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981). The school district began the process of designing a plan to racially balance the enrollment of its schools per the decree.

The district court stressed to the school corporation the importance of its responsibility to draft a solution that would bring the city's schools into compliance with desegregation mandates that originated with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. It also made clear that it was the school district's responsibility to create the plan and that the court was not a supervisory entity that decided which plan was best. Thus, the court's only role was to determine whether the proposed plan was consistent with the U.S. constitutional requirements (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981).

The SBCSC set to work drafting an appropriate plan. The district formed the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), which had over three hundred members. Subcommittees of the CAC met more than 150 times over eleven months.

Meetings were open to the public, given extensive media coverage, and the issues were addressed formally at school board meetings (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1982). A plan that was held to be equitable and effective in accomplishing the goal of desegregation was designed and accepted by community participants (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1982).

2.2.2 *U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation – Part II*

On February 26, 1981, a day before the district court was set to approve the plan, a group of parents who called themselves “Clay Quality Education II, Inc.” filed a motion to intervene. Their argument was that the plan, now referred to as “Plan Z,” was unnecessarily dismantling neighborhood schools (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981). The parents wanted more voice in what the schools were proposing. The district court ruled that Clay had appropriate representation with the U.S. Attorney General and was not, therefore, entitled to intervene. Four days later the NAACP filed a motion to intervene, and the court denied its claim on the same basis (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1982). The SBCSC, together with the U.S. Department of Justice, did revise the desegregation plan voluntarily (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1983). The final plan was adopted by the board of school trustees on February 27, 1981, and approved by the court on April 17, 1981 (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1982).

“Plan Z”

The plan that was accepted by the school board and the district court had as its major goal that the number of black students in each school in the SBCSC be within fifteen percent of the total percentage of black students in the entire district (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1982). For example, in 1981 the SBCSC was made up of twenty-three percent black students, so each school needed to be comprised of eight to thirty-eight percent black students. After the redistricting took place, the SBCSC was actually able to bring

sixteen of its twenty-seven schools within three percentage points, eight schools within six percentage points, and the other three were within the fifteen percent rule (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981).

It is important to note that before Plan Z went into effect, only 9,860 of South Bend's 25,500 students rode the bus to school. The rest were able to walk to their neighborhood schools. Of the students who rode the bus, the ratio of white students to black students was nine to one (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981). There were significantly more white students who rode the bus because there were more white students who attended schools in rural settings or on the outskirts of town thus farther from their homes. Most of the black students in the district attended schools in the city that were within walking distance from where they lived (*US v. SBCSC*, 1981).

Once the district redrew the boundary lines for each school under Plan Z, fifty-five percent of the students (13,950) needed to ride the bus, up from thirty-nine percent before the plan. The ratio of bus riders under Plan Z was 1.5 to 1, white to black, which meant that significantly more black students needed to ride the bus to schools outside their neighborhoods (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981).

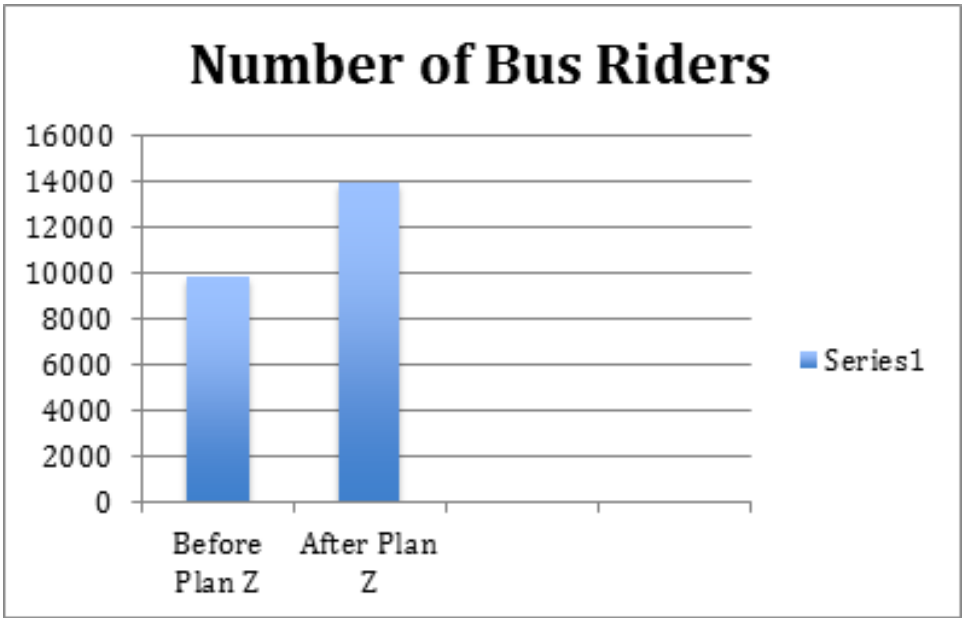


Figure 4. Number of SBCSC students who rode the bus before and after Plan Z

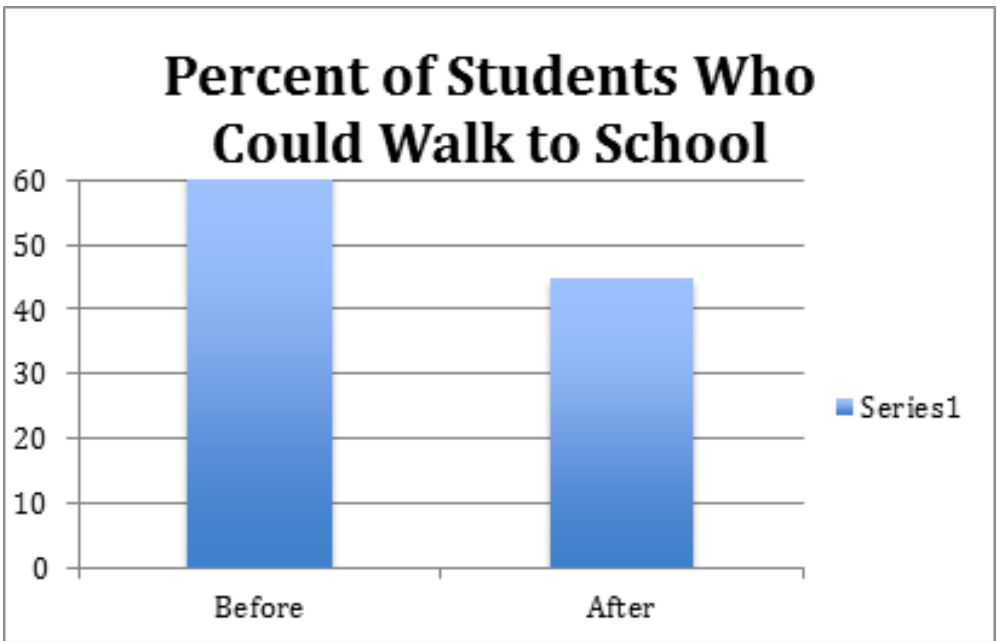


Figure 5. Percent of SBCSC student who were able to walk to school before and after Plan Z

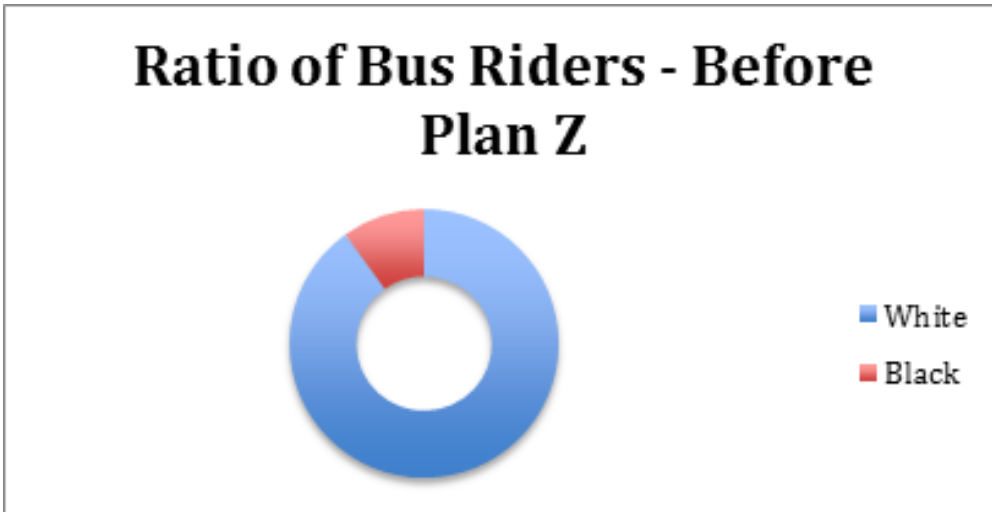


Figure 6. Ratio of SBCSC bus riders to non-riders before Plan Z

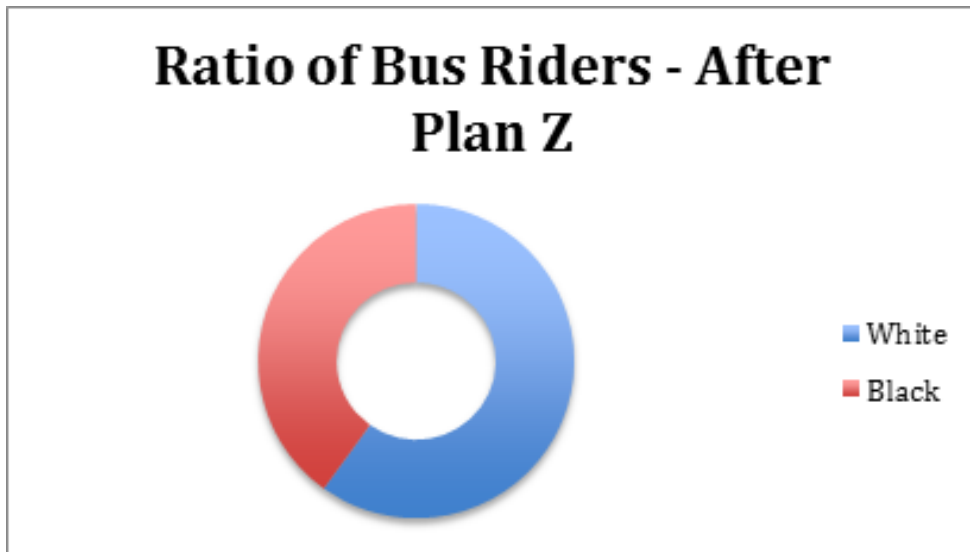


Figure 7. Ratio of SBCSC bus riders to non-riders after Plan Z

2.2.3 U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation – Part III

The SBCSC intended to implement the desegregation plan at the beginning of the 1981-1982 school year. On the first day of school, September 8, 1981, a group consisting of mostly black parents, calling themselves the “Brookins Class,” filed an independent lawsuit against the school board but later agreed to have their complaint addressed as a motion to intervene (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1983). The same U.S. Court of Appeals (i.e.

Seventh Circuit) that had ruled on the Clay and NAACP motions the year before heard the new motion to intervene. The court ruled, again, that the plaintiff did have adequate representation with the Attorney General and Department of Justice and that all parties had the same objective -- the desegregation of the schools. The court also indicated that the Brookins motion was not filed in a timely fashion, and based on these two primary reasons, the motion was denied (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1983). In its decision, the court wrote,

If a parent could intervene in a school desegregation suit as a right merely by stating his concern in constitutional terms, or by denouncing the decree rather than by seeking to modify it incrementally, the requirement of adequacy of representation would be a dead letter, and school desegregation suits would become unmanageable (*US v. SBCSC*, 1983, p. 394).

This decision effectively ended such requests to intervene in these legal matters. The plan, which was subsequently implemented, has been in place ever since.

2.3 Major Topics in School Desegregation Literature

Within the vast body of literature that does exist about school desegregation, there are four topics that appear more frequently than any others. The most common areas of study are on the educational, psychological, and social effects of desegregation on students. The second most discussed topic is the rapid departure of white students from schools that are desegregated, often referred to as “white flight.” A third very common topic for desegregation scholars is the practice of busing itself as a method to integrate schools, and the most recent fourth wave of literature has focused on unitary status and re-segregation

2.3.1 Educational Effects

The most basic question about the success of desegregation measures addresses the question of whether or not black students have benefited academically from the policy; the results are mixed. Bell (2004) suggests that there are two reasons why the U.S. Supreme Court made the decision to reverse its stance on mandatory school desegregation. The first was the continued widespread opposition to busing, and the second was that there simply were no legitimate achievement gains for either black or white students as a result of school desegregation. For example, one of the most rigorous studies on this topic was done in 1984 by a group of researchers at the National Institute of Education. After doing a meta-analysis of all the data that was available, the results were inconclusive about whether desegregation improved student achievement levels for black students. The researchers did conclude that desegregation did not cause the achievement of black students to decrease. However, they were unable to find an indication of improved achievement as a result of school desegregation. Specifically, there was no increase at all in the math scores of black students who moved from segregated schools to desegregated schools. There was a small mean increase in reading, but it was not statistically significant (Bankston & Caldas, 2002).

In contrast, a 1998 meta-analysis of longitudinal survey sets relating to how diverse learning environments impact student outcomes resulted in four significant findings. This quantitative study found that black students who attend majority white schools have higher achievement scores than those who attend majority black schools. In addition, black students who attend majority white classes have better results than black students in predominantly black classes. It was also reported that the earlier a black

student is placed in a majority white setting, the higher the achievement. Finally, white students, the study found, perform better when they are in majority white schools (Hallinan, 1998).

Likewise, another study that addressed the issue of student achievement was conducted by Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2002) and republished several times. The researchers examined cohort groups of students in Texas and traced their achievement over several years. They utilized a matched pair methodology to discover how black students in predominantly black schools performed compared to black students in more integrated schools. The results of the study indicated that the larger the proportion of black students in the school, the more poorly the black students would perform academically. This correlation was particularly strong for high achieving black students. Specifically, those black students who were high achievers in third grade had much lower achievement by the time they reached fifth grade if they were attending predominantly black schools (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002).

Some current research on the topic points to the fact that many of the earlier conclusions drawn about the academic benefits of a diverse learning environments were made based solely on achievement test scores (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). These researchers argue that using only test data prevents us from seeing the child's overall educational experience, and they suggest that the diverse learning environment itself leads to students having improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016).

It is also worth noting that many of the recent studies about the academic achievement gained from a diverse learning environment also make mention of other

important factors that are not school-based (Bankston & Caldas, 2000). This research relates to family structures and how such structures may play a major role in the academic achievement of black students (Bankston & Caldas, 2000). The authors caution that when comparing achievement of white students to black students, we are wise to acknowledge that there may be a number of non-school-based factors that also impact student academic achievement (e.g., issues of poverty).

There are also many studies that measure what is referred to as the “achievement gap” between white students and students of color. The concept of narrowing the gap acknowledges the fact that because of the inequity related to educational opportunities that has existed over many years, it will take time for the performance data of black students, for example, to catch up with that of white students. Data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), indicate that there is still a significant achievement gap. In 1978 white students scored an average of thirty-six points higher than their black peers in math, and in 2004 the gap was still an average of twenty-five points. In reading, white students, scored thirty-two points higher in 1980, and twenty-four points better in 2004 (Vanneman, Hamilton, & Baldwin, 2009).

Even though it may appear that the gap is closing to some extent, some argue that a close examination of the data each year indicates that, while there was some progress on narrowing the achievement gap in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the gap began to widen again in the early 1980s (Lee, 2002). When desegregation efforts were at their peak, that is when the achievement gap was closing the most (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). Even when looking at SAT scores over this time period, which isolates the college-bound students, white students were still outscoring black students in the same

pattern as the NAEP results indicate (Lee, 2002). These same patterns are seen with the high school dropout rates. Since the 1960s the dropout rate of black students has consistently been 1.5 to 2 times greater than the dropout rate of white students. This gap also closed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but began to reverse again in the 1980s (Lee, 2002).

The research on the achievement gap also indicates that the students who are most negatively impacted by the continuing achievement gap are the highest achieving black students. A 2009 study that, again, utilized cohort data from the Texas School Project concluded that those black students who were high achievers in the early grades ended up much further behind their white high-achieving counterparts than the average and below average black students were behind their counterparts (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009). As a result, several reform efforts (e.g. Every Student Succeeds Act) and alternate programs (e.g. charter schools) have focused on closing the gap. Despite the mixed results in the research about racial integration and student achievement levels, scholars continue to examine this important area today.

2.3.2 The Psychological and Social Effects

There is less research on the psychological impacts of desegregation on black students. However, this affective aspect is often listed as an important area to observe. Far from building confidence for the black students and families who are involved in mandatory desegregation programs, some writers point out that involuntary busing measures cause discomfort and insecurity (Edwards, 1993). They argue that black educators served as role models and leaders in their school communities and that the neighborhood schools in black communities that existed before integration efforts were a

sort of “security blanket” for black children (Edwards, 1993, p. 346). Black principals and teachers were in control, and the norms of the school reflected the norms and values of the community (Edwards, 1993). As a result, many were saddened and felt resentment when their neighborhood schools were closed, and they were forced to ride a bus to a new school (Bankston & Caldas, 2002) and when black educators were fired after schools were consolidated (Hochschild, 1984). A meta-analysis of studies in the 1960s, indicated that, as a result, the self-esteem of black students was higher when they were in segregated neighborhood schools than when they went to desegregated schools (Bankston & Caldas, 2002).

According to the research, parents were also greatly affected by integration measures. Before desegregation, black parents were comfortable coming to school and taking part in their child’s education. The people working in the school were their friends and neighbors, and they knew that they would be heard and understood. The parents had a voice in how the school worked (Edwards, 1993). When their children were bused to predominantly white schools, those schools were usually farther from their homes, and parents often felt that they had no input in school policies and had difficulty being active in school events and activities (Bell, 2004).

After the *Keyes* decision in 1973, in which the U.S. Supreme Court effectively mandated school desegregation in the North, Justice Lewis Powell, in his dissenting opinion, wrote about his strong concerns about plans that relied heavily on busing. He predicted that teachers would be frustrated when they were reassigned, that the neighborhood schools would be eliminated, that parents would feel a lack of power in their child’s education, that parents would begin to withdraw their children from the

public schools, and that community support for the public school district would begin to waver (Bell, 2004; *Keyes v. School District*, 1972, p. 217). Some researchers who have investigated the area of the psychological impacts, have found that many of Powell's concerns have become a reality (Edwards, 1993).

Conversely, there is research that speaks to the social benefits of attending a desegregated school. For example, one important goal of school desegregation was always that it might lead to desegregation in other aspects of society. Some research indicates that black students who do attend desegregated schools are more likely to live in integrated communities and work in integrated places of employment as adults (Ryan, 1999). Black students who attend predominantly black schools tend to overestimate the hostility that they would face in an integrated environment, and are, therefore, less likely to opt to participate in this sort of community when given a choice as adults (Ryan, 1999).

Additionally, students who have not had access to desegregated schools lack the "access, knowledge, and informal ties that would lead them to integrated work or housing environments" (Ryan, 1999, p. 303). Both black and white students who attended desegregated schools are generally less racially prejudiced and have more interracial friendships (Hallinan, 1998). It was also found by some researchers that black students who attended diverse schools had more realistic career aspirations related to their education goals and that they were more likely to have jobs in professional careers (Wells & Crain, 2016).

2.3.3 “White Flight”

One of the most significant white responses to desegregation has been the movement of white families from the area, a phenomenon that is often referred to as “white flight.” White parents who do not want their children to attend integrated schools react to the involuntary desegregation measures by either withdrawing from the public schools entirely or moving to a nearby school district that consists of a smaller black population. In some cases, entire white communities have pulled away from larger urban districts (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). This, of course, makes the process of integration much more difficult because of the number of white students who are disappearing (Rossell, 1990).

Studies have indicated that the more highly concentrated the black population is, the faster the decrease in white students occurs (Orfield, 1978). By the late 1970s, approximately one half of all non-white school-aged children in the United States attended the thirty largest urban school districts. In Los Angeles, the Office for Civil Rights finally agreed to drop a twenty-five-year-old desegregation case because over those twenty-five years, the white population had dropped from sixty-five percent to only seventeen percent (Bell, 2004). Desegregation becomes almost impossible in majority-minority settings, like many large urban districts, where there are no longer predominantly white schools to integrate (Bankston & Caldas, 2002).

White flight, due to involuntary desegregation measures, causes ripple effects for the public school system as a whole. Some scholars posit that when parents were allowed to send their children to neighborhood schools, the public school system thrived, and attendance in non-public schools was very limited. Then, when neighborhood schools

disappeared, districts began to see a slow decline in overall enrollment (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). This enrollment decrease causes financial issues for the district since much of the operating cost of schools is fixed. Maintaining schools that are only filled to half capacity, because so many students have left the district, causes the per pupil expenditure to increase which means other programs must be cut (Orfield, 1978).

In 1970, Coleman, originally an ardent supporter of busing, changed his mind. By then he had begun to see the results of busing policies and recognized that chief among the negative consequences of busing was white flight. He acknowledged that busing was, in effect, counterproductive and further exacerbated the exact problem it was intended to solve: segregation (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). Indeed, other research confirms that the greatest amount of white flight took place in school districts with mandatory busing policies (Armor, 1995).

2.3.4 Involuntary Busing

The policy of busing students from black neighborhoods to what were predominantly white schools receives a great deal of attention in the literature. Much of the research addresses public opinion, and most of that is gathered from polls and surveys. Between 1971 and 1982, seventy-five percent of white adults, on average, stated that they opposed busing as a means to desegregate schools (Armor, 1995). In 1982, seventy-seven percent of the white population responded that they opposed busing, but only seven percent of that same group stated that they opposed the idea of integration itself (Rossell, 1990). This signifies that while desegregation is generally thought of as an appropriate and correct policy, the strategy of involuntary busing to achieve this is what is found to be objectionable.

In a more recent Gallup Poll, in 1999, eighty-seven percent of white Americans said that allowing black students to attend neighborhood schools would be better than busing (Gillespie, 1999). Public opinion, at least among white citizens, seems to be moving back toward re-segregation of schools in the same way the courts and policies have been heading. Bills had been introduced in Congress to limit the use of busing for these reasons; however, none of the bills were enacted into law (Frum, 2000).

While there is significant data about how white Americans answer survey questions on the topic of desegregation over the years, there is less information about what black Americans think. Many of the public opinion numbers conflict in this area and are often inconclusive. However, polls in 1975, 1981, 1990, and 1999 all indicate that roughly half of black Americans were vehemently opposed to the practice of busing as a means to desegregate schools (Armor, 1995, Bell, 2004, Gillespie, 1999, Orfield, 2001). Some scholars go even further to note that the policy of busing may have created even more problems than it was intended to solve (Bell, 2004). What is clear from the research is that far fewer white Americans are in favor of busing than black Americans, and the majority of all Americans are against it.

Most leaders, school officials, and parents who oppose busing agree that there are many negative side effects to the policy of involuntary busing. Studies indicate that transportation costs in large urban districts often more than doubled when busing became a major component of the desegregation plan (Orfield, 1978). Critics of busing argue that this is money that could otherwise be used to improve instruction and add resources to schools where children are struggling. Although cost is a major argument against busing, other concerns are that it does not result in achievement increases for the black students

that ride the buses and that it leads to white flight which, in turn, leads to re-segregation (Orfield, 1978).

It should also be noted that there are still advocates for busing who argue that it has been an effective way to desegregate schools. These scholars point to the fact that the achievement gap between white students and black students was closing most rapidly when busing programs were being utilized at the highest rate (Theoharris, 2016). Proponents of busing also posit that the policy of busing has historically been blamed for the failure of school desegregation when it was not the fault of busing at all but rather a lack of commitment to the idea of desegregation itself (Theoharris, 2016). Delmont (2016) suggests that the debate about busing was never about the policy of busing itself. Instead, he maintains, it was a way to frame the discussion about the general concept of desegregation that would allow people to avoid using language that might implicate their views on race.

2.3.5 Unitary Status and Resegregation

During the 1990s three U.S. Supreme Court decisions collectively gave the lower federal courts more power to declare a school district unitary and sent a message that the courts were no longer interested in supervising desegregation measures to the same extent it once did (Eckes, 2004). As discussed earlier, the first of these cases was in 1991 when the U.S. Supreme Court rendered a decision in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, holding that once a school district has legitimately complied with the mandate to desegregate for a period of time, the injunction can be removed. Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote in the decision, “Federal supervision of local school systems [has

always] been intended as a temporary measure to remedy past discrimination” (*Board v. Dowell*, 1991, p. 498).

Then, a year later, in *Freeman v. Pitts*, the Supreme Court solidified its position by deciding that district courts can supervise school districts using an “incremental” approach. Once the district has complied in a specific area of the mandate, the district court no longer needs to supervise in that area (*Freeman v. Pitts*, 1992, p. 485). The 1995 *Missouri v. Jenkins* decision, again, reaffirmed the position of the Court that there would be much less judicial involvement. In this decision, the Court wrote, “The basic task of the district court is to decide whether the reduction of achievement by minority students attributable to prior de jure segregation has been remedied to the extent practicable” (*Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1995, p. 101). The emphasis had clearly shifted from de facto segregation back to de jure segregation and from the results of the desegregation measure back to a school district’s efforts.

These three decisions began another wave of scholarly discourse about desegregation as school districts now had an opening to claim “unitary status.” Unitary status means that the district is not intentionally operating a “dual” system with some schools for white students and other schools for black students. In order to achieve unitary status, a district has to prove that it has eliminated intentional segregation in six areas. The six areas are referred to as the “Green Factors” because they were originally established in the 1968 case *Green v. County School Board*. To achieve unitary status, the school district must show it is not *purposely* segregating based on student assignment to schools, faculty assignment to schools, staff assignment to schools, transportation,

extracurricular activities, and facilities (*Green v. County School Board*, 1968; Holley-Walker, 2010).

The literature relating to unitary status mainly addresses the idea that the U.S. Supreme Court has abandoned its mission to desegregate schools (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Some posit that the Court has become tired of hearing issues related to long, complex, and ultimately ineffective desegregation plans. They believe that the decision to desegregate that was made with *Brown v. Board* was made to remediate a problem that was not explicitly defined and is, therefore, impossible to accomplish (Poser, 2003). Indeed, fewer than half of the school districts that were under court orders to desegregate in the 1980s are still being held to those order, and courts are now enforcing only “minimal requirements” on those still under the mandates (Black, 2008, p. 948).

Another aspect of unitary status that is addressed in the literature is the issue of resegregation. Specifically, there is research that indicates that once a school district achieves unitary status it becomes increasingly more segregated again. One example of this occurred in 1991 when the Supreme Court granted the Oklahoma City Public Schools unitary status even though the average black student in the district attended a school that had an enrollment of sixty-eight percent black students. Ten years later, the average black student attended a school that was comprised of seventy-nine percent black students, and this type of increase in segregation is an example of a pattern that exists across the country (Black, 2008). Despite more than sixty years of working toward school desegregation, during the 2009-2010 school year seventy-four percent of all black students in the United States attended a school that was fifty to one hundred percent

black, and forty percent of black students attended a school that was comprised of ninety to one hundred percent black students (Dorsey, 2013).

Some scholars contend that a return to the “separate but equal” status, that was established in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and was the law of the land until the *Brown* decision in 1954, should be avoided because it would further widen the achievement gap (Orfield & Lee, 2004). A study by the Harvard Civil Rights Project indicates that *most* school districts that have achieved unitary status are significantly more segregated now than they were while they were still subject to desegregation mandates (Orfield & Lee, 2004). The authors also found that of the segregated minority schools that are a result of unitary status the vast majority are in urban areas and are very often comprised of students living in poverty. This means that there are fewer resources for these schools, and there is, therefore, serious inequity among schools (Orfield & Lee, 2004). These findings, the authors suggest, point to the fact that achieving unitary status when the district is not, in fact, desegregated will lead to even deeper unfairness for black students (Orfield & Lee, 2004). In more recent events, however, several school districts have tried to develop plans to rezone; sometimes to increase student diversity. Some of these voluntary plans, although well-intentioned, have led to more litigation (*Doe v. Lower Merion School District*, 2011; *Lewis v. Ascension Parish*, 2015).

2.4 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical approach that is commonly associated with questions of school desegregation in literature. CRT is concerned with the relationships among race, racism, and power. It takes into consideration economic, historical, contextual, and even unconscious aspects of policy. CRT is interested in the

foundational level of social policy including issues of equality and the “neutral principles of Constitutional Law” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5). Critical race theorists understand that even powerful precedents like *Brown v. Board of Education* tend to “deteriorate” over time, weakened by lower court interpretation and administrative “foot dragging” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 5).

There are six assumptions of CRT. First, it is acknowledged that in the United States racism is normal -- it is the way we do business everyday. Secondly, racism serves an important purpose for the dominant group. It is difficult to address because people pretend that it does not exist and say that they are “color blind.” Critical race theorists argue that the idea of being color blind implies that we are denying the individual’s “historical antecedents,” “social relationships,” and “political commitments” (Guinier & Torres, 2009, p. 38).

Racism will not go away easily because of “interest convergence.” Both upper class and working class white people benefit from being the dominant group, so there is no motivation from the dominant group to stop it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). Bell (2004) explains, “Relief from racial discrimination has come only when policymakers recognize that such relief will provide a clear benefit for the nation or portions of the populace” (p. 49).

Next, race is a social construction that we invent so that we can organize people into groups. The fourth tenet is differential racialization, which acknowledges that we treat different groups in particular ways depending on our need from that group at the time. The fifth belief of CRT is intersectionality, which is sometimes referred to as anti-essentialism. This is the idea that no person is just one thing. We all have multiple

identities, among these are gender and race, and many stories of discrimination cannot be easily separated into one or the other because the abuses take place at the intersection of these multiple identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Finally, critical race theorists believe in a “voice of color.” This “thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, American Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10). Moreover, CRT analyzes law through historical and present policies. Brooks (1994) asks what the legal landscape might look like today if people of color had been the decision-makers.

CRT is relevant in this study because it helps to acknowledge the issues of race and racism, helps to give a voice to the parents who are participants, and the results of the study answer some questions about a policy that was originally designed to eliminate racism and inequality in the public schools. It helps us consider Brooks’ (1994) important question -- how things in the SBCSC may have been different if the black parents had more of a role in the decision-making process.

2.5 Additional Relevant Literature

In the course of conducting research for this study, it became clear that there were some other connected issues that deserve mention in the review of literature. One such topic, specifically, relates to the family transportation situations of low-income families living in urban areas. For example, a brief from the National Household Transportation Survey (2014) reveals that low-income families spend a larger percentage of their income on transportation, are more likely to have “limited vehicle availability,” are confined to a

smaller radius of travel, have a higher use of bicycles or walking, are far less likely to own a car, and are disproportionately black or Latino.

In addition, a report from the Urban Institute explains that this is because as fuel prices increase, the low-income family is spending a larger proportion of their budget on gas. For example, if gas were two dollars per gallon, someone above the poverty level would be paying one percent of their budget on gas, and someone at the poverty level would be paying two percent of their budget on gas. However, as the price approaches four dollars per gallon, the middle income person is spending four percent of their budget on gas, and the low income person is spending nearly nine percent of their total budget on gas for the week (Hayes, 2005). This same Urban Institute study indicated that the average travel time from home to work for black adults who are living below the poverty line is twenty minutes (Hayes, 2005).

Another related issue pertains to the issue of choice and what parents want for their child related to the characteristics of the school they attend. The first point that is made in the existing literature is that some families are more likely to be actively engaged in choosing their child's school than other families. For example, a 2004 study conducted using data from interviews with the parents of black students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) found that middle class black parents are much more likely to intervene in their child's education by actively choosing the school the student attends while working class black parents were considered "non-choosers," and their children were more likely to attend the assigned school (Diamond & Gomez, 2004, p. 398). The working class families perceived there to be fewer options and assumed that the assigned school was a "given" (Diamond & Gomez, 2004, p. 402).

Those parents who do perceive that they have options and actively participate in choosing their child's school do so for a variety of reasons. In one study, conducted in Texas, a group of both black parents and white parents were surveyed to determine which school characteristics, from a list of six factors, was most important and which was least important to them when making a choice about which charter school their child would attend. For white parents, the average test scores of students attending the school was the most important factor, and for black families the teaching of morals and values was the most important factor. For both black and white parents, the racial makeup of the student body was the least important factor to them (Weiher & Tedin, 2002). In fact, this same study found that black students who leave traditional public schools to attend a charter school move to a school that has, on average, fifteen percent more black students than their previous school (Weiher & Tedin, 2002).

Research on magnet schools can also inform this point. One study that examined who, specifically, chooses to leave their neighborhood schools when given a choice to attend a public magnet school determined that the racial demographics of the neighborhood school did not predict the number of black students who applied for magnet schools when given the option to do so (Saporito, 2003). Students from predominantly black neighborhood schools were no more likely to opt for a magnet school outside of their neighborhoods than any other student.

In addition to the parent opinion data regarding school choice, there is other public opinion data that is relevant to this study. Specifically, there is cause to examine survey results concerning the perceived importance of school desegregation. Each year, beginning in 1969, *Phi Delta Kappan* in conjunction with Gallup Polls, conducts a survey

of American adults about their views on public schools. The researchers ask a variety of questions that are pertinent to the main issues in education that year, but every year, there is one question that remains the same: “What is the biggest problem facing local schools?” In 1969, thirteen percent of the people surveyed said that “integration” was the biggest problem facing schools (Elam, 1978, p. 76). A year later, seventeen percent of all adults surveyed expressed that integration was the biggest problem for schools (Elam, 1978). The amount of concern about school desegregation peaks there, and then slowly declines each year. By 1980, ten percent of Americans call integration the biggest problem (Gallup, 1980), by 1990 only five percent of participants believed it was the biggest issue (Elam, 1990), and in 1998 the issue does not appear on the list of biggest problems at all (Rose & Gallup, 1998) and has not been listed again since. This trend suggests that over time Americans may have become less aware or concerned about school desegregation as a social issue.

Another important area of research that is applicable to this study pertains to cultural capital and also the concept of social reproduction (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Cultural capital focuses on cultural and social exclusion. This work provides context to this study because the authors provide a framework for understanding how social stratification is maintained and educational inequality is reproduced. Specifically, schools themselves reflect the norms of the dominant class, and are, therefore, not “socially neutral” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988 p. 155). Some students from the dominant class come to school understanding certain “social and cultural cues” that help them be successful in school while those students who are disadvantaged do not have these tools and struggle to ever attain them (Lamont & Larreau, 1988, p. 155). In this way, the

institution of school itself causes students who are in one group to invariably remain in that group.

Teachers and school leaders are often not able to recognize the “injustice” of a process that allows some students to succeed and others to struggle based only on their cultural experiences. They do not intend to cause harm to students; it is simply the way it has always been done (Mills, 2008, p. 84). There is some analysis in the literature that suggests that teachers and school administrators should focus less on trying to find ways for children to overcome barriers and more on restructuring a system that is inherently inequitable (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003). In so doing, school personnel could address the reproduction of educational inequality. Specifically, school districts have a responsibility to examine policies regarding desegregation to ensure that these policies and practices do not unintentionally exacerbate the problem of inequity.

An additional area of interest relates to research that has been conducted regarding the relationship between poverty, depression, and marital status of single mothers who live in urban areas. Specifically, studies have shown that single mothers are twice as likely to suffer from depression than their married counterparts, especially those who face economic struggles (Brown & Moran, 1997). This prevalence of depression has been linked to the lower self-esteems of single women who live in urban environments. The researchers point out that single mothers are more likely to experience “humiliating” or “entrapping” life events that cause the lower self-esteems (Brown & Moran, 1997, p. 21). According to the research black single mothers struggle with self-efficacy much more often and more severely than those who are married (Jackson, 2000). A lack of self-efficacy, defined as “a belief in one’s personal mastery

over difficult situations, is directly related to the level of stress that the parent experiences (Jackson, 2000, p.3).

2.6 Gaps in Desegregation Literature

2.6.1 The Black Voice

In reviewing the volumes that have been written about all aspects of school desegregation in the United States, it is difficult to find studies that relate exclusively to the opinions and beliefs of black Americans. In *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: The Dream Deferred*, one of the few works that does focus on the black voice, Sigelman and Welch (1991) write, "When we consider almost any controversial issue relating to race, we find that a great deal is known about whites' attitudes, but little is known about blacks' attitudes" (p. 2). The authors believe that the main reason this happens is that researchers and policy makers take for granted the way that black Americans feel about race issues. People assume that black Americans will feel a certain way, and so they simply never ask (Sigelman & Welch, 1991).

Another voice that is conspicuously missing from the conversation about school desegregation is that, specifically, of the black parent. While there are numerous polls and surveys about how white parents feel about sending their children to desegregated schools, little attention is paid to what black parents believe and feel (Edwards, 1993). What literature does exist on the issue primarily engages the voices of black adults who were once young students attending a desegregated school or are now black educators. Examples of this are Edwards' interviews of members of three generations of black adults who attended desegregated schools, Horsford's *Learning in a Burning House* in which the author interviews black superintendents, and Foster's *Black Teachers*

on Teaching, which reports a series of interviews with black teachers (Edwards, 1993; Foster, 1998; Horsford, 2011).

When reading about the history of school desegregation in America, there is a sense that the policy was both made for black people and done to them without ever asking whether they wanted it done this way or not. The black community had/has a “collective stake” in the education of its young people, and the literature on the subject lacks any significant treatment of their voice (Irvine & Irvine, 1983, p. 419). The process of desegregation focused on the education system, but it never considered the impact on families and communities (Lightfoot, 1980). There is a genuine need to hear the voices of these families.

2.6.2 The Voice of Black Parents on Involuntary Desegregation Measures

One study that does have similarities to the one explained here was conducted by Wells and Crain in the 1990s. The St. Louis Public Schools made an agreement in 1983 that it would allow black students to voluntarily attend predominantly white schools outside their assigned boundaries. This was a “freedom of choice” plan. The study involved interviews with black high school students who elected to attend desegregated schools that were farther away from their homes and those who decided to stay in their neighborhood schools. The researchers also interviewed these students’ parents.

An important discovery from the St. Louis study was that parent involvement was the most significant factor in determining whether or not the black students chose to attend the desegregated schools. In situations where the parent helped to make the decision with the student and encouraged the young person to attend the suburban school,

the student complied and elected to go to the desegregated school. When parents left the decision entirely up to the child or if there was no discussion at all, students elected to stay in their neighborhood schools where they knew what to expect and did not have to fear that they would be unaccepted in the predominantly white schools (Wells & Crain, 1997).

The parents who did not encourage their children to attend a different school felt powerless. They were withdrawn and felt mistrust toward the schools. Their own personal sense of alienation seemed to prevent them from helping their children in educational matters. All of the parents wanted what was best for their children, but the parents' own lack of self-esteem impacted their ability to outwardly advocate for their children (Wells & Crain, 1997).

This study does take place in a large urban district, and the catalyst for the desegregation plan occurs in the early 1980s, at around the same time as the issue in South Bend. These are certainly similarities. Also, the researchers in the St. Louis study do capture the black voice of both students and parents. However, it is limited only to questions regarding voluntary methods of desegregation. In St. Louis, families had a choice about whether they wanted to participate in the plan whereas South Bend utilized involuntary methods to desegregate. In addition, the study reveals objective reasons that black students have either opted to attend desegregated school or neighborhood schools; it does not present subjective opinions.

Another case study of a school district very similar to South Bend was done by Bankston and Caldas (2002). East Baton Rouge Parish School District is in a relatively smaller urban area. Like South Bend, which is smaller than Indianapolis, but still

relatively large, Baton Rouge has all of the same qualities of a large urban district but is still second to New Orleans. In the 1960s, East Baton Rouge utilized a “freedom of choice” plan, which was ineffectual in desegregating the schools and was legally opposed by the NAACP in 1981, the same year as the first South Bend challenge (Bankston & Caldas, 2002, p.85). When a federal district court ordered Baton Rouge to rectify the situation, the school district developed a plan very similar to what was adopted in South Bend. They “clustered” schools together then bused students across the district, between clustered schools, to balance racial demographics (Bankston & Caldas, 2002, p. 85).

The study of what happened from 1981 to 1999 in Baton Rouge is based primarily on quantitative data that indicate that, like in South Bend, rapid white flight occurred. White students from East Baton Rouge Parish moved to other more suburban districts, a plethora of non-public schools sprung up in the area to accommodate those who were unhappy with the busing plan, the overall enrollment of East Baton Rouge Parish decreased quickly, and the district turned from a majority white district to a majority black district in fewer than twenty years (Bankston & Caldas, 2002).

There is passing reference, in the study, to interviews with school administrators who discuss the impact of white flight on the district. There is one paragraph in the study that references interviews with parents about why they chose to leave the district (Bankston & Caldas, 2002). Therefore, while the situation in East Baton Rouge closely parallels the situation in South Bend, the study was designed to answer questions about how the district was quantitatively impacted by the busing policy. It does not answer questions about the parents’ views on the topic.

It is also notable that this most closely related study did take place over fifteen years ago, and much has changed with regard to school desegregation since then as more and more districts achieve unitary status. The study was also focused on an urban area in the South, and, today, southern schools are the most integrated schools in the country (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). There is still a need to examine desegregation issues in other parts of the country. There remains a void in the literature regarding parent views of involuntary desegregation measures in the North in the current decade.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

There is a great deal written on the broad topic of school desegregation in the United States. Depending on the political climate at the time and the stage of the desegregation process that the nation was in, the content of the research and opinions varies. In the 1950s, the main topic of conversation was segregation in the South and how it was even possible to overcome attitudes and constructs in that region of the country.

In the early 1960s, the discourse was very polarized. Some were writing in defense of the *Brown* decision, and others were making a case against desegregation. This was a time when more and more black students were stepping up to claim what was promised to them in *Brown*, and everyone had an opinion. The issue became one of funding in the late 1960s and whether or not federal funds for education should be withheld in order for school districts to be motivated to move more quickly with the mandated desegregation. It had been almost fifteen years since our nation had

decided that school desegregation was the best policy, but it had not yet been fully implemented.

In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers began talking about involuntary measures like busing and about how neighborhoods and school districts were changing as a result of increased court involvement, now in the North. Scholars began writing about ways out of desegregation in the 1990s and started asking questions about whether the policy really accomplished what it was meant to accomplish.

In 2014 we marked the sixty-year anniversary of *Brown v. Board*, which brought about a time of reflection. Those black students who were brave enough to cross the invisible barrier and go to predominantly white schools in the 1950s and 60s, were now adults, and they were able to speak about their experiences. It was a time to look back and to evaluate, and though the majority of Americans still agreed that integration was the right idea in theory, there were an increasing number of people who wondered if busing was the best tool to accomplish the goal (Gillespie, 1999; Orfield, 1995; Reardon & Owens, 2014). More and more, the literature began to point toward the end of mandatory desegregation in schools (Frankenburg & Lee, 2002; Frankenburg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Orfield, 2001; Orfield & Eaton, 1997; Orfield & Lee, 2007).

Writings from most recent years tend to treat school desegregation post-mortem, trying to decipher what, exactly, went wrong and what may happen now. Once the remaining court-ordered decrees that still exist are abandoned in favor of unitary status, there may be increased segregation in the public schools again since the courts do not monitor the school districts once they have been released from the mandate to make sure

that re-segregation does not occur (Eckes, 2004). Likewise, the number of majority-minority schools is on the rise.

Throughout the different stages of writing about school desegregation, there are some topics that receive more attention from researchers than others. The question of whether black students are really better off, both academically and socially, because they attended integrated schools is the most developed question in literature though there is no true consensus about the answer. The issues of white flight and of busing also gain a great deal of attention. Recently, the most pressing topic in desegregation literature is unitary status and the return to segregated schools.

Many of these topics are relevant to inform the context of the current study. When talking to parents about their child's education, academic performance and the social and emotional aspects are important issues of concern. The departure of white students from the district and the busing policy are realities for the SBCSC. The district is, in many ways, very typical of an urban school district that continues to work to maintain desegregated schools.

2.8 Where the Study Fits in the Body of Literature

Despite the impressive quantity of work relating to school desegregation, there is still a need for more research in certain areas. There is little recent qualitative research focusing specifically on the feelings and opinions of black parents whose children are still being involuntarily bused outside of their neighborhoods to attend desegregated schools. Of the two studies that I found that were similar to the current study and relatively recent, neither had as its main goal to ascertain what parents' actual perceptions are about the advantages and disadvantages of busing. Since this study is framed by legal

storytelling, it is significant that attention is drawn specifically to the voice of the black parents on the topic. Additionally, as a problem of practice, this study could have a direct impact on the policy of the SBCSC.

There is literature to indicate that the policy of school desegregation has not achieved its goal or that results may be mixed. There is certainly quantitative data to suggest that there may not be significant academic gains. The current study examines the affective side of desegregation in contemporary society. It asks the question of whether black parents still feel that this design is what is best for their children and how it impacts their family. In a time when courts and policy makers seem to be wavering about what to do with school desegregation, and when there are still school districts like the SBCSC that are under federal orders or consent decrees, these are important questions to ask. Policy needs to be informed by the voices of the people who are most impacted by the policy, and this study adds this voice to the existing literature.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Question

According to black parents, what are the perceived advantages and disadvantages to the practice of involuntarily busing students to schools outside of their neighborhood zones?

3.2 Research Method

In order to answer the research question, the study incorporates a qualitative approach which utilizes a semi-structured interview protocol. The interview is the best choice of methodology because, in this case, the focus of the study is relatively narrow, and a specific group of people are targeted as participants (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault,

2015). In addition, interviews worked well in this case because the main goal of the study is to understand the lived experiences of the parents (Seidman, 2013). A case study would not have been an effective choice because several interviews were needed to observe a trend (Taylor, Bogden, & DeVault, 2015).

The number of interviews was dependent on participant availability. A qualitative study allows for a smaller sample size than a quantitative study because a story only needs to be told once to be a relevant piece of data (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Even with relatively small sample size, clear themes quickly became evident. “Theoretical saturation” is the point in qualitative research when the information becomes repetitive, and additional data collection does not actually lead to new data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data saturation also adds an element of validity to the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The study uses grounded theory design principles. A specific group of individuals who have experienced something similar were asked a series of standard questions. The answers to these questions help to form a general explanation (grounded theory) to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013). The theory, or answers to the research questions, are grounded in the data (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Specifically, in this study, a group of black parents who live in the same area and whose children are bused to the same school outside their neighborhood, were asked questions about their feelings and opinions about their shared experiences. The answer to the research question is grounded in the experiences of the participants. The individual interviews permit each parent to share their own experience and then allows for emerging themes when all of the data is viewed collectively.

3.3 Setting and Participants

A specific site, in this case a cluster of neighborhoods, was selected because it provides participants whose answers informed the specific research question (Creswell, 2008). The sample size of seven to ten was selected as a goal in an effort to obtain multiple data points while still keeping the size of the sample relatively small. A larger sample might have negatively impacted the level of depth with which the data could be examined. In addition, a large sample size could have caused the study to become “unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives” (Creswell, 2008, p. 217).

Criterion-based selection was used to construct the sample for the study. With this method, a researcher determines which attributes are most significant then locates participants to meet the criteria. The criteria must also match the purpose of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, the selection process used in this study is best described as a “theoretical case” of a criterion-based selection because the participants “exist within a context” and “possess certain characteristics” that allow the researcher to develop a theory (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 158).

Participants were selected based first on the fact that they have a child who is attending Greene School in the SBCSC. This particular school has a relatively large proportion of black students who are bused from a significant distance. Using the entire roster of the school, a list of students who identify, on their enrollment forms, as “black” was isolated. It was important to interview black parents because the purpose of the study was to specifically explore the views of black parents.

Then, using the student's home address listed on the enrollment form, the distance from the student's home to the school was calculated using Google Maps. A rank-order list, with the greatest distances listed at the top of the list was generated. The parents

who live farthest from the school were contacted first. Those parents who could be reached and who agreed to participate were interviewed for this study. If a parent near the top of the rank-order list responded that they would prefer not to participate or if the parent is not reachable with the contact information on the enrollment form, preference moved down the list.

It is important to note that even though I was given permission by the SBCSC to conduct this research and given access to student information, I did have previously existing relationships with some of the participants in the study. This is due to the fact that I served as principal of Greene School for two years and have interacted with the parents in that capacity. It is important to the validity of the research that I did not “hand pick” parents from the list of qualifying participants. The rank-ordered list was an attempt to mitigate any bias I might have had to interview parents with whom I have a particular relationship.

At the time that the study was conducted, there were 204 students enrolled at Greene School (IDOE Compass, 2017). Of those students, eighty-five identified as “African-American” on their student enrollment forms. These students were ranked in order by distance from their place of residence to the school. The longest distance was 13.1 miles, and the shortest distance was 5.9 miles.

For the purpose of this study, an attempt was made to contact each family who lived eight miles away or farther. This provided a total participant bank of forty-one students. Of those students, two of them were not actually assigned to Greene, but the error had not been detected, and eight of them had no working phone numbers. Six of the parents declined to participate in the study, and another sixteen were contacted at least

twice and did not return the call after at least one voicemail message had been left. Seven parents did agree to participate in the study.

These seven parents all participated in a semi-structured interview that was audio recorded and transcribed. Each parent agreed to sign the consent form, and at the completion of the interview each was paid twenty dollars for their participation. Each participant was asked to take part in a member checking process to help confirm the validity of the transcription as data. The transcript was provided to each of the participants, and they were instructed to read through the document and to notify me either through email or a phone call if there were any inaccuracies in the transcript. It should be noted that none of the participants followed up with any corrections or additional information. The interviews were then coded to indicate the results explained in the next chapter.

Although it was not intended, all seven of the participants were women, and all were single-mothers, although one woman did say she was engaged to be married. All of the participants live within the city limits of South Bend, and four of the seven invited me to their homes for the interview. Six of the seven participants indicated that they had lived in South Bend all of their lives or nearly all of their lives, and five of the seven attended SBCSC schools when they were younger. All seven of the participants' children qualified for free or reduced lunch according to school records.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect the data that ultimately answered the research question. A semi-structured approach was best in this case

because it allowed for the participants to tell the stories that they felt were relevant to the topic, made room for more theoretical questions, and it also provided space for questions about the “existing constructs” around the topic (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p. 45). In addition, the focus on storytelling and on the “black voice,” which is informed by critical race theory, make a more rigid structure impractical because any leading by the interviewer might have jeopardized the validity of the study. The stories needed to originate from the participants. Unlike an experimental design, this study did not begin with a theory; the theory was derived organically from the data that the parents offered.

It was critical to this study that only the opinions of the black parent who was the participant were recorded as data. As part of the interview protocol, I explained that if students or other family members came into the room during the interview, they could observe but could not participate. This is important because the study is purposely focused on parent opinions and feelings. If students or other people voiced an opinion, that may have informed or changed the original opinion of the parent and may have potentially threatened the validity of the study.

At the beginning of each interview, I explained the purpose of the interview and asked each participant to read and sign the consent to form. I read the research question aloud, which was also printed on the form and explained that the purpose of the study was to answer the question about the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the busing program. The main interview protocol began with some “icebreaker” questions to help the participants become comfortable talking. Then there were several open-ended core questions that related directly to the research question. Follow-up questions that would add depth or clarity to the responses were utilized as needed.

Interview Protocol:

Preliminary Questions:

1. How long have you lived in South Bend?
2. How many students do you have attending Greene School?
3. How long would it take you to drive from your home to Greene School?
4. Are there any other intermediate schools that you know of that are closer?
5. How long would it take for you to drive there?
6. Do you know why your child is assigned to attend Greene School when there seems to be a school that is closer? Can you explain it to me?

Core Questions:

1. Have you ever heard the phrase “consent decree”? “Plan Z”?
2. (After explaining a brief history of “Plan Z” if necessary) What is your reaction to this now that you know a little history?
3. What impact, if any, does the distance between your home and the school have on your child’s education?
4. What other impacts, if any, might the distance have on your family or other areas of your child’s life?
5. Do you feel that you have any input into where your child goes to school? Do you feel you have options?
6. If it was up to you and you were in charge, how would you decide what school students are assigned to? What makes the most sense to you?

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

After the participants were identified, contacted, and had agreed to participate in the interviews, I asked each parent to designate a time and place to meet them for the interview. I explained that I was willing to meet them in their homes but that I would be willing to meet elsewhere if that was more convenient. Five of the seven participants met with in their homes, and two other parents agreed to meet me at a local restaurant. Using the interview protocol, I conducted the interviews. I audio recorded the conversations, and after the interview had been completed, I transcribed the interview. While the transcription does include some relevant non-verbal descriptions, it was relatively “denaturalized” because the focus of this study is on the meaning of the words that summarized the experience -- the story, not on the language itself (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). The interviews lasted between twenty and sixty minutes.

For the purpose of validity, within two weeks of each interview I contacted the participants and asked them to read the transcripts and correct any misconceptions or inaccuracies. This process is referred to as member checking (Cresswell, 2013). The decision to utilize member checking was made because it allowed for the data to be validated through the participant’s lens (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checking is an appropriate choice for this study because it deliberately shifts the focus onto the participants. For a study that relies entirely on interviews, member checking is an effective strategy to build credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It “is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126).

It is also important, while engaging in the member checking, to be aware of “researcher effects.” It is possible that when the participants review the transcripts they

may want to add or delete material simply to extend their responses in a perceived effort to assist me further in the research or even to report something that someone else told them (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). During the member checking process, it was important to be clear that the purpose was to verify the meaning of what was shared in the initial interviews. None of the participants in this study returned any corrections or additions through the member-checking process.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The process of analyzing the data was inductive because the data began as very specific experiences that the participants shared, and gradually the coding allowed for generalizations about the data set as a whole. All of the data was reviewed first as a “preliminary exploratory analysis” (Creswell, 2008, p. 236). I read the transcripts to try to gain an overall picture of the direction that the data was heading. Because the focus of this study is on the experiences and stories of the participants, all comments were considered to be valuable data, even if only one participant expressed a particular view. However, after the initial exploratory analysis, I coded all of the data with broad open coding (Creswell, 2013). Open coding is a process through which the researcher marks any theme that might be relevant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Specifically, I made several copies of each transcript. I physically cut out each of the participant responses and pasted it onto an index card, labeling with the theme and the participant number. In many cases, a participant’s comment might relate to multiple themes, and in this case multiple cards were made, one for each theme. Once this process

was completed with all interviews, I was able to group the cards into major themes. These major themes were created when a topic emerged in at least three separate interviews. Themes that emerged from this process include comments on diversity, transportation, student learning, financial impacts, social-emotional factors, and parent wishes. The next step was “re-coding” to break the codes down even further (Saldena, 2016). During this process, I examined each stack of cards by theme and determined any sub-themes which were mentioned by at least two parents. The analysis itself took place once the connections had been made, and the entire body of research could be viewed as a whole.

I report findings in chapter four by the major themes that emerged during the coding process. In chapter five, I discuss how these findings relate to the existing literature on the topic, suggest some direction for future study, and offer specific recommendations for the SBCSC.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The scope of the study is limited only to parents who have a child that attends Greene School in the SBCSC. Any findings from the study might inform further research about parent opinions in other parts of the country, but the results from the current study may be generalizable only to this specific school district and under these particular circumstances.

Another potential limitation might be the existing relationship that may exist between myself, as the interviewer, and the participants of the study. Having been the principal at the school from which the sample is being drawn, there was a strong possibility that those who were selected and agreed to participate may have known me as

the principal of their child's school. This certainly might be an advantage in this study if participants felt more comfortable with me and were, therefore, more willing to share their honest opinions and feelings. However, a limitation might occur if the participant felt as though they could not be honest with me because of my prior role or if they wanted to please me by telling me what they thought I might "want" to hear. I attempted to mitigate the issue; I explained clearly that the accuracy of the study depended upon their true opinions.

Perhaps the most significant potential limitation is the fact that the study is an example of cross-cultural research. While the participants in the study are all black, the researcher is white. The relationship between the researcher and the participant can, at times, look much like the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. It is the researcher who sets the agenda and who controls the conversation (Ladner, 1987). Even in a case where the researcher's goal is to present the "voice" of the participants, it is the researcher who decides which voices are heard (Crozier, 2003).

The white researcher must build trust with the black participants, so that the responses are honest and thorough (Crozier, 2003). A qualitative approach is the best choice for "conveying sensitivity" and decreasing suspicion and mistrust (Liamputtong, 2010). Though I did not have a prior relationship with all of the parents who participated in the study, it is my hope that my prior relationship with some of the families in the neighborhood was an advantage in gaining this trust. In any cross-cultural study, the researcher should spend time before the study learning about the culture and spending time to build relationships with the participants (Liamputtong, 2008). The two years that I worked with these families as principal have given me opportunities to do both. In

addition to the relationship building, throughout the research process, I monitored my own cultural sensitivity and was certain to report my findings responsibly so as not to cause any harm to the participant group (Liamputtong, 2010).

Standpoint theory, most commonly used in the context of feminist studies, is the notion that the researcher must be a member of the group in order to effectively study the issues. For example, according to this theory, only a black researcher could study black issues and only a woman could study feminist issues. This theory has most often been refuted by the argument that all people have multiple points of identification, what critical race theorists call “intersectionality.” A single participant could identify as black, female, single, Christian, middle-class, and gay. It is not reasonable to suggest that only a researcher who can identify in all of these exact ways could conduct a legitimate qualitative study with the participant (Crozier, 2003).

Often an outsider perspective is quite advantageous in research. An outsider can “scrutinize certain problems more closely, instead of seeing them as common phenomena or not seeing them at all” (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 115). Specifically, in this study, it is possible that the participants utilized their distinct voice and were more motivated to share their experiences. They understood that their “white counterpart” might not be able to comprehend, and they were willing to use their unique experience to assist the researcher in the examination of the issue (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10).

One final potential limitation that should candidly be addressed is the fact that race in America is a sensitive issue. As a person who respects differences and sees diversity as a strength, it is important to me that I not ever be perceived as racist. As a researcher, it is important to me that I faithfully and accurately report my findings from

the data I collect. I feel that I need to acknowledge the discomfort I have had throughout this study. The discomfort and nervousness came from the fact that I did not want to offend anybody with results I report or words I have used. When a researcher presents another's "voice," they are presenting their feelings and opinions and their lives to the public to be judged. There is an internal struggle for the researcher -- should they just "tell it like it is," or do they have some responsibility to protect the participants from this judgment? (Crozier, 2003). This was my struggle, but I feel strongly that by reporting the data accurately, I have done my best to honor my participants' experiences.

Chapter 4: Results

As discussed, this study was framed around the stories of black parents and their perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of the involuntary busing program in their community. The results of this study are discussed by theme. The following themes emerged during the coding of the data: diversity, transportation, impacts on learning, financial impacts, affective parent concerns, and parent wishes.

4.1 Comments on Diversity

When discussing diversity, some parents indicated that sending their child to a school that had a diverse student population was important to them. Specifically, several parents in the study mentioned benefits while others spoke about the concept of diversity in a very generalized way. They explained about the importance of the children "having friends who are different," being exposed to "different ideas," and learning how to "get along with others." These parents felt that their children could learn life lessons about living in a diverse world if they attended school with a diverse population. They shared

about the positives of “having a mixture” or “mixing them together” or “mixing it up a little more.” One parent described the “mixture” of students this way, “You know how these people are. I know how these people are. We know how we are. Everybody is grouping together to make a community. They’re growing together.” Another participant summarized, “They’re all teaching each other something they don’t know.”

Two of the seven parents indicated that although diversity was an important aspect of their own lives and in their families, they were not particularly concerned about the racial makeup of the school. For them, diversity at school seemed like a non-issue. For example, one parent offered, “I don’t really care. I just want my kids to go to school and hope to God there ain’t no bullies at the school...You know, we’re all people. All girls and boys and women and men and people should stop looking at that. In my world, we’re color blind.” Another parent insisted, “To tell the truth, I don’t care if it’s black, white, Mexican, whatever. As long as she’s getting her education, I’m good.”

The somewhat confusing part of the diversity issue is that while all participants expressed that diversity is valuable, many expressed that they felt there was adequate diversity in their own neighborhoods and that if a neighborhood school was available to them, the demographics would be perfectly acceptable. Two of the participants shared that they believed other parents would not be concerned with the demographics of a school in their neighborhood either. One explained, “If it was basically the kids who live in the neighborhood who went to a school, I don’t think parents would look at it like, ‘My child’s school is segregated.’ I don’t think it really matters.” Another parent agreed about the idea of a neighborhood school, “I don’t think it would be an all-white school or an all-black school. I still don’t think it would be that. It’s diverse as it is. I wouldn’t

think of it like that.” Student body diversity appears to be of value to parents, but it is not an issue they prioritize over attending a neighborhood school.

4.2 Transportation Issues

Though there were no specific interview questions about the SBCSC transportation system, it is important to make note of the fact that five of the seven participants mentioned, on their own, frequent late buses as a frustration that made the distance from home to school even more difficult. These parents had much to offer about the logistics of the busing program.

Several times during the school year, parents explained, they receive text messages that say the bus is going to be two hours late picking their children up in the morning. These are not weather delays, and the delays seem to be related to just one bus each time. So, for some students, their parents have to go to work in the morning, and the children are then on their own to catch the late bus. Two different participants shared about how difficult the situation was and how there were times when their children missed the late bus on those days and just had to stay home from school because nobody could drive them to school. It is very difficult for some families. One parent described, “Or if they miss the bus, God forbid, when it’s two hours late, then you have to find a way to get them to thirty minutes away.”

This also made at least one parent very nervous about her child’s whereabouts. She remarked, “I’m a working mother, so when I’m thinking my child’s on the bus, she ain’t even gotten picked up yet.” Another parent was upset about the instructional time that her child was missing when the bus was late. “Or in the morning

they have a two-hour delay, so I'm a little upset about that because there's something they're missing in class."

Unfortunately, the parents in the interview group also had complaints about busing in the afternoons. The same anxiety that parents felt when the bus was late in the morning reappeared when buses were late in the afternoon. One mother shared, "And now they have the bus system all messed up. Maybe ten or fifteen times this year alone, we get a message saying our child is going to be an hour and a half late. You just sit at the bus stop and wait."

Besides the nervousness, there is also an element of inconvenience when buses are late in the afternoon, and Greene parents feel they do not have as many options as they would if the school were closer. One participant explained, "It's a big deal when they tell you an hour and a half to two hours, and if your kids stayed close, they could just walk home or you could meet them at the school and walk a few blocks." While this study is not designed to tackle issues surrounding the perceived challenges that the SBCSC's transportation department faces, the concerns surfaced enough times in the research that it is worth noting that this is a source of frustration for Greene parents, and it is a problem that may lend itself to further research.

Another aspect of transportation, though, relates to the other options available to families. Of the seven participants interviewed, six parents volunteered information about their family's transportation situation. The idea of the "single-car family" is one that surfaced several times in conversations. Three parents indicated that their family did not have a car at all, two others said they had one car for the whole family, and one

remarked that while she did own a car, she was not able to drive, so she had to find someone else to drive her if she needed to go to the school.

Parents offered that their families do not have cars for one of several reasons. Either they cannot afford a car or their car needs repairs they cannot afford and is not drivable. One parent shared, “Well, at first I didn’t have a vehicle because my vehicle was in the shop. It was in the shop for a while, so that was the biggest part of the transportation issue. Now that it’s out of the shop, it needs to go back.” This same parent went on to summarize that the main problem with her child’s assignment to Greene School is an issue of “transportation, not the distance.” Later in the conversation she pointed out that if her child could walk to a neighborhood school that would alleviate some of the stress.

Families with only one car often have to use that car to go to work or for a partner or adult child to go to work. One participant explained, “I’m sharing [the car] with my significant other, and he has to go to work and so on and so forth.” Sometimes, if a car was needed for school when the car was already committed to work, the child simply could not go to school that day.

Parents also asserted that they thought it would be helpful if their children attended a school that they could walk to from their homes. With some of the SBCSC transportation issues, one parent posited, “They don’t have many people to drive the bus now, so if your kid stayed close, you could walk to school as far as a middle school-aged child like my daughter.”

Some participants also cited the fact that Greene School is not on a public transportation route as a problem for them. One mother observed that if her child misses

the SBCSC bus, her next best option to get her child to school would be public transportation but then lamented that Greene was located too far out in the country to be accessible by the city bus. She said, “If she went to Dickinson [School], that’s close. If she missed the bus, she could actually catch the Transpo bus. That’s cheaper than me trying to find someone to take my child to school.”

4.3 Impacts on Learning

The most common concern that parents shared about their children’s learning was that their child was often more tired because they had to get up so early in the morning to catch the bus. Parents indicated that they were worried that the early bus pick-up could negatively impact their child’s academic performance as well as their behavior at school. Those who expressed this concern felt that if the school were closer, their child would not have to get up so early in the morning to catch the bus or could even potentially walk to school, allowing them to get extra rest. Four of the seven parents who were interviewed for this study felt that the longer distance between home and school did have at least some impact on their child’s learning. When asked if there was an impact on learning, one parent summarized,

Because she has to get up earlier. Because when I first moved here she was going to Brown [School], and then I had to switch her to Greene. Brown -- she didn’t get on the bus that early. But then when she went to Greene, she had to get up -- she basically was getting on the bus an hour early...and I think that interrupts their sleep. You know, when they have to wake up early. I already have to wake her up early, but when you got to wake up an extra hour early just to go way out

to Greene -- you know, then they're wondering, "Well, why does [she] act like this when she's at school?" she's probably tired!

Another concern that parents shared about how the distance impacts learning had to do with their children missing the bus and then having to be absent from school that day. Two parents raised this dilemma. One mother noted that if her fiance had to work that day and her child missed the bus, "Now my kid has to miss school because they missed the bus." Another parent had a similar response and offered what happened when her older daughter had to work on the day that the younger sibling missed the bus. She explained, "And most of the time when he misses, she has to be at work, and then he misses school today."

In contrast, there was one parent who asserted that there was an academic advantage to her child attending Greene School. This mother indicated that she preferred that her child attend a school with a greater proportion of white students. She recalled her thoughts when she first visited Greene:

So, I'm walking through, and I said, "But maybe he'll learn more...because this is a white school. It is way out here," and once again, not being racist, I said, "Where there's a lot of black kids at, they play. You've got to worry about violence, talking back, and just being disobedient period. So maybe this will help him advance through life.

Although this parent was the only one who voiced this particular opinion, it was clear that she felt that there were academic as well as social benefits to her child attending a school that she perceived to be a "white school."

Two of the seven participants expressed that they did not feel that the distance to the school had any academic impact on their children. One of those parents cited the fact that her children were in honors classes and doing quite well. She also commented that the teachers at Greene did work with her when there were problems, so she did not feel there was any negative impact.

As a side note, two parents did mention their inability to participate in school activities and how the distance could sometimes impact that aspect of parent engagement. It was not clear that these parents considered this obstacle as a negative impact on their child's education, but they did remark that for parent teacher conferences, if there was no money for gas, there was no way they could attend the events at the school. One parent indicated that the school would work with parents who live in the city, saying, "Usually, we just do it by phone because they'll say if I can't get out there then we'll just do a phone conference."

When discussing the potential impact on learning, some parents considered extracurricular activities part of the larger picture. For example, a parent shared that she was not able to watch her child participate in sports at school when there was no money for gas. She explained, "It's an issue when it comes to after school sports and whether or not I can make it, but only because transportation is a little bit of an issue in my household right now. So, the distance causes a problem sometimes...depending on gas." Parents were disappointed that the distance created concerns related to academics and other school-sponsored activities.

4.4 Financial Impacts

When parents in the study were asked if there were any other impacts on the children or on the family that were not academic in nature, that is when many other issues were raised. One major concern that was mentioned by six of the seven participants was a financial concern which manifested itself in the lack of gas or gas money to drive to the school.

One parent described how stressful the gas situation can be:

Yes, because the bus takes forever to get here, and it's always late or something's going on with the bus. Or if it's not the bus, then something's happened where I've got to go to school. It's just always something. Then, when you get to the school, you drive so far away. And don't let it be on a day when you've not got paid, and you don't have gas to get out there! Oh, God!....Sometimes you're making it on a fume and a prayer, and I'm like, "Do I have enough gas to get out there and, you know, still have enough gas to run my errands or whatever?"

This mother's response demonstrates the amount of burden that the distance can place on low income families. Other parents voiced similar concerns.

Another mother shared that if there was no gas and the child would miss the bus, then the student was forced to miss that entire day of school. She explained, "But if he misses, it's just like...well, it's just way too far for real. It's just a lot of gas. It's a lot of gas to go from here to way out there." Others mentioned having to borrow money, finding someone else to pick up their child, missing activities, or not being able to pick up their sick child from school. One parent even pointed out that it was a hardship that Greene School was not on a public transportation line like the schools that are located within the city limits. She maintained that an advantage of going to a school in the city

was that taking the city bus would be, "... cheaper than me trying to find someone and gas to take my child to school. If I don't have gas that day, or, you know, single-car homes like us...." Gas appears to be a major concern for parents when it comes to getting to a school that is farther away. This concern was the most common concern voiced by the participants in this study.

In addition to the lack of money for gas, four participants spoke specifically about work and how the distance to school made the situation more difficult for their families in terms of their jobs. Three of the four confirmed the fact that when there was a conflict between a school need and a work expectation, the job had to come first. One parent said, "My job is important. I have to keep my job....You know, I have to be at work at a certain time." This family, and others like it, cannot survive without a paycheck, and the parent may not be able to afford lost time at their place of employment to take a child to school or to attend a school event. Other parents discussed how if one person in the family had to use the car for work, it was impossible to get to school because of inflexible work schedules.

Another parent also elaborated on the economic hardship this caused. This parent was late to work and lost time on the clock because her child missed the bus. When she had to take her son to school, it caused stress at work. When asked if she lost wages on those days, she answered, "Yes, because it's way this way, and I have to go back way that way." Another participant noted having to leave work and the loss of income. This parent explained, "It takes a lot more time, you know, to get there and back, and then get back to work than say a school in town that was like five or ten minutes. I wouldn't be gone that long." This loss of wages weighed heavily on the parents involved in the study.

4.5 Other Related Parent Concerns

Perhaps even more important than their paychecks, parents were concerned about how the complications caused by the distance to the school interfered with their sense of independence. Six of the seven participants spoke about the difficulty of having to rely on other people in order to get to their child's school in an emergency. Three parents discussed having to find someone else to give them a ride since they did not have a car or did not drive, and they also expressed how challenging it can be to find someone to help because of the distance. One parent remarked, "Yeah, you have to ask somebody to take you out there, and they're like, 'That's just too far,' or you know, complaining or something like that." Another mother agreed that the distance makes it hard to find volunteers, "So I have grown children that can drive me, you know, sisters and brothers, people I know that would do it for me, but it is harder for me to get someone to drive me all the way out there."

In addition to having to rely on others for a ride, two other parents stated that they have had to borrow money from other people in order to buy gas to drive to Greene. One parent recalled, "I remember that I had to call someone and ask if I could borrow some change or something in order to be able to get to the school." Another mentioned, "I ended up calling my niece and borrowing money from her to get out there and get her." A third participant shared that she would need to call in a "favor" and then find a way to pay her helper back. She explained, "So, she'll do a favor for me something like that. If he misses the bus, I say, 'Hey, can you run him out there for me?' And she'll have to get her baby up. And I'll say, 'I'll pay your car bill or something. I'll buy you something. Just do me the favor.'"

The distance to the school appears to make an already difficult situation even more stressful for many of the parents who were interviewed. Parents who participated in the study were willing to volunteer information about which scenarios produced the most stress and inconvenience for them with regard to the distance between home and school. Four of the seven interviewees expressed that they struggled when their child was “in trouble” for some reason and needed to be picked up from school. One such parent related, “So, it’s like if she gets in trouble or if things aren’t going their way at school as far as her acting up or whatever, then I would have to get up, put my brace on. I’m not working, so I don’t have gas to keep running back and forth out there to pick her up, you know. It’s just too much. It’s just too much!”

Another parent exhibited even more stress from a discipline situation, replaying the scene:

They said, “Oh, God! You’ve got to come get him right now, right away!”

“Well, I really can’t get him right now because I really don’t have any gas.”

“Well, you come get him, or he’s going to be suspended for ten days!”

And I was like, “Just put him on the phone. I’ll discipline him over the phone.”

“No, you have to come get him right now. If you don’t come get him, we’re

Going to call CPS if you don’t come right now.”

Faced with an extended suspension or even a report to child protective services, this parent maintained she had to find a way to get to the school immediately to get her child even though she did not have a car. Another parent echoed that, “The school wants you to come get them right then and there. Sometimes that’s just not feasible for the parent.”

A second very common occurrence that caused anxiety for parents was when their child was sick at school. Three parents described this scenario. One shared that if the parent could not come to get the child, the student would have to sit in the nurse's office all day then ride the bus home in the afternoon. Another parent noted, specifically, that the distance to the school was the challenge for her when her child was sick. She shared, "If a kid gets sick during the day -- I have a son at [another SBCSC school]. If he gets sick, and I have to pick him up, that's close. That's convenient. But when she gets sick, I have to think about transportation. How am I going to get her?"

In a few instances, participants in the study also referenced "emergency" situations and how if an emergency did arise, the distance would cause them stress. One comment was about an emergency at school where the parent expressed, "If an emergency occurred, I'd probably be going crazy trying to get out there!" Another comment was about emergencies at home and how a closer school would be easier. This parent explained, "Some type of emergency at the house, and I needed to get to them, or some type of emergency there, they'd be closer." In addition to the parent who said she'd go "crazy" trying to get to her child, parents used other phrases in their responses that indicate a level of stress such as "making it on a prayer," "it was horrible," "I have to beg," "oh, God," "it's too much," and, "God forbid."

An additional concern voiced by parents related to inconvenience. Parents in the study shared that the challenge of getting to Greene in the middle of the day made their own personal issues more difficult than they would have been if their child attended a closer school. As an example, one parent discussed a medical issue that impacted her mobility and therefore her ability to drive. Another participant remarked that she would

have to wake her oldest child's baby if she needed to go to the school. One parent explained it as "rerouting my entire day" if she had to find a way to get to the school.

4.6 What These Parents Want

As part of the interview process, all participants were asked directly what made the most sense to them regarding the method of school assignment. They were each asked the hypothetical question, "If you were in charge of school assignment in the SBCSC, how would you do it?" All seven of the participants in the study mentioned proximity to the home in their answers. Five of the seven participants were emphatic that this should be the most important if not the only factor. Two other participants seemed more conflicted about their responses and still struggled to come up with a definitive answer to the question.

The five parents who did agree that proximity to home should be the number one factor in school assignment did so quickly and without hesitation. The answers were generally short and directly to the point. One parent responded, "Location. Where they live." Another affirmed, "I just think if you live where the school is, go to that school." Two other parents agreed and also expressed their opinion that if there were a closer school, students should be allowed to go there. "I guess I would do first where the kids live at. So, if your home is like a mile or a couple miles surrounding, everybody would be able to go to that school. As long as you live five or ten minutes from the school, you can attend the school."

The fifth participant in this group also agreed and reiterated the convenience aspect,

If your kid stayed close, you could walk to school as far as a middle school-aged child like my daughter. She could walk to school. So I feel like it would be a big

advantage if the child lived close; they could cut down on buses, and they would actually probably save money because those kids could actually walk to school, or the bus route wouldn't take as long to pick up the kids in the neighborhood and bring them to school.

Of those five parents who were very clear about their priorities, two of them went on to explain that they believed a neighborhood school would actually be quite diverse and that they believed other parents would also accept the demographics of a school in their neighborhood. The only problem, these parents pointed out, is that schools like Greene that are outside of the city limits would still have a problem with demographics. One mother observed, "Yeah, where they live, because if they did go by location, I think the racial balance wouldn't be extremely off. Maybe for Greene -- Greene and [two other schools outside the city limits], like the schools that are out in the country. It might be something different there, but the majority of the schools don't need to be desegregated."

Outside of the five parents who immediately and emphatically listed proximity as their most important factor, the two other parents did also mention location as one of the most important considerations. These mothers, however, also saw other aspects of the question as it pertained to their own child. One expressed,

Well, one thing I kind of question is like with us being so far away, how is it that this is Greene's district, and we're so far away? You know, most of the kids who live out there by Greene should be the ones going to Greene, but then we have that issue of the race part of it because most of the kids that live out there are white.

This same parent pointed out that her son was interested in a magnet program that Greene offered, so the distance was not the only factor for them.

Another of the conflicted parents agreed that proximity to the school made the most sense but had a different reason for wanting her child to continue to attend Greene. She initially explained, “What I can say is that it’s probably the side of town you live on....but that’s kind of a hard question. Uh, I think they need to mix it up a little bit more. I really do.” This mother went on to express that she perceived there being different benefits to her child attending a school that was more diverse, contending that her child would do better academically if he attended a school with more white children. For these two parents, even though location made the most sense in general, their own situations and beliefs revealed their understanding of the complexity of the assignment process.

In terms of what the parents in the study wanted, another important theme emerged: the desire for choice. Four of the seven parents mentioned that they did not feel they had choices when it came to where their child goes to school. One answered emphatically, “I mean, me personally, I think parents should have a choice. They shouldn’t tell them that they have to. I mean, if it was up to me, I would send my child to a different school.” Another parent did understand that there was a process in place to request a transfer to another school, but she was confused and disillusioned with the process, and she had not yet gotten the answer that she wanted. She explained, “I would ask parents. Once a school gets filled up, then if other parents would like for their kids to go there, I would give them options, saying, ‘You don’t have to go through all these hoops. If you would like your kid to go to a different school then you can go to a

different school? ...I would try to accommodate every family if possible.” One parent shared that she felt that the people who have the choices are the people who are “able to drive their kid to school.”

Related to choice, the final request that two parents expressed was just that the SBCSC re-evaluate the entire situation and try to make it better for families. One responded, “I just think they need to sit down and have another meeting and come up with something. Give parents some alternatives, something like that.” Another declared,

I just feel like if they ever try to do Plan Z over, they need to take into consideration how important the bus situation is too because that’s the main factor. It’s a big deal when they tell you an hour and half to two hours, and if your kid stayed close, they could just walk home or you could meet them at the school and walk a few blocks, so that’s where the Plan Z and transportation are not adding up.

These parents do not seem to feel that they have much control over the situation themselves, but they are hopeful that the district can still find a better way.

Chapter 5: Analysis, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study sought to examine the following question:

According to black parents, what are the perceived advantages and disadvantages to the practice of involuntarily busing students to schools outside their neighborhood zones?

The findings in chapter four highlighted many of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the involuntary busing program in the SBCSC that were articulated by the black parents included in the study. In chapter five, I analyze these findings as they

relate to the literature, discuss new findings, identify remaining gaps, and offer policy recommendations.

5.1 Findings Situated within the Existing Literature

Several of the most recent court decisions regarding school desegregation have indicated a reversal of court-monitored desegregation orders (*Board v. Dowell*, 1991; *Freeman v. Pitts*, 1992; *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 1995). Schools that were once under desegregation mandates or consent decrees are now being declared unitary. As discussed, at the time of this study, the SBCSC is still under court supervision and therefore must take steps to ensure the district is mindful of desegregation policies.

There are many findings from the Greene study that are consistent with the existing literature. One such connection relates to the apparent decrease in the perceived importance of desegregation. This, of course, was reflected in the court decisions discussed as well as the literature. Specifically, the data gathered from the examination of the annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Polls indicate a clear trend that American adults have become progressively less concerned about school desegregation as a social issue (Bushaw & Lopez, 2010; Elam, 1978; Elam, 1990; Elam & Rose, 1995; Gallup, 1980; Gallup, 1985; PDK, 2017; Rose & Gallup, 2000; Rose & Gallup, 2005). Further, research from several studies indicates that black families, in particular, do not necessarily prioritize the racial composition of the student body when deciding upon which school for their child to attend (Saporito, 2003; Weiher & Tedin, 2002).

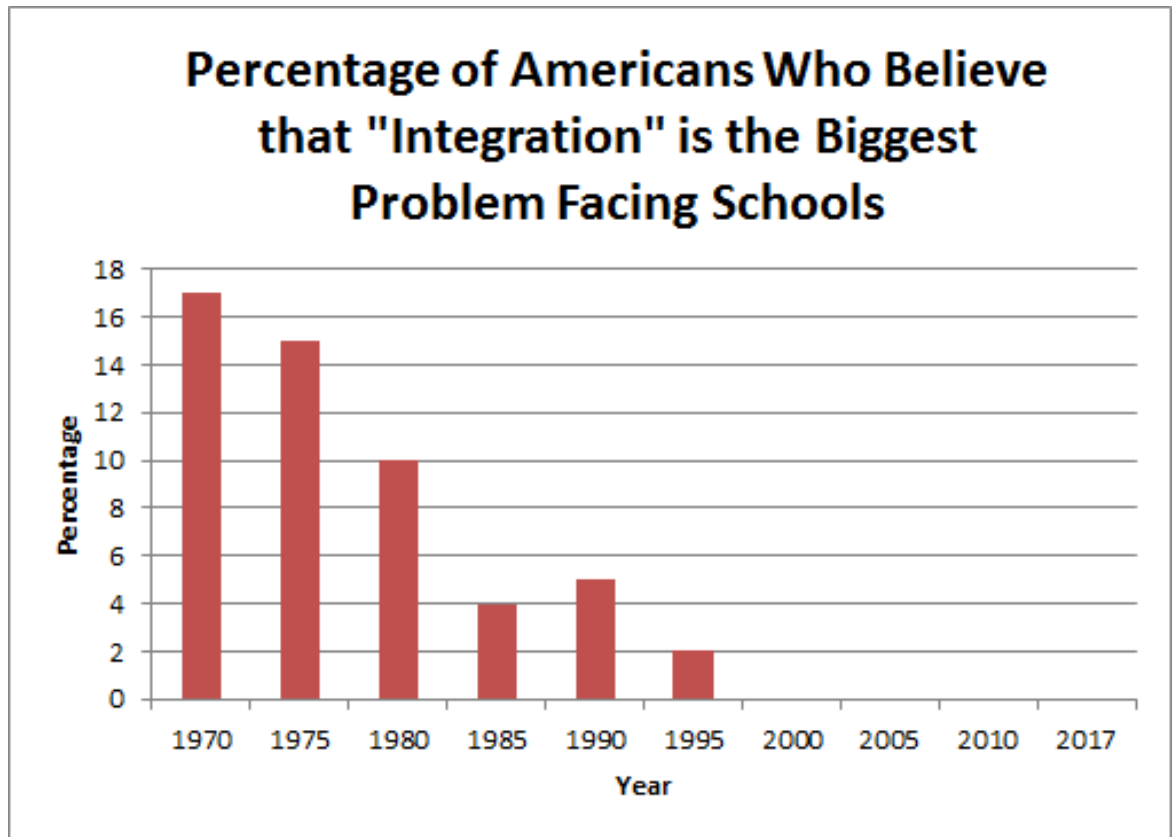


Figure 8. Results from Phi Delta Kappan polls since 1970

Consistent with the existing literature, there is also an indication that the parent participants in the Greene study feel that school desegregation is no longer as important a social issue as it was in the past. Several parents explained that they are not as concerned about a racial balance in their child’s school or that they may have elevated other issues above desegregation. They felt that if a neighborhood school existed that was predominantly attended by black children, it would not necessarily be perceived as an injustice. One parent indicated that most parents she knew would not look at a neighborhood school and say, “My child’s school is segregated,” she reiterated, “I don’t think it really matters.” There is some evidence, then, that the court’s reversal of opinion is one that is shared by some contemporary black parents as well.

Another conclusion that is evident from examination of existing research is that public opinion polls indicate that Americans, in general, are not in favor of busing as a means to desegregate schools. Recent polls demonstrate that disagreement with the policy of busing continues to increase among both black and white Americans (Armor, 1995; Bell, 2004; Gillespie, 1999; Orfield, 2001).

Comments from the participants in the Greene study confirm the results of these national polls. Every parent in the Greene study felt that the distance from the school to the home should be a consideration when making a school assignment. Many of the parents spoke specifically about neighborhood schools and how utilizing the closest school to the home makes the most sense to them. These parents were not generally concerned about the racial makeup of the school that their child attends; they just wanted something that was practical for their families.

Most of the parents in the Greene study were very clear that they would prefer a neighborhood school where their children were closer to home, where it was more convenient for the family with regards to transportation and finances, where they could have more opportunities to participate in activities at the school, and where they would feel less anxiety if they needed to get to the school in an “emergency.” For most of the Greene parents, this was what they truly wanted even if it meant that the school they attended was a predominantly black school.

There is nationwide data that confirms the opinion voiced by the Greene participants. Forty-eight percent of black respondents in a 1999 Gallup Poll said that they would prefer neighborhood schools over busing, and only forty-four percent of black respondents believed that busing was still an effective way to accomplish school

integration (Gillespie, 1999). In a more recent survey, fifty-two percent of black parents responded that if there were a school that was more racially diverse but was significantly farther away from their homes, they would still opt for their children to attend the closer school despite a the lack of diversity (PDK, 2017). These data indicate that there is a significant number of black families who might make a choice for a neighborhood school if given the option.

Additionally, there is a connection between the results of the Greene study and the existing literature relating to cultural capital and social reproduction. The participants for this study were selected based only on their race and on the distance from their home addresses to the school to which their child was assigned. However, independent from the selection process for this study, each of these parents was also a single mother who was living below the poverty level. It is unlikely that this is coincidence. As Lamont and Lareau (1988) indicate, there is a distinct connection between cultural capital and the opportunities that children are afforded. The parents in this study have arguably not had the cultural experiences that their white middle-class peers might have had, and they, therefore, feel as though they have no options when it comes to where their child attends school. They may not know how to navigate the environment of magnet schools applications, school choice vouchers, and the bureaucratic process to apply to an intra-district transfer because theses are not cultural cues that they have learned. This was also pointed out in a study with parents of Chicago Public School students. Working class parents who have economic struggles are less likely to choose alternate school options. They feel as though their school assignment is a “given” (Diamond and Gomez, 2004, p. 402).

For the Greene parents, the result of this mismatch between parent and school culture means that the black parents may not be familiar with the desegregation and busing policies, and they also may not know how to advocate for themselves and for their children or even that there are actions they can take. Very specifically, the mismatch leads to kids attending lesser quality schools that are farther from their homes, which makes it difficult for them, as parents, to be involved in school affairs. This lack of parent involvement also has a negative impact on the student's academic success in school (Laureau, 2000). In this way, the system, itself, is perpetuating inequity for these children. Because the district is operating in the same way it has always addressed desegregation, by busing, the students from these families are unlikely to be able to break from the cycle of poverty that they currently experience (see Mills, 2008).

Another distinct similarity between the existing literature and the results of Greene study is the connection between the self-efficacy of black single mothers and issues related to stress. Results of previous studies indicate that when single women, especially those who experience economic hardship, struggle with their own self-esteem and question their own ability to handle situations with their children, this leads to a greater incidence of depression and stress (see Brown & Moran, 1997; Jackson, 2000). The single mothers who participated in the Greene study demonstrated that they often felt they had to depend on others to get to their children if their child was sick or in trouble at school. They expressed concern that they would not have a plan if there were an "emergency," and they articulated the increased stress that has resulted because of the distance between their homes and the school. Although this study did not measure

depression levels or self-efficacy, the data did reveal sometimes higher stress levels among the participants.

Although there are several commonalities between the existing literature and the findings from the Greene study, there are some places where the findings differ slightly as well. Specifically, a thorough examination of school desegregation case law that spans more than sixty years indicates that the primary underlying goal of these collective actions was to make the educational opportunities of black students equal to those of white students. As an example, the initial case of *U.S. v. South Bend Community School Corporation* (1981), was initiated because the school district was allegedly violating Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974, both of which are specifically designed to prohibit discrimination (*U.S. v. SBCSC*, 1981; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974).

However, only one of the parents in the Greene study even mentioned the idea of equal opportunity at all. She indicated that prior to Plan Z, “There was a lot of schools that were mostly white and getting a better education than other races.” Other than that one comment, parents did not address the concept of equal opportunity. Several parents did discuss how they valued the idea of diversity and the social benefits of having their child in a school where they could work with children from different backgrounds and cultures.

Another difference that is noticeable when comparing the existing literature to the findings in the Greene study relates to the amount of attention given to the academic impacts that are derived from school desegregation efforts. In the review of literature, this was a common topic, and, though there are mixed findings about whether black

children perform significantly better academically in desegregated settings, it is clear that much research has been done on the subject. For example, the 1984 National Institute of Education meta-analysis indicated that while school desegregation had not caused the achievement of black students to decrease, there were no significant gains in achievement as a result of a more diverse learning environment (Bankston & Caldas). However, a 1998 longitudinal study found that black students who attend majority white schools perform better on achievement tests than black students who attend majority black schools (Hallinan), and a 2002 matched-pair study found that the larger the proportion of black students in a school, the more poorly the black students perform academically (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin).

In contrast, each of the Greene participants was asked, specifically, about what academic impacts, either positive or negative, the busing program might have on their child's academic achievement, and there was relatively little comment. Two parents shared that they believed that the longer bus trip might make their child more tired which could potentially negatively affect their learning. Two other parents shared that their children sometimes miss the bus in the morning, and, having no other means of transportation, the children would then miss the day of school, and their absences might negatively impact their academic performance.

There were two participants in the Greene study who indicated that they believed that the busing program had absolutely no academic impact on their child at all. Only one parent expressed that she felt her child would perform better at Greene because she perceived it to be a "white school." She felt that the overall behavior of the students would be better than it would be at a predominantly black school. Interestingly, Greene

is only eighteen percent white, and only fifteen percent of the students passed the state-mandated test (ISTEP) for both math and English language arts. The parents in the study were either unaware of this data or un-impacted by it. Greene parents made absolutely no reference to the achievement gap in the interviews nor did they note that Greene is actually a low-performing school. Had the parents been specifically presented with the data, it may have changed their opinions.

Even though there was a specific question in the interview protocol regarding the academic impacts of the busing program, parents in the Greene study spent disproportionately little time discussing the perceived advantages and disadvantages in this particular area. This is a significant contrast to the existing literature which is heavily committed to research on this area. Like the existing literature, though, the limited data that was collected from the Greene study on the topic of academic impacts is also mixed and inconclusive.

5.2 New Findings

The most significant new finding from the Greene study is the negative financial impact on black families that is caused by the involuntary busing program. The causes of financial stress for these families, themselves, are not at all a new discovery; however, the causal link between the busing program and a greater financial hardship is a new finding.

By far, the most common concerns that parents in the study shared about the distance from their homes to the school relate to economic challenges. Specifically, the majority of participants interviewed expressed concerns about the lack of gas money needed to drive to the school. Parents indicated that there were often times when they

just could not afford to bring their child to school or pick them up. In addition, most of the parents in the study either did not have any working car or had only one car that was shared by multiple adults in the household. They often had to find the gas money to pay a willing helper who was available to take the parent to the school.

All of the parents interviewed are mothers whose income level falls below the poverty line, and it is significant to note that research included in the review of literature indicates that rising gas prices do affect the poor more acutely than other socio-economic groups, that minority families are more often affected by this, and that low-income families do often have fewer resources when it comes to personal transportation (Hayes, 2005; NHTS, 2014). Additional research indicates that one of the main reasons that many low-income families choose to live in urban areas is so that they can use public transportation (Glaeser, Kahn, & Rappaport, 2008).

The Greene participants spoke about all of these issues, and several mentioned an additional economic hardship, which related to their employment and lost wages. The Urban Institute study indicated that the average travel time from home to work for black adults who are living below the poverty line is twenty minutes (Hayes, 2005). In reference to the parents in the Greene study who explained the loss of time at work, if they had to leave their jobs to go to school, it is clear to see the concern. If a parent drove twenty minutes one direction to work then had to drive forty minutes the other way to the school and back to work, they could potentially lose sixty minutes of time on the clock. Single mothers who already have low income and struggle with money for gas would then lose money from their paychecks as well.

The parents who were interviewed for this study all have economic challenges outside of their child's school assignment, but it is clear that the greater distance between their homes and the school make a challenging situation even more difficult. Parents have to spend a greater percentage of their budget on gas if they need to get to the school than they would if the school were closer. They cannot utilize public transportation to travel to Greene, so they have to invest in personal transportation, share with an adult family member, or give gas money to a friend or relative to drive them to the school. This is an expense they would not have if the school was near their homes in the city, and they could use the city bus. There is a clear link between the involuntary busing measure and increased financial difficulty for black families.

Another new finding also relates to how the involuntary busing program negatively impacts black parents emotionally. There is a significant amount of existing literature that addresses how school desegregation measures may affect black students socially and emotionally. There is also research about how parents have felt about their involvement in neighborhood schools that are predominantly black schools and how this might differ from how black parents feel about their involvement in desegregated or predominantly white schools. There is not, however, an existing body of research that addresses the social and emotional impacts that the busing program may have on black parents themselves.

In general, parents in the Greene study spent a significant amount of time explaining the financial hardships that they believed were made worse by the distance between their homes and the school. Woven throughout their narratives about economic concerns were some threads that relate directly to their own emotional well-being. For

example, the participants in the study did not specifically refer to their sense of independence in their responses, yet all but one of the mothers interviewed spoke about having to rely on other people they know to solve the problems presented by the distance between home and school. It is clear that the women thought about the dependence on outside help as bothersome, but it is not clear whether it was simply an inconvenient annoyance or whether it played a part in a more serious mental health concern like depression.

Additionally, another example of an underlying emotional issue relates to stress or anxiety. The struggle to find transportation to the school, the loss of work time, and the lack of independence are all issues that contribute to the problem of stress. Parents whose children attend a school nearby do not have to worry about how they will get to their child if there is an emergency. They do not have to construct last minute plans when the school calls and wants them to pick up their child. They do not have to depend on the availability and goodwill of other people in order to get to their child. This impact is one that, while never overtly labeled as “stress” by the participants, is a common thread in all of their stories, and it is the one that may be the most prevalent. Though each participant’s situation is a little different, they all expressed some form of emotional discomfort caused by the location of their child’s school.

It seems as though parents’ voices on these matters may not have been known or considered since the original implementation of the plan in 1981. This finding is consistent with the literature on CRT. CRT makes us consider how the “voice of color” may have been absent from these important policy discussions. For example, there appears to have been no motivation of the dominant groups to rethink the policy of

busing students to schools outside of their neighborhood zones. The consent decree was only necessary because the predominantly white school leaders had not rectified the problem of segregation in the schools. As a result, a policy was put into place that, whether intentional or not, has resulted in an increase of economic hardship for black families. Of course, it is also a valid point to consider that school officials' hands are tied to a certain extent because the district remains under court supervision. Moreover, to be fair, school officials were not interviewed about why the program operates in this manner. As such, another important question that arises from this study relates to whether the court's decree, specifically, which is a policy that was intended to help students of color, actually disadvantages black families in other ways.

5.3 Gaps that Still Remain

Throughout the course of this research, several important topics and questions have emerged that are not within the scope of this study, but these questions may deserve further exploration because they do relate to school desegregation and, more specifically, to school desegregation in the SBCSC. For example, it would be interesting to learn how Latino parents might answer the same questions that were asked to black parents in this study. Greene School is currently comprised of forty-four percent black students, twenty-eight percent Latino students, eighteen percent white students, and ten percent multiracial students (IDOE Compass, 2017). The Latino population is a significant demographic at the school, and these students are also bused from the west side of South Bend. Many Latino families who have children that attend Greene live in a neighborhood directly adjacent to where the participants of this study reside.

Latino parents were not included in this study because the question posed was related directly to the SBCSC consent decree and Plan Z. The Latino population is not addressed in the court agreement or the subsequent plan to desegregate the schools. However, interviewing Latino parents in order to examine their views on the question could better inform district officials about the unique needs of this student subgroup and their families.

It might also be interesting to repeat a similar study with white students who live in and near the same neighborhoods. The issues that surfaced as a result of these interviews, especially the financial impacts, may potentially be an issue of poverty. As noted, eighty-four percent of the students attending Greene are on free and reduced lunch (IDOE Compass, 2017). From a policy standpoint, the SBCSC would benefit from knowing how Plan Z impacts *all* of its stakeholders when reviewing the policy each year and working to address the needs of students and families.

Another important topic for further exploration is the issue of the perceived transportation problems at the SBCSC. This is not necessarily a topic that requires generalized research, but it would certainly benefit the SBCSC to examine the structures in place and how better to troubleshoot problems that may cause the late bus situation in both the morning and afternoon. It was clear from this study, that some parents feel very much inconvenienced by the current situation, and they believe that their child's education may actually be impacted by how well the transportation system works.

5.4 Additional Relevant Learning from Data Set

One interesting phenomenon that occurred when conducting the research for this study is that all of the parents interviewed overestimated the time it would take for them

to travel from their homes to the school. The children of the participants travel by bus from the west side of the city to a school south of town in a rural setting that is surrounded by farmland and woods. According to Google Maps, each of the participants live between nine and eleven miles from the school, and it would take them between seventeen and nineteen minutes to drive from their home to Greene (Google Maps, 2017).

**Distance From Participants' Home to Greene
Compared to Distance from Home to Closest School**

Participant	Distance from Home to Greene (Miles)	Travel Time from Home to Greene by car (Minutes)	Closest School	Distance to Closest School (Miles)	Travel time to closest school by car (Minutes)	Travel time to closest school by bicycle (Minutes)
A	9.0	16	Brown	1.7	5	9
B	8.6	16	LaSalle	1.8	6	9
C	8.6	16	LaSalle	2.1	7	10
D	8.3	15	LaSalle	2.2	8	11
E	8.1	14	Jefferson	2.2	6	12
F	8.7	16	LaSalle	1.9	6	9
G	8.1	15	Jefferson	2.2	6	12

Figure 9. Mapquest distance from participants' homes to closest school

However, four of the participants suggested that it would take them about twenty minutes, two said it would take twenty to twenty-five minutes, and one thought it would

take thirty minutes to drive from their home to Greene. Clearly, the perception of these parents is that the school is farther away than it actually is. Several participants made a clear reference to the perceived distance by using phrases such as “way out there,” “too far,” “way out in the country,” and “so far.” One parent expressed disbelief that Greene could even still be in the SBCSC.

Another factor that may add to the perception of increased distance is the fact that the drive is not on city thoroughfares but on country roads. One mother explained that the travel time, “Depends on the traffic because you have to cross the train track out there, and the roads are tore up with potholes and all that type of stuff. And you’re going through the country, and there’s deer and stuff you have to watch for.” Another parent agreed that the, “Roads are dangerous, and it’s a long drive, and it’s an irritating drive because sometimes I get lost.”

All of the participants were able to name at least one other intermediate school (grades 5-8) that was closer to their home than Greene, and most were able to name two or three closer schools. Two of the women even said that they would drive “right past” another school on their way to Greene. When asked how long it would take them to drive to the other school, most participants said it would take about ten minutes. One mother said it would take only five minutes, one said fifteen, and one said it would take about the same amount of time. In all but the one case where the parent felt it was the same, the other school seemed significantly closer to the participant.

A confirmation with Google Maps again revealed that the participants may have overestimated their travel times to the closer schools as well. All seven of the parents in the study do, in fact, live closer to at least one school than to Greene. In all cases, there is

another school within two to four miles of the home, and the travel time actually ranges from seven to twelve minutes (Google Maps, 2017). A definitive answer to the question of why parents in the study consistently overestimate travel times would require further research. However, one plausible explanation might have to do with the parents' attitudes about travel outside the city and the amount inconvenience they perceive as a result of their situations.

While the participants of the study are very clear about the fact that there are other schools that are closer than Greene, they are not at all clear about why their students are still assigned to Greene, which is significantly farther away. Another relevant discovery is a clear lack of awareness of the black parents in this study as it relates to the specific school desegregation policies in their child's school district. Since each parent in the study indicated that there was at least one other school that was closer to their home than Greene, they were then asked if they understood why their child was assigned by the school district to attend Greene. Of the seven participants, only two were able to point to the racial balance as a reason.

One woman remembered from her own childhood experience in the SBCSC that, "They were trying to keep it racially balanced." She shared that, because of the shifts in the boundaries, she did not go to the same school as her friends who lived on the same street. She recalled,

We stayed on the west side of town, and it was majority minority, and it was weird because my neighbors on one side went to [one school], which was in the area, I was bused out to [another school] because they were trying to keep it

minority based, and my neighbors on the other side went to [a third school].... So, it was just weird because we were all neighbors.

Not only were her neighbors sent to other schools, but she says she was even separated from her siblings. “The second year my mom got a letter saying that my brother has to go to Marquette. There was three of us. My sister has to go to Kennedy, and I went to Warren, so we all three stayed at the same household, but all three went to different elementaries.”

Another woman remembered that while she did not have to change schools herself, the world was changing around her, and, even as a child, she was very aware of it. She said, “I remember when I was in elementary. It was majority black, but there were some white kids....I didn’t have to go, but some other kids did, and then we started getting more white children in there, which is good because I met a lot of friends that way, and I liked having different types of friends, you know, different opinions about things.”

Most participants, however, expressed that they had no real understanding of why their children were assigned to attend Greene. Two parents replied that they just thought their students attended Greene because of the district boundaries, but they did not indicate that they knew how the boundaries were drawn. Two other participants admitted that they had no idea why their child would be assigned to a school that was so far away from their home. One said, “I’ve been trying to figure that out! They say that Greene is her home school.” The other emphatically responded, “I don’t! It doesn’t make sense because this shouldn’t be to go way out there!” As a whole there appeared to be a varied

level of understanding among the participants about why their children were assigned to attend Greene.

On a more global level, there seemed to be the same confusion about the SBCSC's desegregation efforts. All participants were asked if they had ever heard of either the "consent decree" or "Plan Z." Four of the seven parents stated that they had never even heard these terms discussed. Another said she had heard the phrase "Plan Z" but had no idea to what it referred. Again, the parent who had attended the SBCSC schools as a child could recall that all of the movement from school to school that she experienced was because of Plan Z. One informed parent not only knew about Plan Z, summarizing, "They're trying to reroute it to make it feasible and everybody don't be so segregated," but she also had strong opinions about it. She offered freely, "I think it's stupid! You got kids that are across the street from me that go to a whole different school!"

Because of the varied levels of prior knowledge about the desegregation efforts of the SBCSC, in all cases, a brief, factual explanation of the history of the district was provided. Parents were told,

In 1981 the U.S. Department of Justice told the South Bend Community Schools that they needed to desegregate their schools. There were too many primarily black schools and too many primarily white schools, and they needed to balance the demographics. The school district agreed to do that, so they had to come up with a plan to integrate their schools, and one of the ways they decided to do that was to redraw some of the school boundary lines so that the schools would be more racially balanced.

After hearing the short explanation, the participants were asked to give their reactions to the story and their honest opinions. The responses of the participants fell into three categories, and they give a glimpse of the significantly different points of view and some internal struggle that exists when it comes to the idea of school desegregation itself.

Only one of the seven respondents was able to say, without qualification, that she felt that the district's plan to integrate was a good thing. When asked about her reaction to the history and how it made her feel, she said, "Great! I don't mind it at all because their dad is white, black, and Indian. So, it's fine. My family is a rainbow full of colors, and I love it!"

In contrast to this parent's response, the majority of the participants expressed some genuine confusion about how they felt about the SBCSC school desegregation efforts. When asked if she thought the situation was better for black students because of the school district's desegregation efforts, one parent commented, "I really don't know." Parents in this group seemed to be able to see different sides of the issue and were conflicted. On one hand, they knew some of the history of school desegregation in the United States and knew that the point of it was to provide equality of opportunity. Philosophically, they agreed that desegregation was a good idea. On the other hand, the practical considerations of the situation with their children at Greene School muddied the issue for them.

One parent talked specifically about desegregation and said, "I agree with it. I think it was something that was definitely necessary because at the time there was a lot of schools that were mostly white and getting a better education than other races." Later in the conversation, the same parent expressed some wavering on the issue, saying,

Well, one thing I do kind of question is like with us being so far, how is it that this is Greene's district, and we're so far away. You know, most of the kids who live out there by Greene should be the ones going to Greene, but then we have that issue of the race part of it because most of the kids out there are white. I don't know what the best thing to do would be.

Another parent had a similar inner struggle with the issue. She felt that desegregation was positive but later in the conversation wondered if it really was as important to her as she initially thought. She explained, "Well, the black kids and the white kids, they do need to be combined, but...to tell the truth I don't care if it's black, white, Mexican, whatever. As long as she's getting her education, I'm good." When asked how she would assign students to schools if she were the superintendent, another participant emphatically stated, "What I can say is that it's probably the side of town you live on." Then she added, "I think it should be a mixture...That's a hard question!"

Still, another participant agreed that desegregation was a good idea, but, referring to the SBCSC, she said, "They did it wrong! I mean, they probably did it right, but they didn't look at it as a whole as far as sending kids way out there to Greene." When asked what a better way would be, she said, "I don't even know if there is a right way!" Clearly, each of these individuals is struggling, in their own way, to balance what philosophically makes sense to them with the reality of their day-to-day lives.

One of the most surprising outcomes of the conversations about desegregation was that several participants felt that the world looked at school desegregation differently now than they did years ago. One woman said, "Times have changed! I feel like Brown [School] is majority black kids, and where they're located a lot of kids from the

neighborhood walk to that school. You have that....I don't think it really matters....Maybe I can understand that back in the 80s or 70s when they did that, but now parents aren't really worried about that. They want their kids to go to a school that's close to home."

Another parent expressed genuine shock when she heard about the history of the SBCSC and how the consent decree is still in effect today. She exclaimed,

My goodness! Wow! I thought all that was over and done with....actually, I got chills going through me! That is horrible! I didn't know prejudice still existed like that. Now, with all the stuff that's going on politically, yeah, but I was blinded. I didn't know that. I always just went to school just to go to school. I thought that in the 60s and 70s all that desegregation stuff stopped, and we were all integrated. You know, we were all together. So, you're telling me the school district is still doing that now?

At least some parents see desegregation as a thing of the past and not a part of their current reality. It seems like something they have heard about in general terms or maybe read about in a book, but it is history.

This finding is closely related to one discussed earlier in this chapter. The parents in the Greene study indicated that they are not particularly concerned with the issue of school desegregation, and it was pointed out that this is consistent with the literature. It is also evident that the participants do not have any significant knowledge about their local school district's policies to implement desegregation or the history of desegregation in the SBCSC. It is not entirely clear why the parents had little knowledge about the desegregation decree.

Another question that emerged from the interviews is one that relates to black parents who want their children to attend “white schools.” There was only one participant who outwardly expressed these views, so she was definitely an outlier in this aspect, but it was still a fascinating discovery. Throughout the interview the mother continued to preface her comments by saying, “not to be racist, but,” indicating that she was concerned about how her view would be perceived. However, she was clear that she felt her son would do better in a school that contained more white children who she believes are “good with the books” and fewer black students who she says, “play too much.” Further research on this view and on parent perceptions about how the demographics of school can impact their own child’s performance might substantially add to the body of literature related to the topic.

The last issue that arose in this study is one that, on many levels, is already being tackled. As urban school districts like South Bend serve more and more diverse student populations, there comes a tipping point when there are more black and minority students than white students. As noted, the student population at Greene is currently only eighteen percent white, and the SBCSC as a whole is thirty percent white and is thus a majority-minority school district (IDOE Compass, 2017). How do districts, who are still under federal mandates to desegregate, work within a system where there is less diversity? How can a district be desegregated if it consists mainly of minority students? Is the *Brown* mandate impossible to implement considering that many school districts are highly concentrated with minority students? These are questions that the courts and policymakers will undoubtedly need to address, but from a research standpoint, academics will need to keep a close eye on what happens to these urban districts and how

different solutions and responses fair over time in terms of educational and social impacts.

5.5 Final Conclusions

This study examined the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the busing program at the SBCSC. According to the data gathered in this qualitative study, black parents who were interviewed were able to identify, through their individual stories, many more disadvantages than advantages to busing students outside their neighborhood zones.

Of those parents who did list benefits, they discussed the issues as pertaining only to their own child's situation. They did not make generalizations with regard to overall advantages. For example, one parent thought it was a benefit for her child to attend Greene because of the environmental magnet program that is offered there. She did not discuss the magnet program in general, though; she talked about her son's specific case and his interest in the outdoors. Another parent mentioned how her daughter "got into trouble" at a closer school, so she was somewhat relieved when they moved and her child would then go to Greene for a fresh start. There was also a parent who believed that if her child attends a "white school," he will do better.

The disadvantages to the school assignment policy and busing were much more numerous according to the data collected. Having examined all of the transcripts from the interviews, it is possible to actually place the vast majority of the answers to the question about the impacts of busing directly into the disadvantages category. In addition to the categories of "educational impacts" and "family impacts," there are several other disadvantages that were discussed.

Some of the disadvantages to school assignment to a more distant school include the fact that students do not have an opportunity to walk home as they might if they attended a closer neighborhood school. This seemed particularly unfortunate to parents in light of perceived problems with the SBCSC transportation system. At least one parent also mentioned that it was a disadvantage that Greene School is not located on a public transportation route that would give families more options.

Parents also shared that if their child was sick during the school day, and they could not get there to pick them up, that the child would have to stay in the nurse's office all day and ride the bus home at night. Similarly, if a child were being disciplined at school, and the administration required that the child be picked up, the parents might be told that the suspension would be longer if they were not picked up immediately. Both situations appeared to upset the parents.

Finally, several parents discussed their frustration with not always being able to go to the school to participate in school activities. One parent explained how the school will work with parents who cannot attend parent teacher conferences by allowing a phone conference, but this still felt like a disadvantage to some parents because they did not have the same experience.

With regard to the research question, then, this group of black parents do not, in general, perceive that busing students outside of their neighborhood zones has any significant advantages. They do, however, believe that the program may negatively impact their children's academic performance, and they perceive it is as a disadvantage to them and their families because it creates an additional financial burden, it detracts from their independence, and it is the cause of unneeded stress.

5.6 Implications for the Study

The results from the Greene study shine a light on some aspects of a busing program that are not often addressed in the existing literature. In this case, there appear to be unintended negative consequences to the desegregation plan that have developed over the past thirty-five years that it has been in place. These consequences affect the families of the students, not just the students themselves, and include financial implications as well as health implications related to stress. By giving the black parents in this study a voice, new information that may lend itself to further research has been added to the already rich body of literature and research on the topic of school desegregation.

Perhaps even more importantly, though, the results of the Greene study lead to some specific recommendations to assist the SBCSC addressing the needs of its stakeholders. In doing so, it is important to note that when making such recommendations, the administration may be limited by the desegregation decree in place. Nevertheless, there are some actions that can ensure that the voice of the black parents is heard when revising policy. Based on the findings from this research, the following recommendations are offered for the school leaders and policy makers of the SBCSC:

1. Conduct a district-wide survey and focus group discussions at each school to collect input from parents regarding school assignment and how the current policy impacts their children in both academic and non-academic ways and how the policy impacts them as parents and families.

2. Analyze the data collected with regard to specific sub-groups including race, socioeconomic status, and distance from home to school.
3. Evaluate the transportation system and how late buses are impacting both student learning and the families in the district. Also, explore a partnership with the public transportation providers in order to meet the school district's obligation to help families ensure that children attend school regularly.
4. Make efforts to find new ways to inform families about all of their options and the policies and procedures in place if they do want to select a different school in the district.
5. Consider the opinions of all sub-groups when making and/or keeping policy, and ensure that all families have a voice. Consider the impacts that each policy decision has on both student learning and on the families in the SBCSC community.

These recommendations are even more timely because the SBCSC school board voted on December 18, 2017, to accept a plan to close three schools, including Greene, and to redraw boundary lines ("Focus Plan," 2017). This plan has been submitted to the Department of Justice for approval ("FAQ's," 2017). As part of the new plan, all of the Greene students will attend different middle schools. Based on the "School Boundary Lookup" tool on the SBCSC website, all of the students whose parents were participants in this study will be attending Navarre School for the 2018-2019 school year. Navarre is significantly closer to the homes of the parents in this study. According to Mapquest, the new school is between three and five miles from the participants' home compared to the eight to nine miles between their homes and Greene. Mapquest estimates the travel time

from home to Navarre to be eight to ten minutes compared to fourteen to sixteen minutes to Greene (Mapquest, 2018). However, as indicated earlier on the chart, Navarre is still not the closest school for these students.

The closest school for four of the seven families involved in this study is LaSalle Academy which houses the district's high ability magnet program. Students must meet certain academic requirements to be accepted into the program at LaSalle ("Focus 2018"). LaSalle's school letter grade was a "B" for the 2016-2017 school year, the highest in the district. They received an "A" for the four years prior (IDOE Compass). Twenty-three percent of the students attending LaSalle are black while forty-one percent of the students at Greene are black. LaSalle Academy's enrollment for 2017-2018 was 823 compared to Greene's 194 (IDOE Compass).

It seems likely that if the parents in this study were able to be more engaged in the selection of their child's school, what Diamond and Gomez (2004) refer to as "choosers," they might select a school that is an "A" school that is closest to their home and offers a full array of extra-curricular opportunities rather than choose to have their child bused eight miles outside the city to an "F" school where the enrollment has dropped so significantly that it can't even field an eighth grade basketball team. The parents in the study, however, are black single mothers who have limited resources and are, like many working class black parents, "non-choosers" (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Most of the parents in the study do not perceive that they even have a choice about their child goes to school. They put their children on the bus to Greene School, even though the school assignment doesn't make sense to them and even though the policy actually makes their lives more difficult than they already are.

The SBCSC has indicated that the purpose for the new organization plan is to improve student outcomes, to ensure diversity, to address changing enrollment trends and demographics, and to efficiently utilize resources (“FAQ’s,” 2017). It also asserts that the decision about which schools to close was made based on a variety of factors including demographic trends, enrollment, condition of the facilities, geographic locations, and capacity (“FAQ’s,” 2017). While these are all, arguably, very important factors to consider when making an important policy decision regarding student assignment, one factor that is absent from this list is the voice of the parent.

Another point that also should be examined very closely during this important time is whether the structure of this new design addresses the issue of social reproduction where previous structures, arguably, have not. The children of the participants in this study come from a low socioeconomic group, and their single mothers have low wage jobs and only high school educations. Unless, we change the system for these children, they will very likely have the same future, and school will not be able to help them. School, in fact, may actually perpetuate the cycle. Finally, this is an opportune time for school leaders to evaluate whether the new policy is more equitable for black children and black families. The mandate of school desegregation forced American schools to find a place for black students within their current system. This moment is a significant opportunity for the SBCSC to evaluate its own system in an effort to build something that works for black children, not just to find a place for them.

In conclusion, Decker (2014) posits that “as educators learn about the law and the legal system, they become empowered to influence education policy within and outside their classrooms, buildings, and districts” (p. 683). This quote is relevant to the situation

in the SBCSC as the administration must continue to monitor the legal developments in this area while the district remains under the desegregation decree. Specifically, the SBCSC must work within the confines of the law to review busing decisions and student assignment policy decisions. At the same time, school leaders can hopefully consider the policy implications of those stakeholders who have not always had a voice.

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Education

Indiana University *Bloomington, Indiana*
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, May 2018
Dissertation: Parent Perceptions of an Involuntary Busing Program

Purdue University Calumet *Hammond, Indiana*
M.S. in School Administration, July 2001

Indiana State University *Terre Haute, Indiana*
B.S. in English Education, May 1997
Magna Cum Laude

Teaching Experience

Michigan City Area Schools *Michigan City, Indiana*
Barker Middle School
2008-2011: Instructional Coach

- Provided job-embedded professional development to teachers in all content areas in grades 6-8
- Designed and implements professional learning sessions based on needs analysis

LaPorte Community School Corporation *LaPorte, Indiana*
LaPorte High School
2001-2008

- Designed and delivered instruction in English grades 9-12
- Coached softball team
- Coach speech and debate team

Valparaiso Community School Corporation *Valparaiso, Indiana*

- Designed and delivered instruction in English grades 9-12
- Coached softball team
- Coach speech and debate team

Additional Professional Experience

Merrillville Community School Corporation *Merrillville, Indiana*

Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction

- Oversaw instruction in six elementary schools
- Designed and implemented curriculum resources

South Bend Community School Corporation *South Bend, Indiana*

Principal, Greene Intermediate School

- Oversaw instructional programs in grades 5-8
- Managed day-to-day operations

Michigan City Area Schools *Michigan City, Indiana*

Assistant Principal, Barker Middle School

- Assisted with day-to-day operations in grades 6-8
- Oversaw discipline and attendance policy