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# Perceptions of Segregation, Desegregation, and Integration from Burglund High School Students in McComb, Mississippi

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PERCEPTIONS OF SEGREGATION, DESEGREGATION, AND INTEGRATION  
FROM BURGLUND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MCCOMB, MISSISSIPPI

by

Cynthia Loren Lamkin

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
and the Department of Educational Research and Administration  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

### PERCEPTIONS OF SEGREGATION, DESEGREGATION, AND INTEGRATION FROM BURGLUND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MCCOMB, MISSISSIPPI

by Cynthia Loren Lamkin

December 2016

Black-American history has been, and continues to be, one rich with struggle and progress throughout a multitude of past and current events – including the White resistance to Blacks becoming educated and the segregation and inequality permeating education, politics, and general living for centuries. It is necessary to gather a further understanding of the Black perspective regarding direct experiences of discrimination in education in order to cultivate pedagogy by which all students may have an equal chance to thrive. This study of the memories shared by former students who did and did not participate in the walkout on October 4, 1961, from Burglund High School in McComb, Mississippi, will facilitate an understanding of former pupils' perceptions of segregation, desegregation, integration, and McComb public schools during and since the walkout.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## DEDICATION

While diligently working to successfully walk the path of earning this doctoral degree, I was provided loving support by my beloved husband (Robert Sr.), my children, Kenneth (KC), Jaylon (Jay), Asia, Robert Jr. (RJ), my parents (Dorothy and Joseph Young Sr.), my sister (Valerie), and my friends. I am thankful for each of you and your patience as journeyed to I completed this major life goal, and I dedicate the heart of this work to you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASU -	Alcorn State University
AYP -	Adequate Yearly Progress
COFO -	Council of Federated Organizations
CORE -	Congress of Racial Equality
CRT -	Critical Race Theory
IPA -	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
IQ -	Intelligence Quotient
HEW -	United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare
IRB -	Institutional Review Board
KKK –	Ku Klux Klan
MCT2 -	Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 <sup>nd</sup>
MDE-	Mississippi Department of Education
NAACP-	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAEP -	The National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB -	No Child Left Behind
USM-	The University of Southern Mississippi
SNCC -	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

## CHAPTER I –INTRODUCTION

Blacks were legally enslaved in the United States beginning in the early 1600s until the mid-1800s (Schwartz, 2005). During the era of slavery, it was illegal to teach Black slaves to read or write in most of the southern states (Anderson, 1988). However, Blacks found support in becoming educated during slavery from a group of Whites known as anti-slavery activists or Constitutionlists (Schwartz, 2005; Zeitlow, 2012). Therefore, Du Bois (2009) noted that after gaining freedom, many former slaves had a greater desire to be educated. Thus, schools were opened following the end of the war so newly freed slaves could be educated. In 1865, organizations such as the Freedmen’s Bureau assisted in the development of schools for freed people. Although there was much resistance from Whites, Blacks began to educate their own children in their own schools. As the Freedmen’s Bureau ended its operation in 1870, Blacks were faced with an enormous amount of violence as they tried to continue to educate their children on their own (Du Bois, 2009). Blacks who attempted to attend schools endured threats to their lives and the destruction of their schools (Schwartz, 2005).

As time progressed, laws were passed and education evolved. Whites realized that they could not prevent Blacks from being formally educated (Williams, 2005a); however, most White people would go to great lengths to ensure that Blacks did not attend school with Whites. For example, Whites enacted laws to prevent Blacks and Whites from attending school together, initiating what is known as segregated, or “separate but equal,” schools (Schwartz, 2005). In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregation, “separate but equal,” or what was also known as “Jim Crow Laws,” constitutional in public facilities, including schools (Whitman, 1993).

## Background of Study

Particularly in the southern public schools, Black and White students could not legally attend school together due to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* favoring “separate but equal” facilities (Butchart, 2007). However, in the separate schools, Blacks did not receive the same quality education as Whites – as Blacks were forced to be educated in schools that were underfunded, with poor facilities, unqualified teachers, inadequate materials, and little to no transportation compared to White schools (Williams, 2005a). Separate but unequal schooling for Blacks and Whites would remain until 1954, when the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (Kirk, 2007). According to Whitman (1993), due to concerns regarding education, 5 lawsuits were independently filed in Topeka, Kansas. Whitman (1993) indicated that all 5 lawsuits were filed under the *Brown* name and challenged the constitutionality of “separate but equal” in public schools. This landmark opinion led the way for other Jim Crow laws to be challenged and eventually overturned.

As the fight for equality continued, Blacks across the nation, particularly in the South, who attempted to enroll in all-White public schools were threatened, assaulted, and sometimes killed (Bolton, 2000). Schools in Mississippi that attempted to desegregate were sites of violence and were slow in desegregating. Following a course of minimal involvement in school desegregation, the state government advised school districts to devise their own plans to desegregate their respective schools (Bolton, 2000).

Across the South plans such as equalization, pupil placement, and freedom of choice were implemented in public schools under the pretense of encouraging desegregation; however; they helped the schools thwart the *Brown* ruling and remain



noncompliant with the order to desegregate (Clotfelter, 2004). Blacks in the southern region found themselves with little to no support with the desegregation and integration of White schools (Clotfelter, 2004). Because many state and local governments were intentionally employing tactics to slow desegregation, in 1955, *Brown II* brought forth a judgment from the Warren Supreme Court that mandated that all U.S. school districts move with “all deliberate speed” in desegregating their schools (Whitman, 1993). The McComb School District in McComb, Mississippi, was one such segregated district.

During segregation, the all-Black high school in McComb was Burglund High School and the all-White high school was McComb High School (Burglund High School Walkout, n.d.). A group of young Black students from Burglund High School were inspired by previous protests in McComb in areas such as voting rights and education. Motivated by efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Pike County Non-Violent Action Movement, these Burglund High School students protested segregation by participating in sit-ins at the Woolworth’s and the Greyhound bus terminal in McComb in the summer of 1961 (Dittmer, 1995).

As a result of participating in the sit-ins, the students were arrested and all but one student, Rhonda, were released (Burglund High School Walkout, n.d.). It is not known why Rhonda was not released with the other students. However, the students who participated in the walkout were asked to sign a contract documenting their promise to never participate in a civil rights activity again. Seniors who refused to sign the contract were expelled from Burglund High School (Burglund High School Walkout, n.d.). On October 4, 1961, because of the severity of the disciplinary actions of the city courts and

the delayed release of Rhonda from city jail, more than 100 students walked out of the all-Black Burglund High School in protest. The walkout began a movement that influenced a life-changing chain of events in McComb, Mississippi including the integration of McComb High School 11 years after the walkout (Dittmer, 1995).

### Student Achievement in Mississippi

Clotfelter (2004) indicated that early education in Mississippi had many struggles that affected the academic performance of students. The state used unconstitutional tactics to slow down and even stop the process of desegregation of its public schools. The quality of Black students' education was affected because Whites were concerned about Whites and Blacks attending school together (Schwartz, 2005). The education that Blacks received was poor, and Whites were fleeing public schools to suburban and private schools (Holmes, 2002).

To date, the state of Mississippi continues to exhibit poor academic performance in many schools, compared to other states in the nation. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an assessment that provides a common measure for students nationally – measuring student achievement in the areas of math, reading, science, and writing (NAEP, 2013). NAEP has ranked Mississippi as second to last in the nation on its assessment in reading (NAEP, 2013). Additionally, Mississippi is assessed by a state accountability system that uses an assessment called the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2<sup>nd</sup> (MCT2) to measure student achievement. The state of Mississippi uses the criterion-referenced MCT2 assessment to assess proficiency levels of students in language arts and math (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). The results of the MCT2 assessment determine the state's ranking in the United States. The state of Mississippi is

consistently ranked as last in the United States for achievement in reading, science, and writing – and is ranked the second lowest in math – based on students’ performance on the MCT2 (NAEP, 2013). Moreover, according to results from the MCT2, as reported by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), the McComb School District’s (MSD) accountability rating for the school year 2013-2014 was a level D (academic watch) on an overall scale of A-F (MDE, n.d.).

### Significance of the Study

The struggle for Blacks to gain equal education gave significance to this study and provided insight into the personal lives and experiences of former students of Burglund High School who did and did not participate in the 1961 walkout in McComb, Mississippi. Details of the lived experiences and perceptions of Black former students who did and did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout are important because of the impact of the walkout on education in McComb, Mississippi. Participants in the study had the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their roles in the Burglund High School walkout. Participants also shared their thoughts and feelings about the segregation, desegregation, and integration of McComb schools as well as their thoughts and feelings about schooling in McComb since the walkout.

Studying the lived experiences of 10 Black former Burglund High School students who did and did not participate in the walkout provided an understanding of their perceptions of the walkout. Exploring the issues of segregation, desegregation, and integration of McComb schools from the time of the walkout is important to the field of educational leadership because of the rich history that was experienced and shared by the participants. The participants’ shared experiences will be vital to educators and leaders of

McComb schools because they will offer insight of shared knowledge of the participants' educational histories. The participants' shared knowledge is important to assist today's students with becoming more invested in their education. It is also important for the students, parents, and community to learn of and acknowledge the struggle that existed for Blacks to be educated equally in the city of McComb and to ensure the history of inequality in public schools does not repeat itself.

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), the study was illustrative of the social experiences of the walkout. The theory will provide for a critical analysis of race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) influencing walkout involvement in the study based on the former students' perceptions of segregation, desegregation, and integration and of the walkout. This is important because the current students' knowledge of past students' experiences will enlighten them about segregation, desegregation, and integration may affect current students' perception of education.

#### Purpose of the Study

The history of Black Americans is comprised of many events that continue to shape Black culture. Blacks continually pursued formal education which brought great resistance from Whites. This resulted in inequality and segregation in education. While Whites viewed segregation as a way of life, Blacks viewed it as a practical hardship.

Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand and explore the perceptions and experiences of former students from Burglund High School who did, and did not, participate in the walkout on October 4, 1961. In addition, this study will focus on participants' experiences of segregation, desegregation, and integration in the McComb schools since the walkout.

## Research Question

This phenomenological study was guided by the following central research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of former students who attended Burglund High School and were expelled for participating in the walkout on October 4, 1961 regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of former students who attended Burglund High School but did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout on October 4, 1961 regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration?

## Assumptions

The following assumptions served as components in this study:

1. Study participants were able to verbalize their personal experiences and perceptions regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration through insights, thoughts, and impressions.
2. Study participants provided truthful and accurate accounts of their individual perceptions and experiences.

## Theoretical Foundations

The qualitative study utilized the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its central tenets as a framework for interpreting and understanding the perceptions and experiences of former students from Burglund High School regarding the walkout, school segregation, desegregation, and integration. I sought to understand participants'

perceptions of McComb schools from the time of the walkout from Burglund High School until now.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT was formulated in the mid-1970s by a group of scholars and lawyers to support the study of the transformation of relationships among race, racism, and power. The authors contend that the ideas of CRT have been used to understand school issues such as discipline, tracking, hierarchy, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing. Bell (1995a) indicated that there are five central tenets of CRT: interest convergence, whiteness as property, voice/counter story, critique of liberalism (colorblindness), and racial realism. There have also been tenets added to the original five tenets of CRT, which include social construct and restrictive vs. expansive. CRT is the best choice for a framework for this study because of the different components related to race and racism that the theory explores.

#### Justification of the Study

It was vital to understand the perceptions and experiences of former students from Burglund High School and those who were expelled for participating in the walkout for several reasons. First, many of the students who were expelled were high school seniors and were denied the right to graduate from Burglund High School or any other McComb public school. Therefore, it was important to understand the overall affect the resultant lack of educational attainment had on the former students' lives.

Second, educational leaders and teachers must understand the lasting impact such a decision had on students over time. During the past few decades, schools have become increasingly resegregated in McComb; in these circumstances, students of similar

residence, race, academic ability, and/or socio-economic status are concentrated in public schools (Barton, 2003). Resegregation results in the declining exposure of students from historically underserved groups (students of color and students living in poverty) to White students (Glen, 2011) and often is accompanied by a significant achievement gap (Barton, 2003; Wiggins, 2011). The student body of MSD is currently 89.25% Black and 93% low income, and the district's academic rating from MDE is a D (MDE, n.d.).

By understanding the experiences and perceptions of Black students who were involved in segregation, desegregation, and integration of McComb schools during the time of the Burglund High School walkout, school leaders and teachers may become more informed regarding the potential hazards of reverting to a system of separate (and unequal) schools. Furthermore, the information learned from this study could be used to improve scholastic achievement among current students in McComb and to continue to build positive relationships among students, staff, and community members (Blacks and Whites) regarding the rich history of the area.

### Methodology

In this qualitative study I used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA involves the “the detailed examination of the lived experience of individuals” (Lichtman, 2012, p. 260). The purpose of the IPA design was used in this study to gain an understanding of how participants perceive the phenomenon of their lived experiences of segregation, desegregation, and integration in McComb, Mississippi. According to Nightingale and Cromby (1999), IPA required reflexivity from the researcher and is described as the “awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility

of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research" (p. 228). As the researcher and a human instrument for this study, all data were filtered through my lenses. Because of my own experiences and knowledge of McComb, Mississippi, MSD, and the subject matter, it was impossible for me to remain outside of the study. My positionality statement will be detailed in Chapter III.

### Summary

Background information was presented regarding the struggle that Blacks endured to become educated in comparison to their White counterparts. Blacks were not given the privilege to learn through formal or traditional schooling. But, with much effort and perseverance, their desire to learn became an undeniable reality following the freeing of slaves in the late 1800s. A number of freed Blacks began the quest to teach their children and were successful, but with much opposition. Blacks, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were forced to be educated separately from Whites due to the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which mandated "separate but equal" facilities (Butchart, 2007). It was okay to have "separate but equal" train cars, which led to the infamous "Jim Crow Laws." Everything was placed in the category of "separate but equal." Most Black students did not have adequate facilities, quality learning materials, qualified teachers, or reliable transportation that generations of White students had long enjoyed. As time passed, the "separate but equal" law was ruled unconstitutional with the decision of *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954. Many states honored the *Brown* decision and began to desegregate soon after the ruling. Many southern states, including Mississippi, were reluctant to abide by this federal mandate.



In addition, I explained how the Black residents in the city of McComb, Mississippi, took on the challenge of the Civil Rights Movement, desegregation, and, eventually, integration with the help of young members of a civil rights organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and students of Burglund High School. Some of the Burglund High School students participated in sit-ins and were arrested. The act of the arrest and lack of release of one student, Rhonda, prompted a mass walkout of more than 100 students from Burglund High School (BHS) 1961. The BHS students marched to the city courthouse in protest which lasted for the duration of the day October 4, 1961.

The challenge of desegregation in Mississippi was met with much opposition. Nevertheless, schools in Mississippi eventually did become desegregated. In Chapter I, I also briefly discussed how student achievement in Mississippi has fared. Information in the chapter also noted overviews of the significance of the study, purpose, justification, research questions, assumptions, and theoretical framework.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms were used extensively in this study and are defined below for this particular research context. Understanding the meaning of the terms will prove vital in establishing a foundation, regarding Blacks' quest for freedom and education discussed in Chapter II.

*Appeal*- to ask that a higher court or judge reconsider a court decision (Somerville, 2005).

*Abolition*- the end of slavery (Burgan, 2006).

*Abolitionist*- a person who advocated for the end of slavery (Anderson, 2004).

*Amendment*- a formal change made to a law or legal document, such as a constitution (Burgan, 2006).

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) - the case in which the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared that separate but equal schooling was not equal and therefore unconstitutional (Anderson, 1988).

*Class action lawsuit* - a lawsuit that is pursued on behalf of a large group of people who claim to have been wronged by a defendant in a similar way (Anderson, 2004).

*De jure segregation*- segregation that is imposed by law (Gifis, 1996).

*De facto segregation*- segregation that is imposed by social and/or cultural custom or code (Gifis, 1996).

*Desegregation*- ending the practice of separation of people by race in public facilities (Somervill, 2005).

*Discrimination*- the act of treating people unfairly based on their differences (Somervill, 2005).

*Freedmen*- persons freed from slavery (Anderson, 2004).

*Integrated*- all races are included in a system (Somervill, 2005).

*Resegregation* - renewal of segregation, as in a school system, after a period of desegregation (Anderson, 2004).

*Segregate*- to separate (e.g. by race, class, or gender) from a main group (Anderson, 2004).

## CHAPTER II –REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

The history of Black Americans has been molded by many events, which continues to shape Black culture and progress. Each event, constitutional amendment, or program brought about its own story, influence, and outcome. Starting at what could be considered the beginning of Black culture in the U.S., Chapter II opens with a discussion of slavery and literacy (Schwartz, 2005). The discussion included how and why it was illegal to teach slaves to read or write in most of the southern states during the time of slavery (Anderson, 1988).

Chapter II included a discussion of the era of slavery, resistance to Blacks becoming educated, segregation, landmark court cases related to school segregation, integration, desegregation in Mississippi, resistance to desegregation and integration, advantages and disadvantages of integration, resegregation, and desegregation in McComb, Mississippi. Chapter II also focused on specific people, movements, and events in the state of Mississippi, specifically the Burglund High School walkout in McComb, Mississippi.

### Slavery and Literacy

Butchart and Roller (2004) noted that there were laws that denied Blacks the opportunity to be formally educated in many states. According to Woodson (1968), the majority of White southerners believed that the more slaves learned, the more they became useless to their owners. White slave owners believed that slaves should be kept ignorant so that they would not develop a desire to be independent of their slave masters (Woodson, 1968). Despite the laws and the possibility of slaves facing severe punishment

or death because they were caught reading or writing, slaves still believed in the power of education, and they did all that was in their strength to become educated (Schwartz, 2005).

According to Butchart and Roller (2004), during the period of slavery, slaves persevered and used various methods to obtain literacy. Gaines (1996) noted, “African Americans have, with almost religious fervor, regarded education as the key to liberation” (p. 1). Williams (2005a) explained that the slaves’ motivation to become educated was to read the bible, stay informed of the abolitionist movement, and later have awareness of the progress of the Civil War. Because they believed that education would bring awareness and potential for rebellion to slaves, many Whites were opposed to slaves becoming educated (Rousmanier, 2007).

In spite of some Whites’ opposition to Blacks being educated, there were some Whites who assisted Blacks with literacy by teaching them in secret, clandestine schools (Du Bois, 2009). According to Du Bois (2009), the first pre-war freedmen’s schools were clandestine schools. Clandestine schools were schools for Blacks, and they were common during the pre-and post-Civil War eras (Langhorne, 2000). Per Langhorne (2000), enslaved Blacks had to secretly educate themselves through such means in areas such as Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Beyond promoting education for Blacks, there were many White anti-slavery activists who opposed slavery and felt that it was unconstitutional (Zietlow, 2012). According to Foner and Mahoney (1990) abolitionists were activists who protested against slavery. Such protests occurred as early as 1787 in England (Sonoi, 2011).

Abolitionists were “people who sought to end slavery within their colony, state, nation, or religious denomination” (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2008, p. G-1). Evangelical Protestants who were aggressive in their efforts to end slavery led the abolitionists in the U.S. (Sonoi, 2011). Moreover, Brooks (2013) indicated that abolitionists petitioned the U.S. Congress to abolish slavery. Zietlow (2012) explained that some anti-slavery Constitutionalists argued, “slavery could never be legal under the Constitution because it violated the natural rights of mankind, which were protected by the Constitution” (p. 425).

The Constitutionalists played a major role in the freeing of slaves (Brooks, 2013). Using various methods, the Constitutionalists made arguments with regard to their beliefs that slavery was unconstitutional (Brooks, 2013). They were abolitionists who assisted in educating and encouraging slaves to escape to free states, such as New York, Maine, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania (Zeitlow, 2012). They wrote and distributed pamphlets, gave speeches, and used newspapers to inform the public of their beliefs (Zietlow, 2012).

James Ashley, a U.S. Congressman, was instrumental to the Constitutionalists’ movement; he believed that slavery was a “violation of fundamental human rights and the constitutional provisions protecting those rights” (Zietlow, 2012, p. 395). Some freed slaves also joined the Constitutionalists in the opposition of slavery (Zeitlow, 2012). Lechner (2008) stated that because of the oppressive state of slavery, Black abolitionists often wavered between despair and hope in their quest to have a voice against slavery, and they were often reactive in their protest due to the environment’s complicated nature of politics and racial tension. One of the most recognized Black abolitionists was Fredrick Douglass (Meltzer, 1984). Fredrick Douglass spoke passionately against slavery (Meltzer, 1984). According to Lechner (2008), Douglass was a former slave who was an

abolitionist and stationmaster for the Underground Railroad. Hood (2010) stated that the Underground Railroad was a “sometimes spontaneous, sometimes organized effort to assist persons held in bondage in North America to escape from slavery” (p. 52).

Beyond working with the Underground Railroad, Fredrick Douglass gave prominent speeches and participated in debates about the Constitution and what it represented (Meltzer, 1984). Rolston (2003) indicated that Douglass gained great recognition for his protest against slavery in Britain, Ireland, and eventually in the United States. Furthermore, while Douglas was fighting for the freedom of slaves through debates and speeches, Dred Scott was fighting his own war to remain free. In opposition to anti-slavery, the U.S. Supreme Court held in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) decision that it was a White person’s “fundamental right to own slaves” (Zietlow, 2012, p. 416). Cullen (2003) indicated that the Court decision ruled that Blacks “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect” (p. 106).

According to Oliver (2007), the slave master who owned Dred Scott and his family took them to free territory, which was part of the Upper Louisiana Territory, or modern day Minnesota:

Congress had forbidden slavery by the terms of the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The Missouri Compromise of 1820, one of several compromises between the North and South, had forbidden slavery in the territories north of the 36°30' parallel, and later in 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act permitted states to enter the Union as free or slave states on the basis of popular sovereignty. Dred Scott’s master, Dr. Emmerson, left Minnesota to move back South in search of a wife. Once he found a wife, he then sent for Dred Scott and his wife Harriet to return to

the South and render their services to him and his new wife. In need of work, Dred Scott and Harriet decided to honor Dr. Emmerson's wishes and move back to the South. His master had brought the Scotts back to a slaveholding jurisdiction. (pp. 14-15)

VanderVelde (2011) stated that the Scotts had returned to a slave state, they were therefore again considered property. Upon return to the South, the Scotts' sued for their freedom in 1846 under the Slave Transit Law, which existed in states such as Missouri (VanderVelde, 2011). The law stated that when slaves were brought to reside in free jurisdictions, they were emancipated. VanderVelde added that the Scotts' won their case in the lower court, but in 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the ruling stating, "Any legal rights to Blacks, slave or free, were denied" (p. 25). Zietlow (2012) noted that the Court's decision declared that Congress did not have the power to abolish slavery, thereby nullifying the Slave Transit Law.

Benson-Hale (1982) explained that W., E., B. Du Bois described how Black people in the U.S. possessed two "warring souls" (p. 21). That is, Blacks were not only products of their own culture but were also shaped by the demands of Whites (Benson-Hale, 1982). In time, through continued protest from Blacks and abolitionists, laws would be passed that abolished slavery, namely The Emancipation Proclamation (Randolph, 2007).

#### The Emancipation Proclamation

President Lincoln signed The Emancipation Proclamation during the Civil War in 1863. Through The Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln declared, "that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be free" (Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, p. 2). Freeing the slaves, however, was not President Lincoln's original goal;

instead, the signing of The Emancipation Proclamation was a tactical move to “bolster the Union cause” in the Civil War (Foner, 2012, p. 2). The government had very little power to enforce the decree that President Lincoln made to free the slaves (Foner, 2012). Some Americans questioned if The Emancipation Proclamation was even constitutional (Burgan, 2006).

Foner and Mahoney (1990) indicated that The Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately end slavery because it did not have any effect in the Confederate states. Lincoln could only enforce the ending of slavery in the Union states, which were states in the North. Slave states such as Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and many others were not in the Union (Foner & Mahoney, 1990). Despite the ineffectiveness of The Emancipation Proclamation in the Confederate states, there were some who continued to fight aggressively for the freeing of slaves (Foner, 2012).

### Thirteenth Amendment

Zeitlow (2012) explained that James Ashley, the anti-slavery activist, fought for a human’s right to be free. James Ashley’s belief that humans should not be enslaved encouraged him to make a plea to President Lincoln to pass the Thirteenth Amendment. Ashley argued that the Amendment would do several things, including, “Abolish slavery in the United States, create a constitutional right to free labor, and embody a constitutional guarantee of the Government to protect people” (Zeitlow, 2012, p. 409). After the assassination of President Lincoln, a Republican from Illinois, Vice-President Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency and was left to complete the task of passing the Thirteenth Amendment (Peacock, 2003). President Johnson, also Republican, began his Proclamation of Amnesty plan in 1865, and it required at least 50% of voters that were in



a Confederate state to swear U.S. loyalty and accept the Thirteenth Amendment (Peacock, 2003). The Thirteenth Amendment made slavery illegal under the plan, and Confederate leaders applied for individual pardons (Peacock, 2003).

According to Peacock's (2003) research, by the end of 1865 all former Confederate states had met the requirements to Johnson's plan. Although freedom did not happen immediately for all slaves in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment was written so that Americans would be protected from legalized slavery forever (Finkelman, 2011). The Thirteenth Amendment states:

When all of the several states shall have abolished slavery, then and thereafter, slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall never be established or tolerated in any of the states or territories of the United States, and they shall be forever free. (U.S. Const. amend. XIII § 19)

The Thirteenth Amendment goes on to say: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (U.S. Const. amend. XIV § 1). Rutherglen (2012) stated that the Thirteenth Amendment established freedom for more than four million Blacks. Fletcher (2007) noted that the Thirteenth Amendment "eliminated the threat to the Union and was ratified by twenty-seven states ensuring equality for all persons" (p. 52). The Thirteenth Amendment not only established freedom for slaves, but it gave Congress the power to define what freedom would mean for the freed slaves (Zietlow, 2012). However, according to Balkin and Levinson (2012), the Thirteenth Amendment had its challenges; it did not appear to

deliver all that it had promised because there were still problems of inequality between Blacks and Whites.

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When the Civil War ended, the southern states struggled economically without the free labor of Blacks (Du Bois, 2009). At this point, Whites were not responsible for the survival of Blacks, something had to be put into place to rebuild the South and to assist in the efforts of Blacks being able to support themselves (Peacock, 2003). Blacks’ perseverance and initiative proved to be powerful. As a result of what appeared to be a step forward for Blacks after the Thirteenth Amendment, Blacks began to take even more initiative towards their future (Peacock, 2003). Blacks began to discover ways to build on the desires of becoming educated, such as building schools and holding classes in homes and churches (Du Bois, 2009).

## Freedmen's Bureau

Some southern Whites opposed Blacks moving forward educationally and instead desired to keep the “old South” intact (Butchart, 1980); however, freed slaves pushed to open schools to bring education to Black communities (Hayward, 2007). Anderson (1988) indicated that in order to move toward taking control of their own education, ex-slaves established “Sabbath” (p. 12) schools. Sabbath schools were church-sponsored and provided basic literacy to ex-slaves (Anderson, 1988). Anderson stated that the Sabbath schools operated mainly on the weekends and evenings and were developed before “free or public schools” (p. 12).

Now free, Blacks began to develop schools in the South, attracting eager Black learners (Anderson & Moss, 1991). In addition, Congress formed the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 to help former slaves with their freedom and education (Peacock, 2003). The Freedmen's Bureau would also offer assistance to Blacks that included legal advice and emergency food, clothing, and medical care (Peacock, 2003). In addition, the Freedmen's Bureau provided several additional types of assistance to schools such as, (a) funds for renting buildings for schoolrooms, (b) military protection for students and teachers against those who opposed Blacks being educated, (c) superintendents for the schools, and (d) transportation for teachers and books for students (Du Bois, 2009). However, according to Franklin (2013) “the Bureau's greatest success was establishing schools” (p. 38).

Furthermore, some White Republicans wanted to extend the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau, which was to function for only one year after the Civil War (Du Bois, 2009). Franklin (2013) specified that the Republicans wanted to extend the life of

the Freedmen's Bureau indefinitely under the Freedmen's Charter Bill. However, President Johnson vetoed the Freedmen's Charter Bill because he thought it was unconstitutional to extend the life of the Freedmen's Bureau (Franklin, 2013). Due to the veto and opposition from other White southerners, the Freedmen's Bureau ended its operations in 1870 (Du Bois, 2009).

Rousmanier (2005) stated that even without the Freedman's Bureau, freed slaves, and some sympathetic Whites, continued the push for literacy. For example, Elijah Marris, a self-taught slave and sergeant in the Union army, taught other Black soldiers to read and write while in the army. When he left the army, he and his brother formed their own school in 1866 for Blacks in Kentucky, where he taught for 30 years (Rousmanier, 2007). Furthermore, Watkins (2001) noted that education was good for the South and good for the nation, although the education of Blacks was not a priority for Whites during the post-war Reconstruction Era.

The period after the Civil War, 1865-1877, was known as the Reconstruction Era and was considered as the next opportunity of hope for Blacks (Foner, 2012). Foner (2012) indicated that during the Reconstruction Era, America tried to rebuild the southern states. President Lincoln developed three initiatives of Reconstruction prior to his assassination: (a) enactment of progressive legislation favoring the rights of freed slaves, (b) restoration of the Union, and (c) transformation of southern society (Ferrell, 2003). In addition, Reconstruction was intended to provide "equal protection of the laws" (Anderson & Moss, 1991, p. 1) for freed men and women.

## Reconstruction

The authority was given to the government to intervene in the restructuring of the South in order to protect the basic rights of Blacks (Foner, 2012). It is important to note that before Reconstruction began, the South took a major hit economically because many freed slaves were fleeing the South, leaving few laborers to work on plantations or keep the homes (Foner, 2012). Even after the war was over, some White Democrats agreed with southerners that states had a constitutional right to own slaves (Burgan, 2006). As indicated by Burgan (2006), many White Democrats were verbal in expressing their opposition to any amendment or law that would change the way of life in the South.

Despite the White Democrat resistance to Reconstruction, there were some positive changes for Blacks during this time (Dittmer, 1995). The Reconstruction Era was a progressive time for Blacks in government, with some Freedmen even serving as U.S. senators in such states as Massachusetts and Mississippi (Dittmer, 1995; Ferrell, 2003). Along with changes in government, Reconstruction offered a rebuilding of much of the South destroyed or damaged in the Civil War (Ferrell, 2003). For example, the Reconstruction government “built hospitals, rebuilt railroads and bridges, expanded the range of government, and established Mississippi’s first public school system” (Dittmer, 1995 p. 12).

While the South was trying to rebuild and make way for Blacks in society, a struggle was also occurring in the White House, which jeopardized the progress Blacks had achieved in the U.S. (Ferrell, 2003). In 1876, Samuel Tilden and Rutherford Hayes vied for the presidency with a total of 20 electoral votes and three states' electoral votes in dispute (The Learning Network, 2012). Although Tilden was ahead of Hayes in both

the popular and electoral votes, the election commission chose Hayes, a Republican (Savage, 2009). Savage (2009) indicated, “The Democrats awarded Hayes the electoral vote in exchange for Republicans removing federal troops out of the South” (p. 698). It was thought by the public that Democrats and Republicans struck an informal deal that resulted in the Compromise of 1877 (Rehnquist, 2004). According to Rehnquist (2004), Hayes' victory in the presidential election led to the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of Jim Crow, which legalized racial segregation based on race in all public facilities across the South. In spite of these forthcoming Jim Crow laws, the Fourteenth Amendment would appear to bring a small glimmer of hope for Blacks and their rights.

#### Fourteenth Amendment

Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States' Constitution in 1866, and it was ratified in 1868 (Balkin & Levinson, 2012). Balkin and Levinson noted that:

The Fourteenth Amendment was originally designed to establish equal citizenship for blacks and whites and to make unconstitutional the Black Codes, state laws that had sought to return the newly freed men and women to conditions a little better than chattel slavery. (p. 1459)

The Fourteenth Amendment was also purposed to guarantee for Blacks, rights, privileges, and immunities of citizenship such as due process, equal protection, and education (Whitman, 1993). According to Burgan (2006), the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was initially put in place to protect businesses but later became a protector of voting and civil rights (Tthesis, 2012).

Article I of the Fourteenth Amendment notes:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (U.S. Const. Amend. XIV § 1)

Peacock (2003) indicated that the Fourteenth Amendment was sanctioned to protect the rights of not only Blacks, but also of the American people as a whole. Furthermore, it gave Blacks equal rights and extended protection to the state government actions which made the Bill of Rights applicable to the states (Peacock, 2003). Specifically, Blacks were given hope under the Fourteenth Amendment that they would receive the same quality education as Whites (Tsisis, 2012).

#### Resistance to Blacks Becoming Educated

As explained by Anderson and Moss (1991), many Whites did not accept the concept of racial equality because they believed that formal schooling indicated White dominance and elite White privilege. Whites made it very difficult for Blacks to achieve their goal of becoming educated by keeping Blacks in a position as second-class citizens and keeping them out of their all-White schools (Anderson & Moss, 1991; Tsisis, 2012). Opposition to Blacks becoming educated came from hostile southern White groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and lynch mobs that threatened the lives of teachers and students (Ruckner & Jubilee, 2007). White southerners were very violent and used intimidation tactics to stop Black education from progressing (Butchart, 2010).

For example, the KKK would burn crosses, bomb schools, and beat and kill teachers and students as a deterrent to teaching Blacks (Schwartz, 2005). Groups such as the southern legislators and the U.S. Supreme Court also went through lengthy legal measures to keep Blacks from moving forward in their quest to become educated (Ruckner & Jubilee, 2007). These measures included developing laws that forbade Blacks and Whites from attending school together. White parents would often remove their White children from the schools if Blacks attempted to attend “their” local, supposedly public schools. According to Rucker and Jubilee (2007), each of the previously mentioned groups had a hand in the impediment of Black education.

Nevertheless, the newly freed Black people wanted to obtain education in any manner possible (Butchart, 2007). Blacks also wanted to take control of their own education by having input on their children’s teachers and who would select the educators (Hayward, 2007). Moreover, Blacks’ continued pursuit to be educated complicated Whites’ plight to intimidate Blacks and kill their desire to learn (Hayward, 2007). To Hayward (2007), this ideology had a hand in the birth of legally-mandated segregation in the U.S.

### Segregation

Howard and Smith (2011) explained that segregated schools are a widely documented part of U.S. history. According to Douglas (2005), by 1940, most northern and southern schools were segregated by race, and many Blacks suffered due to discrimination. For example, the segregated all-Black schools did not receive adequate financial support for teachers or textbooks compared to the all-White schools (Douglas, 2005).



Whitman (1993) explained that the root of segregation began in 1896 with *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which sparked the “separate but equal” doctrine. Although *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was not an education case, it played a major role in the movement to segregated public facilities, particularly schools (Cross, 2006). The *Plessy* case focused generally on transportation by railway and carriage (Whitman, 1993), specifically in Louisiana. However, the case would affect education throughout the United States because of the ideas it promoted (Cross, 2006). The case began when a Black Louisiana native, Homer Plessy, who had many White physical features, attempted to defy the public transportation law of segregation that was already in place (Anderson, 2004). He did so by sitting in the section reserved for Whites during his travel on the trains (Martin, 1998). At one point, Plessy was directed to move to the colored section and was arrested because he refused (Cross, 2006). Martin (1998) explained that Plessy, like many other Blacks, disagreed with the Louisiana law, and he took legal action against the railroad company, citing the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Anderson (2004) described that Plessy requested that proceedings against him for a criminal violation of the state law be halted, but the Louisiana State Supreme Court refused. The Court upheld segregation in the state (Cross, 2006). According to Cross (2006), Judge Henry Brown stated that the law constituted a “reasonable” (p. 17) “form of regulation consistent with the established usage, customs, and traditions of the people” (p. xvii). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) case ruled “separate but equal” laws constitutional (Lieberman, 1987). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision was officially named “*An Act to Promote the Comfort of Passengers*” (Cross, 2006, p. 17) in Louisiana. Cross indicated that “separate but equal” was also known as “Jim Crow” (p. 17).

According to Gavin (2004), the Jim Crow, or segregation era, existed from 1877-1965, and it brought with it legalized segregation in many other areas, such as housing, businesses, and schools (Hayward, 2007).

According to Butchart (2007) the “separate but equal” doctrine stated that separate facilities based on race were legally acceptable if the facilities were of equal standard. However, according to Schiller (2008), Blacks were provided with anything but equal standards during segregation. Despite these unequal standards, Blacks believed education to be a basic human right afforded to all members of society. Students were legally separated in schools by race in several states, but especially in the South (Butchart, 2007; Cross, 2006). The “separate but equal” schools limited the level and quality of education for Blacks, which limited their opportunity for growth in society (Cross, 2006). The enacted rules, laws, and doctrines may have been attributed to a great fear of Blacks being educated. This fear stemmed from the power that literacy could bring to Blacks (Butchart, 2007).

According to Agirdag, Houtte, and Avermaet (2012), school segregation had a negative effect on Blacks socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Children of segregated groups had lower self-esteem due to the separation in schools (Agirdag et al., 2012). According to Douglas (2005), Ohio Governor Thomas Corwin had strong convictions about how Black children should benefit from education and why segregation of schools must end. Douglas quoted Governor Corwin as early as 1843 stating:

By educating poor Black children we place them, to some extent, at least, upon a footing of equality with the fortunate inheritors of rich estates. It is of all agencies yet discovered the most efficient in producing that perfect and just equality among

men which brings harmony into the social system and gives permanency to free government. (p. 1)

Douglas also quoted Mason S. Stone, the first state superintendent of education in Vermont, who stated:

Let every child in the land enjoy the advantages of a competent education at this outset in life, and it will do more to secure a general equality of condition than any guarantee of equal rights and privileges which constitution or laws can give. (p. 1)

Contrary to the idea of some Americans that Blacks should be educated and educated equally, Blacks continued to suffer at the hands of an unequal educational system, especially in the southern states.

#### Characteristics of Black Education

The law of “separate but equal” appeared to be anything but equal. Irons (2003) explained how many Black children walked miles to school on dirt roads, passing White-only schools to attend schools in pinewood shacks with no desks or blackboards, while the White children rode buses to school with plenty of space and updated facilities. Aligned with the “separate but equal” ruling, a system of inequality for public education was developed where Black schools were seriously underfunded compared to White schools (Randolph, 2007).

Despite underfunding and poverty being an obstacle, Blacks put forth effort to develop and build schools. Therefore, Blacks would set up meetings in churches and homes to educate their children and for others who desired to learn to read and write

(Randolph, 2007). According to Schwartz (2005), these meetings to educate Black students set a trend in the South that began to concern Whites.

Walker (2000) studied the segregated schooling experiences of Black students in the southern United States and South Africa. Walker and Archung (2003) spoke of the commitment of teachers and principals in both countries and how students were taught to succeed in their segregated schooling experiences. Chin (2004) indicated that in both countries interpersonal caring was found with the teachers and the principals.

Interpersonal caring occurred when the teachers and principals took a personal interest in the needs of the students (Chin, 2004). Walker and Archung (2003) stated that, “the needs of the Black students were met according to the perception of the teacher and principal” (p. 714). Foster (2005) described that within the Black community it was important for collaboration to be a part of the dynamic of empowering students to reach for achievement in schools. This characteristic was known as institutional caring – a “system where school leaders identified academic, social, and psychological needs of students, and those needs are arranged to be met based on school policy” (Foster, 2005, p. 689).

According to Walker (2000), Blacks found some interpersonal value in segregated schools. Similar to the findings of Walker and Archung (2003), Walker (2000) noted consistent categories in segregated schools that provided institutional caring, such as (a) quality teachers, (b) curriculum and extracurricular activities, (c) parental support, and (d) leadership of the school principal. Clearly, there was a strong bond between Black schools, families, educators, and the community (Walker, 2000).

These community values and foundations of Black schools were promoted through different school activities such as clubs, and religious services (Morris, 1999). The school, parents, and community had a sense of shared responsibility, participation, and ownership for education in Black segregated schools (Morris, 1999). According to Walker (2000), “These characteristics are what made these schools valued” (p. 253). Black parents, teachers, and students formed a community that treated education as a collective effort (Fairclough, 2004; Walker, 2000). Schools, although segregated, were treated as the institution of learning that they were expected to be, and students and parents respected the teachers in their endeavor to teach their children because they were working together (Fairclough, 2004).

Walker (2000) stated that while Blacks valued their education in segregated schools, they still wanted the equal education that Whites were receiving due to extra resources. Blacks wanted their quality of education to be equal to that of Whites, including well-equipped schools, legible and updated textbooks, qualified teachers, and the opportunity to go to school close to where they lived instead of miles away from their homes. In order to get this “equal” education, they decided to attack the “separate but equal” ruling because what they had, while separate, was not equal. This desire led to a fight for desegregation (Walker, 2000).

#### Landmark Cases Related to School Desegregation

There were numerous court cases that would continue the forward progress of educating Blacks and desegregating schools (Anderson, 2004). The U.S. Supreme Court class action case known as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) challenged the unconstitutional actions of “separate but equal” schools at the elementary and secondary

levels (Whitman, 1993). The five lawsuits filed under *Brown* varied but focused on constitutional rights for education (King, 2004). According to Whitman (1993), the five cases filed under *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) were *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1951) in Virginia; *Belton v. Gebhart* (1951) in Delaware; *Briggs v. Elliot* (1952) in Clarendon County, South Carolina; *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in Topeka, Kansas; and *Bolling v. Sharp* (1955) in Washington, DC.

Case documents revealed that the very nature of segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment and promoted the destruction of public education for Blacks (Whitman, 1993). Though citing similar concerns, *Bolling v. Sharp* (1949) had to be filed separately from others in the *Brown* case because it was filed under federal law in the District of Columbia instead of state court. Moreover, in the *Bolling* case, it was decided that the accusation of school segregation did not fall under the Equal Protection Clause and was resolved in a separate opinion (Whitman, 1993).

In the next section, significant court cases involving school segregation were briefly discussed. They were discussed in three sections, pre-*Brown*, *Brown*, and post-*Brown* cases. First, the pre-*Brown* cases included *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), *Briggs v. Elliott* (1949), *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), *Gonzales v. Sheely* (1951), and *Belton v. Gebhart* (1951). Second, the *Brown* cases included *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Brown II* (1955). Third, the post-*Brown* cases include *Bolling v. Sharpe* (1955), *Davis v. Prince Edward County* (1959), and *Brown III* (1978).

#### *Pre-Brown Cases*

*Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). This landmark case in Louisiana focused on segregation in areas other than schools, such as transportation and public facilities

(Hendrickson, 2001). One result of this case was the ‘Plessy standard,’ which became a well-known alternative name for “separate but equal.” According to Whitman (1993), the ‘Plessy standard’ became typical doctrine in the U.S. Segregated facilities were expected to meet the ‘Plessy standard’ by providing separate but equal facilities for both Whites and Blacks. However, as was the custom, many facilities were indeed separate, but they were never equal.

*Mendez v. Westminster (1946)*. This case challenged the “separate but equal” law (Bell, 2004). Gonzalo Mendez, William Guzman, Frank Palomino, Thomas Estrada, and Lorenzo Ramirez filed a class action suit on behalf of their minor children against the Westminster, Garden Grove, and El Modeno School Districts, the Santa Ana City School, all schools of Orange County, California, and the respective trustees and superintendents of each school district (Strum, 2010). *Mendez* alleged that children of Mexican- and Latin-descent were segregated and were required to enroll in particular schools separate from White children (Tonatiuh, 2013).

Strum (2010) indicated that in *Mendez*, lawyers complained that the Mexican- and Latin-descent minors’ Fourteenth Amendment rights were violated, and Mexican- or Latin-descent children were not granted equal protection of the law in their schools. The U.S. District Court found that children of Mexican- and Latin-descent were indeed being segregated in the school districts, and students were not given equal protection of the law by providing equal facilities and textbooks (Bell, 2004). As a result of the lawsuit, the districts were thereby ordered to desegregate their schools.

*Briggs v. Elliott (1949)*. Harry Briggs was one of 20 parents who sued the school board in Clarendon County, South Carolina, in the case of *Briggs v. Elliott (1949)*. Briggs

and other parents petitioned the Clarendon County School's local superintendent, R. M. Elliot, for their own bus to transport their children to the Black school (Williams, 2005a). After being denied the use of a school bus to transport the Black children to school, the parents decided to file a lawsuit (Williams, 2005a).

Thurgood Marshall was the lawyer chosen to represent the Briggs' and other parents in the court case (Somerville, 2005). Marshall stated that the NAACP legal defense fund should assist with the Briggs' case, encouraging a full lawsuit against Clarendon County (Somervill, 2005). The Clarendon County school officials reported to the U.S. Supreme Court that progress had been made in making school facilities equal; therefore, the U.S. Supreme Court returned the case back to the district court for rehearing (Williams, 2005a). Marshall argued that the real concern was that schools would continue to be unequal if separation of Blacks and Whites continued (Williams, 2005a). The case was once again appealed back to the U.S. Supreme Court; as a result, the district was ordered to make the schools equal. However, the decision did not result in the ending of segregation in Clarendon County schools until several cases later, and those cases consolidated into *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Somervill, 2005).

*Sweatt v. Painter (1950)*. Segregated conditions were also present at the post-secondary level. Herman Sweatt was a Black man who applied for admission to the all-White School of Law at the University of Texas in Austin. Sweatt was denied admission and appealed the original decision (Green, 2011). President Theophilus Painter of the University of Texas withheld Sweatt's application until Attorney General Daniel rendered a decision on whether or not to admit Sweatt into the university.



Attorney General Daniel worked to keep the University of Texas Law School segregated, and he denied Sweatt's admission (Kozol, 2005). Sweatt sued on the grounds of the Texas State Constitution prohibiting integrated education. The NAACP's legal defense fund represented Sweatt, showing that the institution's separate facilities did not meet the *Plessy* standard (Cullen, 2003). Kluger (1977) explained how the defendants in the *Sweatt* case proposed that the law schools in Texas create an additional law school for Blacks that would be equal to the White law schools in the state. According too Green (2011), the *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) case was similar to the pattern that public school systems followed with inequality in education. The Texas court did not rule in Sweatt's favor; however, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized that the accusations of inequality in the schools presented in the *Sweatt* case were accurate (Henderickson, 2001). This set the course for desegregation at the post-secondary level, which eventually prompted desegregation in K-12 public schools (Henderickson, 2001).

*Gonzales v. Sheely* (1951). As the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) case demonstrated, people of Latin descent in California, Texas, and Arizona also dealt with some of the same discriminatory issues as many Blacks across the nation (Valencia, 2005). As detailed by Powers and Patton (2008) in the *Gonzales v. Sheely* (1951) case, Porfiro Gonzales, a Mexican-American parent, filed a class action suit with other Mexican-American parents against Ross Sheely and the school board of trustees in Phoenix, Arizona. The suit was filed because the Arizona elementary public school authorities were accused of not allowing the children of Gonzales and the other Latino parents to attend an all-White school (Valencia, 2005). Judge Dave Ling of the U.S. District Court of Arizona ruled in the case of *Gonzales v. Sheely* (1951) that the

“segregation of school children in separate school buildings because of racial or national origin constitutes a denial of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed to petitioners as citizens of the United States” (p. 7). The Court stated that segregation in elementary schools was unconstitutional (Powers & Patton, 2008).

*Belton v. Gebhart (1951)*. During this same period, Ethel Belton, a Black parent in Claymont, Delaware, desired that her children be allowed to enroll at a local all-White school that had qualified teachers and adequate materials, rather than have her children bussed to an inferior all-Black school 90 minutes away in Wilmington (Somervill, 2005). After Belton and several other Black parents petitioned the Claymont school board for their children to attend the local White school, the parents’ request was officially denied, (Somervill, 2005). The *Belton v. Gebhart (1951)* case was filed in Delaware and heard by the Chancery Court (Williams, 2005b). The chancellor’s ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, stating that the plaintiffs were being denied equal protection under the law, and ordered the school to admit the 11 petitioning children into the White school (Williams, 2005b).

Displeased with the decision to admit the Black students, the Delaware school district appealed, but the appeal was denied. The case was then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court by the school district (Somervill, 2005). In the end, the district was ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to admit the 11 children to the all-White public school.

#### *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*

Irons (2003) described the conditions that Black children were exposed to under the “separate but equal” law as hindering and oppressive to their education. *Brown* was a consolidation of several cases that addressed the “separate but equal” law regarding

education. Many of the court cases previously described led to the U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The cases involved included: *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1951) in Virginia; *Belton v. Gebhart* (1951) in Delaware; *Briggs v. Elliot* (1952) in Clarendon County, South Carolina; *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in Topeka, Kansas; and *Bolling v. Sharp* (1955) filed in Washington, D. C. (Whitman, 1993). The ‘Brown’ in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) is based on the experience of Linda Brown. According to Thomas (2003), Linda was an 8-year-old Black girl who was denied admission to the local all-White elementary school in her community. Linda had to attend an all-Black elementary school 21 blocks from her home because school officials refused to allow her to register at the all-White elementary school that was only a few blocks from where she lived. Linda Brown’s parents filed a lawsuit to try and force the school district to admit her to the nearby all-White school (Thomas, 2003).

In the *Brown* case, based on the precedent set by the early court cases (the pre-*Brown* cases) and research that concluded that segregation negatively affected Blacks emotionally and psychologically. The U.S. Supreme Court found segregation in public schools to be inappropriate and unconstitutional. In a unanimous opinion, the Court ruled that laws that established separate schools for Blacks and Whites were unconstitutional.

Most of the southern states and some northern states participated in what was known as massive resistance to the *Brown* decision (Waite, 2010). For example, the Governor of South Carolina, James Byrnes, believed in segregation and made the statement that desegregation of schools and other facilities was “the end of the South as we have known it” (Williams, 2005b, p. 21). Herman Talmadge, Governor of Georgia,

said that as long as he was governor, he had no intentions of allowing schools to combine races. Talmadge called desegregation “the first step toward national suicide,” and he went on to say, “the *Brown* decision should be regarded as a mere scrap of paper” (Williams, 2005b, p. 21).

*Brown II (1955)*. Many school districts did not adhere to the decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court in the original *Brown* decision to desegregate schools (Somervill, 2005). In 1955, schools presented arguments to the U.S. Supreme court requesting relief from desegregation. The U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision addressing the relief, which became known as *Brown II* (Anderson, 2004). In the *Brown II* decision, the Court mandated that schools desegregate "with all deliberate speed" (Anderson, 2004, p. 49). In addition, the Court placed the responsibility of desegregation on school authorities in each school district and gave local courts the responsibility of overseeing and enforcing the Court’s decision. Somervill (2005) noted, because the Court did not give specific directions on how to carry out desegregation, many districts’ interpretation of “all deliberate speed” allowed them to proceed at a slothful rate, and many made no progress at all.

#### *Post-Brown Cases*

*Bolling v. Sharpe (1955)*. The case of *Bolling v. Sharpe* targeted educational equality when a group of parents sued the president of the Board of Education, C. Melvin Sharpe, in a school in Washington, D.C. (Stephan & Feagin, 1980). Gardner Bishop, Nicholas Stabile, and the Consolidated Parents Group attempted to have 11 Black students, including Spottswood Bolling, enroll in John Philip Sousa Junior High School, an all-White school (Somervill, 2005). The school’s principal would not allow the

students to enroll even though the school had several empty classrooms and available seats (Williams, 2005a). According to Somervill (2005), the District of Columbia public schools experienced racial segregation, and the U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren decided that the students were denied due process of law.

*Davis v. Prince Edward County (1959)*. Other court cases would continue to argue for and promote the ideology of desegregation. The *Davis v. Prince Edward County (1959)* court case in Farmville, Virginia, sought to end segregation at Robert R. Morton High School, an all-Black school (Stephan & Feagin, 1980). According to Somervill (2005), 450 students decided to protest and strike for two-weeks about the poor conditions of the high school. With the assistance of lawyers from the NAACP, the students agreed to challenge segregation directly rather than only through petition for school renovations. On behalf of these 117 Morton students and their parents, the NAACP lawyers filed suit in the federal district court in Richmond (Williams, 2005b). The first plaintiff listed was Dorothy E. Davis, a 14-year-old ninth grader. The students' request was rejected by the U.S. District Court but was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court (Somervill, 2005). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public education was unconstitutional and illegal, Somervill (2005). The Prince Edward school district was ordered to desegregate its schools; however, White Virginians aggressively resisted the order to desegregate (Williams, 2005b). The "Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors refused to appropriate funds to the school board, and the public schools remained closed for five years" (Williams, 2005b, p. 27). The state did not want to honor the order to desegregate its schools.

*Brown III (1978)*. Patterson (2001) explained that in 1978 there was a concern about the open enrollment policy in the Topeka, Kansas, school district. The concern was that the policy had already, and would continue to, lead to segregation in Topeka's schools. The initiation of the policy presented the choice of open enrollment, which gave Black and White parents the opportunity to shift their children to preferred schools. This process led to the possibility of the majority of one race abandoning a school and lead to resegregation (Patterson, 2001).

Williams (2005b) discussed the case that took place nearly 25 years after *Brown*; better known as *Brown III*, and indicated that Topeka attorneys Richard Jones, Joseph Johnson, and Charles Scott Jr. convinced Linda Brown to reopen her original *Brown* lawsuit. During a series of litigations in 1978, the Topeka attorneys stated that Topeka's school policy of open enrollment led to segregation (Williams, 2005b). The case concluded in 1994 with a desegregation plan that allowed additional elementary magnet schools to open with an agreement to redraw Topeka's current district attendance plan, which combated ongoing segregation. The district court denied the claim, finding that Topeka's schools were not segregated (June-Friesen, 2013).

#### Problems with Desegregation

Much of the South was slow to adhere to the desegregation of its schools after the *Brown* court decision (Clotfelter, 2004). The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was supposed to be an equalizer for education, but many perceived that the victorious case lacked the promised educational equality and integration (Bell 2004; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Morris, 2008). Blacks who had the experience of attending all-Black segregated schools indicated that some of the problems

that existed with Black education continued to occur after the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case and grew from school desegregation (Bell 2004; Horsford 2007; Horsford & McKenzie 2008; Morris & Morris 2002; Noblit & Mendez 2008; Tillman 2004a, 2004b; Walker & Archung 2003).

The Black students who attended all-Black schools had a different view of integration (Horsford, 2010). Some Black students did not view the experience of integration as a positive one because they felt that the treatment was often unjust and inhumane in the integrated schools (Horsford, 2007). Some felt as though the quality of education in Black schools was diminished because White teachers did not teach them with the same quality of education offered to White students were being taught in the White schools (Horsford, 2007).

However, the U.S. justices rejected Marshall's plea for the Jim Crow system to be dismantled when they did not set any deadlines for compliance with the judicial desegregation orders (Irons, 2003). According to Pratt (2009), several schools complied immediately with the order and others continued to remain segregated. Irons (2003) suggested that the U.S. Supreme Court's failure to enforce its own order encouraged a massive resistance, which caused entire school systems to shut down. Many Whites became hostile about desegregation being forced upon them, which in turn pushed Whites to be even more defiant of the Court's order (Irons, 2003). Furthermore, the resistance became more violent in states such as Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi (Irons, 2003; Pratt, 2009). For example, mob violence in Little Rock, Arkansas, pressed the U.S. Supreme Court to warn defiant officials to end their rebellion against desegregation (Irons, 2003). Warnings were not taken seriously, and Little Rock's

school was closed, leaving it and many other schools in the South segregated (Irons, 2003). In *Brown II* the Court gave another directive for southern officials to proceed with all deliberate speed (Somervill, 2005). Nonetheless, southern officials came up with every tactic they could to ignore the court's orders (Irons, 2003). Some of the tactics deployed included closing the schools and Whites fleeing the schools, leaving only Blacks in attendance (Somervill, 2005).

Additionally, once the resistant states realized that they would not be able to continue to outwardly and aggressively defy the order of *Brown*, they began to gradually resort to less aggressive tactics designed to accomplish the same means. For example, the resistant states used token desegregation plans such as "Equalization Plan, Freedom of Choice Plans, and Pupil Placement" (Irons, 2003, p. 21) to further undermine the *Brown* decision and, delay integration. However, integration of public schools was inevitable.

#### Integration

Long after the original *Brown* decision, "The inequality towards blacks in integrated education became evident through poor facilities, unfair educational policies, and unequal salaries for black teachers. The inequality provided by the government kept blacks in many public schools in a segregated environment" (Preston-Grimes, 2010, p. 40). However, while there were some movement toward truly integrated schools in the South, it was often a dangerous endeavor.

Williams (2005b) explained how Blacks attempting to integrate White schools were threatened, assaulted, and sometimes killed. For example, Fred Shuttlesworth, a civil rights leader, was severely beaten by a White mob after attempting to enroll his child in an all-White school in Birmingham, Alabama (Williams, 2005b). However,



Blacks were not the only group that risked violence when it came to the integration of schools. Somervill (2005) indicated, because of the intimidation and threats, there were only a few Whites who would consider staying in an integrated school with Blacks.

Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, is a famous example of the serious issues involved with the integration of schools (Kirk, 2007). The crisis began in 1957 when nine young Black students, affectionately called “the Divine Nine,” attempted to attend Central High School (Kirk, 2007). Beals (1995) explained that the nine students were chosen to integrate the school based on their personal conduct, academic achievement, and health. The nine students were Elizabeth Eckford, Minni Jean Brown, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Pattillo, Gloria Ray, Terrance Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Carlotta Walls (Cope, 2011). In the students’ attempt to integrate Central High School, they found themselves caught in the middle of a war between the federal and state government over desegregating and integrating all-White schools (Kirk, 2007).

The desegregation of Central High School led to fear, resistance, and violence for Black and White students and their parents (Somervill, 2005). Boyd (2007) indicated that the nine students were met with opposition in the form of mobs of people gathered outside the school yelling obscenities and throwing objects. The Segregationist Council for the city also threatened to hold a protest at Central High School and physically block the students from entering the school (Boyd, 2007). Additionally, Governor Orval Faubus decided to assist the segregationists in their efforts to halt integration by ordering the Arkansas National Guard to surround the school and keep the nine students out (Anderson, 2004). President Dwight D. Eisenhower convinced Faubus to call off the

guardsmen the next day, but eventually gave his own order for 1,000 soldiers and 10,000 guardsmen to protect the students from the mob and to escort them individually into the school (Anderson, 2004).

Beals (1995) explained that, although the President provided protection for the nine students, they continued to suffer verbal and physical abuse both from the White mobs outside and the White students inside while attending Central High School. The Black students were yelled at, called names, and spat on. Acid was thrown in the eyes of Melba Pattillo, and she was trapped in a stall in the girls' bathroom by a group of White girls who tried to burn her alive (Beals, 1995). If the Black students retaliated against a White student for any of the cruel treatments received, the Black students were often severely punished with excessive suspensions or even expulsion (Collins, 2008). On the contrary, White students were only punished if their offense was egregious or witnessed by an adult (Collins, 2008). Though the Divine Nine were met with great opposition due to the school system's resistance to desegregation, eventually the students successfully integrated Central High School for the remainder of the 1957-1958 school year (Cope, 2011; Kirk, 2007). However, the nine students' integration of Central High School was short lived because Governor Faubus and the school board closed Central High the following year, sending the White students to private schools and forcing the nine students back to their segregated schools (Anderson, 2004).

According to Orfield (1978), in 1974 schools in Topeka, Kansas, like many schools across the country, were still not in compliance with the desegregation laws. By 1979, the *Brown II* decision had been the law for 24 years; however, Topeka schools were still not integrated. The noncompliance to the desegregation laws caught the

attention of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) (Ogbu, 1986). The HEW launched a full investigation and threatened to pull funding from the Topeka schools if they did not become compliant (Ogbu, 1986). According to Orfield (1978), as schools in Topeka attempted to abide by the ruling of *Brown II* to desegregate schools with all deliberate speed, the former all-White schools began to become majority Black schools because Whites refused to attend school with Blacks.

Finally, after years of resistance and continued desegregation of schools, as an attempt to comply with the *Brown* ruling, school districts began to bus Black students to attend all-White schools (Ogbu, 1986). William (2005b) indicated that, Blacks had the most difficulty with the task of busing because they had to leave earlier and get home later than White students in order to attend schools that were across town. Therefore, the task of busing for the purposes of integration was not considered successful for Black students (Ogbu, 1986).

The challenges for Blacks were great during the times of desegregation and integration of schools. Blacks fought for desegregation and integration, which is what they believed, represented equality. At the same time, Whites fought for segregation, which is what they believed to be their way of life. The *Brown* decision brought about changes for the state of Mississippi. The changes based on desegregation due to *Brown*, particularly in Mississippi, were not immediate, but inevitable.

#### Desegregation in Mississippi

The South was the focus of the nation after the *Brown* (1954) decision ruled “separate but equal” schooling unconstitutional (Prifogle, 2013). Southerners often considered Blacks to be inferior to Whites, which had a great impact on how Whites felt

about Blacks and Whites attending school together (Prifogle, 2013). As a result of their beliefs on superiority, Whites were resistant to the changes that desegregation would bring (Bolton, 2009).

McClemore (1973) indicated that in 1821, the first private school to open in Mississippi was the Franklin Academy School for White boys in Columbus, Mississippi. Prior to the Civil War, in 1861, Mississippi did not readily accept the idea that it needed to provide free public quality schools for its children. Instead, education was provided through private schools and academies. The few schools that were opened were for White, wealthy youth and were funded through donations and student tuition. However, most children, Black and White, stayed home to work and support their families. Public schools were not compulsory; children were not required to attend school until 1918.

By 1868, Mississippi began offering free public education for Black and White youth in schools that were segregated, though some Whites chose not to take advantage of the free public education provided and opted to attend private institutions that did not admit Blacks (McClemore, 1973). Bolton (2007) indicated that wealthy White Mississippians believed their all-White private institutions were of high quality because their schools remained “one-race” (p. 4). In addition, the choice of private schools for White students contributed to the attitude of superiority among the White Mississippi population and a continued resistance to desegregation and integration of public schools (Bolton, 2007).

#### Resistance to Desegregation and Integration in Mississippi

In Mississippi, Whites made their resistance to desegregation clear by continually instituting roadblocks (Bolton, 2005). For example, Blacks were met with strict

opposition from Whites through intimidation and state-sanctioned policies to block the desegregation and integration of schools (McMillan, 1989). The state of Mississippi went through 16 years of delays and token desegregation to appear to be in compliance with desegregation laws after the *Brown* decision was handed down (Bolton, 2009). Moreover, the new move of integration was on the terms of Whites; for instance, Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs by being replaced by Whites. Furthermore, the Black communities lost the control that they previously had over the education of their children as integration began (Bolton, 2000).

Civil rights were controlled by the legal system in Mississippi, which heavily enforced “separate but equal” laws (Sparkman, 2011). Mississippi-based political and hate groups made it difficult for national civil rights organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), and the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to assist Blacks with receiving equality in and out of schools (Prifogle, 2013). According to Moses and Cobb (2001), SNCC was a political organization formed by a group of Black college students in 1960. Its purpose was to eliminate segregation in the South. COFO, an organization developed through SNCC, was a coalition of civil rights organizations that operated in Mississippi with the mission of overseeing civil rights activities, promoting voter registration, and overseeing the distribution of funds for the Voter Registration Project. This organization was instrumental in forming the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (Moses & Cobb, 2001). According to Moses and Cobb (2001), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was under the umbrella of COFO, and it helped to organize the Freedom Summer campaign. CORE also helped to organize the 1963 March

on Washington and sponsored the freedom rides (Dittmer, 1995). Freedom rides were an integrated group of students and veterans who intended to challenge segregated interstate travel by riding Greyhound and Trailway buses from Washington D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana. In addition, the NAACP promoted the rights of Blacks, including legal matters, education, and employment concerns (Moses & Cobb, 2001). In spite of the push for equality from the Black civil rights organizations, the state of Mississippi showed no interest in adhering to desegregation mandates (Fuquay, 2002). However, the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 included provisions to enforce school desegregation, and plans to desegregate Mississippi schools had to be developed (Fuquay, 2002). However, by 1967 only one-third of Mississippi's school districts had desegregated, with less than one percent of Black children attending school with White children (Bolton, 2009).

#### Plans to Desegregate in Mississippi

Mississippi's struggle to desegregate after *Brown* became more evident with each tactic used to keep Blacks and Whites separate in its public education system. According to Bolton (2000), since the state had to show compliance to the *Brown* ruling, the state began to develop plans to make it look like desegregation was taking place while it still enforced segregation within some of its schools. Mississippi provided plans to the school districts that would satisfy its desire to keep its Black and White students separate. The plans were called the Equalization Plan, Pupil Placement, and Freedom of Choice (Bolton, 2000).

#### *Equalization Plan*

Bolton (2000) detailed how Mississippi adopted an Equalization Plan to support schools that were still segregated and unequal under the pretense of improving Black

education. The Equalization Plan was a funding strategy designed to equalize funding between Black and White schools. However, the plan would only make minimal adjustments to what the state could spend on Black public education (Bolton, 2000). Bolton stated that White Mississippians' goals within the Equalization Plan were to "preserve white privileges and maintain segregation" (p. 783).

According to Harris (1993), White privilege occurred when "whiteness was historically treated as a property and valued and protected in social and legal institutions" (p. 4). White privilege was an assurance that segregation would be preserved because of the value placed on Whiteness. Whites often used White privilege as a position of superiority in public education by demanding exclusive rights to a separate quality education (Harris, 1993). White Mississippians had hopes that the federal government would accept a new equalization policy as an improved version of "separate but equal" instead of forcing them to desegregate (Bolton, 2000). Bolton (2000) stated that, "upgrading black schools within segregation was considered a viable alternative to school integration by both Blacks and Whites" (p. 782). Moreover, the plan was designed to keep the Jim Crow ideas and norms intact in Mississippi (Bolton, 2000).

Pinder and Hanson (2010) indicated that the Equalization Plan was put into place as an effort to secure de jure segregation by providing adequate funding only to White segregated schools, thereby supporting and continuing segregation. As a result, the Equalization Plan did not show any improvement in Black education (Bolton, 2000).

According to Bolton (2000), the program failed because:

As one of the poorest states in the nation, Mississippi had limited resources to expend on closing the huge gap between black and white education created under

the system of segregation. The only real solution to this problem was to obtain federal funds, but the use of such monies threatened to destroy the Jim Crow arrangements the state's equalization program was designed to protect. (p. 2)

While the Equalization Plan failed, the state quickly devised another plan to keep Black and White students separate; this plan was called Pupil Placement.

### *Pupil Placement*

As cited by Bolton (2009), segregation was still alive and well after the failure of the Equalization Plan. Littlejohn (2009) indicated that White segregationists implemented Pupil Placement as a resistance tactic to stop desegregation. Pupil Placement allowed segregated placement of Black students within a White school (Bolton, 2009).

Furthermore, school boards were in place to govern decisions made by schools and to ensure that Pupil Placement decisions were based on race (Littlejohn, 2009). To ensure segregation, Pupil Placement encouraged tactics such as Black students being required to complete applications, tests, and personal interviews before being considered by the state to be placed in White schools (Littlejohn, 2009).

However, if Black and White students did end up in the same school, there were many tactics applied within Pupil Placement that continued student separation (Bolton, 2009). For example, Black and White students attended classes in separate wings within the school, they had different bells (one for Blacks and one for Whites) to change classes, there were separate times to eat lunch, and they had separate water fountains (Bolton, 2009).

Littlejohn (2009) noted that the NAACP challenged the Pupil Placement tactics in federal court, and Pupil Placement was ruled unconstitutional. As a result, White



segregationists, such as members of the state legislature and school leaders, decided to abandon Pupil Placement by 1960. In its place, a new tactic was implemented to rebel against desegregation called Freedom of Choice.

### *Freedom of Choice*

Bolton (2005) indicated that under the pretense of being in compliance with the *Brown* ruling, the Mississippi government introduced another token system known as Freedom of Choice. Freedom of Choice was initially put in place to allow Black or White students to attend any public school of their “choice” within their districts (Bolton, 2005). However, Blacks in Mississippi did not have the choice to attend the all-White public schools as they were led to believe by Freedom of Choice. For example, parents of Black students in Mississippi who chose to attend the all-White public schools were intimidated with the threat of being fired from their jobs or being evicted from their homes without notice (Bolton, 2005).

McMillian (1989) indicated that some Black Mississippians had crosses burned in their yards and received threatening phone calls with the promise of bodily harm at the hands of Whites for taking advantage of Freedom of Choice. In 1968, in the case of *Green vs. County School Board* (1968), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Freedom of Choice was not working towards desegregating Mississippi schools and would not be a method accepted to implement school desegregation (Bolton, 2009). White parents, the legislature, and school leaders were disappointed with the outcome of Freedom of Choice. They decided to combat desegregation with school choice, which was another tactic to eliminate the possibility of Blacks attending public school with Whites.

### *School Choice for White Students*

As explained by Bolton (2005), in 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Alexander v. Holmes* (1969) required 30 Mississippi school districts to immediately dismantle Freedom of Choice and establish full integration. Andrews (2002) contended that as a result of integration being enforced by the government, Whites then began to open private schools that were not financially supported by the government and were restricted to Whites-only, giving White parents and students school choice. According to Colburn (2012), after integration, many Mississippi parents decided to use school choice, a plan that granted White parents specifically the freedom to choose options of traditional schools or private schools for their children's education. Eckes (2006) explained that because most White families resisted the forced integration, Whites built and supported private schools to educate their children.

Fuquay (2002) indicated that the new, restricted, private, all-White schools were created with the purpose of continuing segregation, and they became prevalent for the White and wealthy. These schools were also known as independent or nonstate schools that grew dramatically in numbers from 1969 to 1971 (Andrews, 2002). These non-government funded institutions allowed White officials to reserve the right to select their students and have their all-White institution be supported through tuition (Andrews, 2002). It was a new strategy in an ongoing effort to segregate (Fuquay, 2002). In fact, according to Eckes (2006):

The White parents perceived the public schools to have greater discipline problems, less challenging academics and fewer extracurricular activities. White parents combined their monies to create inexpensive private schools for their children to attend to combat the forced integration (as cited in Carr, 2012). The

Black parents believed that the White parents' choice to have their children attend a private school was for reasons of racism. (p. 15)

Despite school choice and other resistant tactics that were implemented into public education by Whites, there were advantages to integration.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of Integration

Despite the hardships of integration, there were advantages. Black students who attended integrated schools often had the opportunity to attain better reading skills and set career goals (Eckes, 2005). Black students attending integrated schools also performed better in college than students attending segregated schools (Eckes, 2006; Wells, 2001). Furthermore, Wells (2001) indicated that Whites' attempts to isolate themselves from Blacks educationally had not been beneficial to Whites academically because they were deprived of the educational and social benefits of interacting with different races. Justice White of the U.S. Supreme Court supported this idea, stating "A racially and ethnically diverse student body increases the atmosphere of speculation and experimentation for all students" (as cited in Wells, 2001, p. 775). Although there were many other advantages for Blacks with integration, there were also disadvantages.

Moses and Cobb (2001) explained that during integration, Mississippi schools, particularly those that were predominantly Black or all-Black, remained at the bottom of education rankings due to students' low scores on state standardized tests. According to Bolton (2007), the leaders of the public schools where Blacks attended were not in full support of the integrated public schools. As a result of this lack of support, the students were not successful on the standardized tests because they did not receive the same materials or high-quality teachers as the students who were in all-White or predominantly

White schools. Additionally, as White leaders often removed their children from the integrated public schools, enrollment dropped which negatively affected the school tax base (Bolton, 2007).

Furthermore, a lack of funding, outdated or insufficient materials, and low-quality teachers were endemic of the poor conditions of the Black schools (Moses & Cobb, 2001). This resulted in low student performance, which influenced Whites' perceptions of Black students and communities. Rather than acknowledging the structural constraints brought on by racism and segregation, Whites saw Black students and communities as inferior.

Similarly, according to Frankenburg (2009), "scholars suggest that a newer form of racism, laissez-faire racism, exists ... which perpetuates White privilege using rational-sounding discourse [such as low student performance] to justify any inequalities that might result in segregation" (p. 872). Children in laissez-faire segregated schools are considered inferior, and are often left behind and are typically Black (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

Furthermore, in an effort to address the concerns of poor student performance on state standardized tests, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law in 2002 to identify failing schools (NCLB, 2002). Compared to the times of segregation, the failing schools often had similar inequalities that have persisted and contributed to Black students' lack of success (NCLB, 2002). As a result, the failing situations in these schools enabled parents who were able to remove their children, in many cases leaving the majority of one race in the schools (Moses & Cobb, 2001). This phenomenon is known as resegregation.

## Resegregation

Glen (2012) defined resegregation as the mounting separation of students of color from White students in public schools. Orfield (2005) described resegregation as desegregation moving backwards. There are several other types of resegregation that have been documented in educational settings, such as an overrepresentation of Black students in special education and remedial classes, and Blacks being over-disciplined compared to their White counterparts (Artiles, Klingler, & Tate, 2006; Artiles, Palmer & Trent, 2004; Oakes, 2005). Resegregation is another phenomenon that results in White flight.

White flight occurred when White parents moved into new areas and districts leaving an abundance of one race in the abandoned districts (Orfield, 1978). Fossey (2003) indicated that White flight occurred in many schools after they were forced to integrate, leaving them with majority Black student populations and “inequitable sub-par schooling, and remedies such as forced busing, . . . and race based staffing ratios” (p. 43) that were established to redress the White flight. Moreover, Holmes (2002) stated that White parents’ choice of schools was not typically based on the quality of the school, but the school’s ability to segregate the entire school from Black or Latina/os students. Charles (2005) addressed how schools that became resegregated due to White flight would typically suffer from a lack of funding, low-quality teachers, and outdated or insufficient materials. Based on school funding formulas, school districts then had less money to work with once the Whites left (Fossey, 2003). In addition, according to Wiggins (2011):

Nationally, in present day two in five students of color go to schools where enrollments are ninety percent or more non-White, and many of those schools are among the poorest with the least amount of resources and most under-qualified teachers, and where students are disciplined harder, drop out more, and graduate less. (p. 40)

However, many Black parents and educators were not surprised when resegregation and racial isolation reentered the schools because of their past experiences with segregation (Horsford, 2010). They were also not surprised to learn that Whites were performing better academically than Blacks and Latinas/os.

Rothstein (2013) stated that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) remains the most reliable student achievement indicator today. According to NAEP (2012), an “achievement gap occurs when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant, that is, larger than the margin of error” (para. 1). NAEP evaluates the achievement gap between Black and White students (Rothstein, 2013). In turn, these achievement gaps and school disparities lead to significantly different average academic scores between the two groups (Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012).

Rothstein (2013) stated that the NAEP report reveals that the negative trend of low-income Black students in isolation in predominantly low-income schools, or resegregation, is increasing. Rothstein also indicated that the NAEP results from 2011 revealed that the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites in the negative trend continues to be affected by “low quality teachers, class size and the isolation of Black

students in segregated schools” (p. 10). In addition, Mickelson (2003) noted that, due to students’ performance levels, the dropout rate is higher among Blacks than Whites. Consequently, the nationally-normed NAEP revealed the negative academic and social effects of resegregation, or the isolation of Black students.

Furthermore, an achievement gap is often evident between Black and White students experiencing segregation or resegregation. Students in the segregated public schools of McComb, Mississippi experienced the negative academic and social effects of segregation. However, Blacks were in a constant battle to experience the same quality education as Whites in the 1960’s era.

#### Desegregation in McComb, Mississippi

According to Dittmer (1995), McComb, Mississippi, “gained the reputation as the bombing capital of the world” (p. 268) due to the high number of bombings during the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation. The bombings took place when Whites became fearful of Blacks uniting as one voice against the violation of their voting rights and the inequality in Black schools (Gordon, 2011). Middle-class Whites were fearful of the organizing Black civil rights groups in McComb (Dittmer, 1995). Whites wanted to be left alone in their tradition of segregation, and Blacks wanted equality (Gordon, 2011). Blacks began to take steps toward gaining the equality they felt they deserved for themselves and their children. In addition, according to Gordon (2011), “McComb and Pike County became ground zero for the national civil rights struggle” (p. 1). C.C. Bryant, Bob Moses, Tom Hayden, John Hardy, and many others played significant roles in jump-starting the Nonviolent Voter Registration Project in McComb, which was a driving force for the Civil Rights Movement in the city (Dittmer, 1995).

Umoja (2003) indicated that the Mississippi Summer Freedom Campaign, also known as the Mississippi Summer Project, led the push for human rights, that is, Black rights, in McComb, Mississippi. The project was organized in 1964 to attempt to register as many Blacks to vote as possible (Umoja, 2003). The freedom campaign groups such as SNCC and COFO believed it was important to operate a nonviolent movement in order to break the barriers of segregation (Umoja, 2011). The organizations initiated such movements as the Pike County Nonviolent Action Movement and the Nonviolent Voter Registration Movement (Umoja, 2003). Additionally, the Freedom Summer Project developed Freedom Schools in Mississippi's public school systems (Dittmer, 1995).

Freedom Schools offered summer education programs and created community centers to provide weekly instruction on voting, academics, and nonviolent campaigns for Blacks (Dittmer, 1995). Similar to the nonviolent movements in other parts of Mississippi, in the summer of 1961, C.C. Bryant (the NAACP president), Hollis Watkins and Curtis Hayes (members of the Pike County Non-Violent Action Movement), and young student members of SNCC decided to stage sit-ins and request service at the White-only Woolworth's and at the Greyhound Bus terminal as a protest to segregation in the city of McComb (Burglund High, n.d.). Most of the SNCC members were then students at the all-Black Burglund High School in McComb, Mississippi. Among the students was Brenda Travis, a 15-year-old Burglund High School student (Dittmer, 1995).

Rhonda and other students were arrested on August 30, 1961, due to their participation in the sit-ins (Dittmer, 1995). Rhonda, in particular, was sentenced to serve time at the state juvenile prison as a result of participating in this civil rights activity



(Burglund High, n.d.). In addition to her sentencing to the state juvenile prison, she was also expelled from Burglund High School (Burglund High, n.d.).

In protest to what Black community leaders and Rhonda's fellow students believed to be the severe and unfair disciplinary action Rhonda received, more than 100 students walked out of the all-Black Burglund High School on October 4, 1961 (Burglund High, n.d.). They marched over two miles and were arrested as they knelt to pray on the steps of McComb City Hall. The SNCC staff (Bob Moses, Chuck McDew, and Bob Zellner), NAACP President C.C. Bryant, and other participating Black adults were also arrested and later charged with "contributing to the delinquency of a minor" (Burglund High, n.d., para 2). At their court hearings, the students were asked by the judge to sign a pledge mandating that they would cease participating in civil rights activity, but many of the students refused to sign. As a result of their refusal to sign the pledge, many of the students were expelled from Burglund High School (Burglund High, n.d.). Several of these expelled students were seniors and thus were denied the opportunity to graduate and receive their high school diplomas (Dittmer, 1995). A few of these students, now adults, still reside in McComb, Mississippi.

### Summary

African Americans established their place in United States' history through overcoming many harrowing struggles with exemplary displays of perseverance. Africans were enslaved and taken away from their world, as they knew it, suffering at the hands of Arab, Spaniard, British, Portuguese, American, and other slaveholders and oppressors of the past. Although Blacks were enslaved to Whites for the most extensive duration of time, most never lost their deep desire to learn to read and write. In the U.S., even though

learning to read and write could cost a slave his/her life, some decided that the value of literacy was worth the risk. Slaves discovered the possibilities of liberation, religion, and, later, awareness of the progress of the Civil War in becoming literate.

There was great opposition from Whites regarding slaves becoming literate. White slave owners saw literacy for slaves as a threat to their way of life. They feared that slaves would become knowledgeable of freedom and rebel against their enslaved state. There were many abolitionists and anti-slavery Constitutionalists who opposed slavery and the idea of slaves being illiterate. Abolitionists and anti-slavery Constitutionalists fought to change the world of slavery as it was known in the South.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed The Emancipation Proclamation, thereby freeing the slaves. Now free, Blacks were in a deeper search for literacy. Whites, particularly in the South, were still opposed to Blacks becoming literate although they were now free. The freed slaves persevered and opened schools to educate their children. In addition, in 1865, Congress formed the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves with their freedom and education. After much debate over keeping the Freedmen's Bureau open, operations of the Freedmen's Bureau ended in 1870 (Rousmanier, 2005).

As an attempt to restore the South, Reconstruction took place from 1865 to 1877. During the Reconstruction Era, efforts were made to restore the Union, transform southern society, and enact progressive legislation favoring the rights of freed slaves. The South took a major economic hit during Reconstruction and found it very difficult to function without slaves. However, the Reconstruction period was a progressive time for Blacks, and it established Mississippi's first public school system (Dittmer, 1995), although it was segregated.

In spite of Mississippi's segregated public schools, Blacks were still eager to learn while Whites continued to oppose the education of Blacks. White southerners were violent towards Blacks who wanted progress in education. They expressed their opposition by using intimidation tactics, violence, and burning Black schools. Nevertheless, newly freed Blacks continued their quest to obtain an education. However, while Black schools were poorly funded and lacked materials and qualified teachers to meet the need for a quality education, the government sufficiently met the needs of White schools.

In 1954, the *Brown* case declared "separate but equal" schools unconstitutional, but Mississippi offered much resistance and its schools did not appear to begin to desegregate for another 16 years. Mississippi had only one-third of its schools desegregated by 1967. In an act of resistance and under a pretense of compliance, Mississippi offered token desegregation programs called the Equalization Plan, Pupil Placement, and Freedom of Choice. The programs were designed to continue segregation of Blacks and Whites in the schools. By 1969, Mississippi was forced by the federal government to dismantle all token desegregation programs and completely integrate its schools.

Mississippi's public schools were integrated by the mid-1970s, but Whites were still not content with the mixing of Whites and Blacks in their schools. The dismantling of segregation in Mississippi public schools brought about the establishment of private schools. That is, when White parents could no longer keep their children separated from Black students in public schools, they began removing their children from the public schools and sending them to private institutions. The White exodus from the public

schools, or “White Flight,” left the schools with a majority of one race, usually Black, creating resegregation. Despite the exodus of Whites from the schools, Black citizens in McComb, Mississippi, began their own movement to address the issues of segregated schooling in their city.

In the summer of 1961, the Black citizens of McComb, Mississippi, began to take a stand for their voting rights, which led to a stand for the desegregation and eventually integration of its schools. There were civil rights organizations, such as SNCC, Pike County’s NonViolent Movement, and the NAACP, that assisted with the voter registration drives and the efforts to desegregate McComb’s schools. In 1961, Brenda Travis, a 15-year-old girl, participated in sit-ins at the Woolworth’s and Greyhound bus station. Due to her participation in the sit-ins, Brenda was arrested and expelled from the all-Black Burglund High School. Her arrest and expulsion led to the protest and eventually the walkout of more than 100 students from the all-Black school in 1961. Students who participated in the walkout were arrested, and the students who were on schedule to graduate that year were denied the opportunity to receive their diplomas unless they signed an agreement to never participate in a civil rights protest again. The movement of the Burglund High School walkout was an event that would eventually change public schooling in McComb, Mississippi.

## CHAPTER III - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The focus of Chapter III is to discuss the qualitative research methodology for this study. The qualitative method emphasized the researcher's role as an active participant in the study and is used when the researcher is interested in exploring the perceptions and the experiences of others (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2005). The study focused primarily on the experiences that the participants lived and their perceptions of those experiences. This chapter also included statements regarding the researcher's positionality, the purpose of the study, research design, theoretical framework, sample, procedures and data analysis, credibility and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

A qualitative approach was ideal for this study, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), its usefulness in discovering the meaning that people give to events they experience is valuable information. In addition, the qualitative approach was appropriate when the nature of the research questions require an investigation of personal phenomena, such as feelings (Stake, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicated that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. People are studied in their natural setting while interpreting phenomena in terms of their perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Patton and Cochran (2002) suggested that qualitative questions often begin with "what" or "how" to give the researcher an in-depth understanding of the topic being researched. Applying the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets, this study allowed participants who did and did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout the opportunity to express their perceptions of segregation, desegregation, and integration in the McComb public schools. Participants

also shared their perceptions of the public schools in McComb during the eras of segregation, desegregation, and integration until now. As a natural part of this discourse, I presented an abbreviated detail of my own perceptions and lived experiences of McComb public schools as my positionality statement

#### Positionality Statement

My role as the researcher was vital to the process and the completion of this qualitative study due to my experiences as a Black educator and leader. When I was in high school, Whites' tactics to separate Blacks from Whites were different from those tactics used during the times of segregation, desegregation, and integration. Although schools were fully integrated, White educators such as administrators and counselors used blatant tactics to create segregated, unequal experiences for Black and White students at the public high school I attended.

As a high school junior, I experienced such tactics when my principal and counselor tried to keep me and other Black students separated from Whites in my high school. My high school practiced segregation by not offering opportunities for Black and White students to interact socially. For example, the school did not sponsor the prom or dances for the whole student body. There was a Black prom and a White prom, and outside groups sponsored the junior and senior trips. The Black students' dances, proms, and trips were sponsored by a group of Black alumni who graduated from the school. The parents of the White students sponsored the proms, dances, and trips for the White students at my high school.

The school's attempt to separate Blacks from Whites did not end with separation of activities that should have been sponsored by the school but reached into the school

walls with my guidance counselor. As I approached my senior year, my interest grew for more education. However, being the first in my family to graduate from high school and the first to go to college, I did not know how to begin my quest for higher learning. My high school had a White and a Black guidance counselor. Students were assigned to a guidance counselor based on students' last names. I was assigned to the older White male guidance counselor for my college advisement. He worked with the students whose last names began with the letters M-Z, and my last name was Young.

I expressed to him my interest to attend college and that I did not know where or how to begin the process. I had traveled to Alcorn State University (ASU), a historically Black university, on a high school day trip sponsored by the Black alumni of the high school. The high school day trip to ASU was an attempt to expose the Black students to the college experience. However, my perception of ASU was that it was too far away from the city and quite primitive because there were no cable televisions, no phones in the rooms, and no private bathrooms in the freshmen dorm. ASU also specialized in agricultural education, and I was interested in medicine.

My desire was to attend The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), which was a predominantly White university. I was impressed with what my friends who attended USM had to share about the school's modern dormitories, with such things as cable television, phone service in the dorm rooms, and private bathrooms. I liked the fact that the school was very close to restaurants and that the school had a mix of Black and White students. I also was impressed by all of the areas in which I could specialize for the medical field. My friends who were also Black were attending USM and spoke highly of the university and all it could offer me. My guidance counselor, however, was an

alumnus of the institution and advised me against attending. He suggested that I go to ASU as it would be a better fit for me. I explained that I wanted to major in medicine and had heard USM would be ideal for that major. He said, “Yes, it is a good school, but you would fit in better at Alcorn State University.” Through his encouragement, I attended college at ASU.

Although I decided to attend ASU and major in medicine, I found myself graduating with an undergraduate degree in pre-medicine, but not using that degree. Life circumstances did not allow me to continue on to medical school, but instead to begin a career as a teacher/counselor. My experience as a school counselor led to a passion for helping others like myself. My experiences also placed me on a path toward assisting students by advising them based on their future endeavors and not on the color of their skin.

Currently, I am a 20-year veteran educator of McComb, Mississippi, where I have worked in public schools with a predominantly Black student population. My background in McComb as a General Education Development (GED) teacher for both private and public schools as a behavior interventionist, guidance counselor, and assistant principal has prepared me to work with children from the McComb area while gaining experience working with students who have an academic deficit and come from an underserved ethnic group. My past experiences with discrimination in public schools, such as the advice from my counselor based on my skin color instead of my academic goals, has prepared me to guide Black students on a more productive path. I have first-hand knowledge that will assist students in attaining a better quality of life despite obstacles presented by people seeking to hinder them based on the color of their skin.



In addition to the discrimination I experienced during my high school years, I also experienced discrimination in my quest for employment with the McComb School District when applying for an assistant principal position. I was told by administration that I was being turned down for promotional positions because I am a Black woman and I lacked experience. I was privately informed that the higher-level administration wanted to hire a White man. I learned later that the new hire did not possess more education or experience than I did. I applied that same year for an assistant principal position at the elementary school, and I was privately informed again that higher-level administration wanted to hire a White female for the position. Again, this person did not have the same level of experience or education as I did. These were all clear signs of discrimination.

As a Black woman residing in McComb, Mississippi, and working for the McComb School District, my reasons for writing a dissertation in the area of segregation, desegregation, and integration in McComb, Mississippi, and focusing on the Burglund High School walkout, are both personal and professional. In my experiences with working with Black parents and Black students in the McComb School District, both have suffered maltreatment and unfairness due to low expectations of parental support and student performance. I believe that the parents' mistrust of the school officials and disconnection from the education process often is passed on to students and this affects students' value for education and leads to poor academic performance.

In addition to my personal reasons for conducting the study, I have lived in McComb for 20 years and have two children who have graduated from the McComb School District. I also have two younger children currently attending school in the district. I believe in the district and what can be achieved in the schools academically, so

I have chosen to allow my children to attend public schools in McComb instead of choosing private schooling for them. As a Black leader, I can help lead teachers and others in the education of Black children. How we educate Black students influences their progress and success. As a Black leader, I can also help fellow educators understand that we do not singly work with “Black” or “White” children, but we simply work with children who deserve our best.

Now, as an educator in McComb, Mississippi, I have found that one cannot fully or effectively approach the issues and concerns of education in the area without knowing the history. I believe that knowing the history of McComb will help to develop better educators, leaders, and students. The history of the walkout can empower educators and leaders by helping students and their families navigate through the mistrust and disconnection between the school and community. The community’s awareness of the history of the walkout will also help in teaching the students of the McComb community about the effects of racism which influences teaching and learning in the schools. I will explore the experiences of former Burglund High School students who did and did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout and examine their perceptions of segregation, desegregation, and integration of public schools from then until now. Obtaining this historical knowledge will allow me to identify emerging problems due to racism and devise strategies that will allow me to be effective when educating current and future students in McComb public schools.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of former students who did and did not participate in the walkout of Burglund High School

on October 4, 1961. I examined the perceptions of the participants who did and did not participate in the walkout and those who were subsequently suspended, expelled, or denied the right to graduate due to their participation. I also examined the perceptions of the participants regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration of public schools in McComb from then until now.

### Research Design

This qualitative study employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to examine the real-life experiences of participants who did and did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout and their perceptions of segregation, desegregation, and integration of public schools. IPA was specifically developed for the purpose of responding to research questions related to individuals' perceptions. As the researcher and human instrument for this study, all data was filtered through my lenses. Because of my own experiences and knowledge of McComb, Mississippi, and the subject matter, it made it impossible for me to remain outside of the study. Furthermore, my personal experiences with discrimination do not allow me to have an objective view with regard to the Burglund High School walkout. However, through qualitative methodological techniques such as peer debriefing and member checks, I addressed my biases by working with a colleague who was impartial to the study. She assisted me with becoming more aware of my own views and interpretations regarding the data. I also reduced the bias by not asking leading questions. Participants were allowed to assure accuracy of interview statements through transcript review.

## Theoretical Framework

According to Delgado and Stefancic (1992), CRT was formulated in the mid-1970s to combat racism that had already developed. Although racism had appeared to decrease, it was being acted out in subtle forms such as segregation within integrated schools.

According to Ladson-Billings (2004), CRT allowed for the study of the transformation of the relationships among race, racism, and power. In addition, CRT expresses skepticism, neutrality, and color blindness towards racial justice and insists on a historical analysis of the law (Bell, 1995a). Bell (1995a) noted that CRT also recognizes that racism is embedded in society.

According to Tate (1997) the origin of CRT was in higher education involving legal studies. It was grounded in social justice and was developed because Critical Legal Theory (CLT) could not address the struggles of people of color. “CLT primary goal was to expose and challenge the idea that legal reasoning was neutral value-free and unaffected by social and economic relations, political forces and cultural phenomena (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 12).

The five original tenets of CRT included interest convergence, whiteness as property, voice/counter story, critique of liberalism (colorblindness), and racial realism (Bell, 1995b). Bell (1995a) noted that social construct and restrictive vs. expansive were tenets that were later added to CRT. The tenets social construct and restrictive vs. expansive were not elaborated on in this study due to the lack of information in the literature. However, I will use this theory, and its five central tenets as a method of interpreting and understanding the perceptions and experiences of the former Burglund

High School students who did and did not participate in the walkout of 1961 in McComb, Mississippi.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the first tenet of CRT is interest convergence, which is also known as material determinism. Interest convergence occurs when Whites offer support to Blacks or when Blacks experience favor in judicial decisions on racial justice only because Whites will personally benefit. Bell (2004) stated that the interests of “African Americans achieving racial equality would only be accommodated when their interests converged with the interests of Whites who are in policy-making positions” (p. 69).

According to Bell (2004), “even when the interest convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policymakers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites” (p. 69). The civil rights judicial decisions that favored Blacks resulted from the self-interest of elite Whites (Bell, 1980). That is, Whites’ self-interest in Blacks brought favorable judicial decisions, which were tied to race and resulted in changes in economic conditions for Whites (Driver, 2011). For example, the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown* that ruled segregation unconstitutional “was not motivated by a desire to redress black suffering under racial segregation; instead, the United States eliminated Jim Crow in order to improve its international image during the Cold War” (Driver, 2011, p. 151). The unconstitutional ruling of segregation in public schools denied the Soviet Union the power to continue to make the claim that the United States operated under immoral conditions as it related to Blacks (Driver, 2011). According to Feldman (2011), *Brown*

allowed the United States to make a “credible claim that Democracy was superior to Communism” (p. 2).

The second tenet of CRT is Whiteness as property – which maintains that property ownership has particular rights and privileges – that is, Whiteness has a property value in terms of rights (Bell, 2004). According to Harris (1993), this “property included human rights, liberties, powers, and immunities vital to human well-being, including: freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, freedom from bodily harm, and free and equal opportunities to use personal faculties” (p. 4). Harris continued:

Whiteness defined the legal status of a person as slave or free. White identity conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits and was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof. Whiteness- the right to white identity as embraced by the law-is property if by property one means all of a person’s legal rights. The law constructed whiteness as an objective fact. (p. 4)

Yosso (2006) defined the third tenet of CRT as voice/counter story, which reflects on the real-life racial experiences of “people of color” (p. 10) and inspires the oppressed to raise awareness of racial and social injustice. Instead of attempting to convince people that racism is real and does exist, the function of a counter story seeks to document the pervasiveness of racism through the voices of those victimized by it (Yosso, 2006). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), counter storytelling is “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 144).

Bell (2004) named critique of liberalism as the fourth tenet of CRT. Critique of liberalism addresses colorblindness in justice and racial issues, such as, when the government refuses to make decisions based on local prejudices, or when college admissions decisions are not determined, in part, on a person's race. According to Closson (2010) "critique of liberalism challenges three assumptions about race and the law: that the law is color-blind, that the law is neutral, and that change must be incremental so that it is palatable to those in power" (pp. 175-176). The tenet challenges the idea of colorblindness by addressing the refusal to acknowledge race and racial differences in society (Bell, 2004).

Bell (2001) described the fifth tenet of CRT as racial realism, also known as permanence of racism, which renders the belief that racism is enduring in society due to the history of racism within the culture. The effects of racism are real to people, and racial realism challenges the principle of racial equality among Blacks and Whites (Bell 1995b; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) stated that racial realism offers the view that "racial progress is sporadic and that people of color are doomed to experience only infrequent peaks followed by regressions" (p. 154). Bell (1995b) indicated that, in spite of efforts from the Civil Rights Movement and some resulting small triumphs, Blacks are still not equal to Whites and "racial equality is not a realistic goal" (p. 302). In order to successfully achieve racial equality, Blacks needed not to challenge the judicial system's unequal methods of handling racial inequality but to focus on challenging the principle of racial equality (Bell, 1995b).

## Sample

In this qualitative study, I used purposive sampling, which is used when participants are chosen because of the particular characteristics that they share (Patton, 1990). The characteristics shared by the participants in this study are that the participants all lived in McComb, Mississippi, they are all Black, and all attended Burglund High School during the time of the Burglund High School walkout. According to Creswell (2007), “It is essential that all participants had experienced the phenomenon being studied. Purposive sampling works well when all individuals studied are representative of people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 128).

Additionally, I personally, professionally, and socially knew several people who met the study criteria. Therefore, it was not difficult to locate participants. I also asked those people whom I interviewed to give referrals for other participants. Participants were initially contacted via letter, telephone, e-mail, or in-person about participating in the study. The data collection took place in the spring of 2015 at McComb High School in McComb, Mississippi. McComb High School is a school in the McComb School District and is in a central location in the city of McComb. I used a private room to complete the interview sessions. All of the participants were familiar with the school and had little or no difficulty locating it; however, a contact number was provided for directions. Participants that could not come to the original place assigned for the interview, were interviewed in the place of their choice and were interviewed via telephone.

## Procedures and Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, 10 participants were invited to their place of choice to be interviewed individually. Individual interviews were useful for getting the story behind a



participant's experience and for providing privacy and protection of confidentiality for the participants (Kvale, 1996). Moreover, I conducted individual face-to-face, semi-structured interviews because I wanted to focus on a single participant without interruption. Individual participant interviews were limited to approximately one to one and a half hours. Furthermore, study participants were provided the opportunity to share their lived experiences through open-ended questioning in a semi-structured interview without restraint from the researcher (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on the interview questions at will. The interview questions were designed to collect data that assisted in addressing the principal research questions of the study.

As the human instrument, I was the primary component in data collection and analysis using IPA. Lichtman (2012) defined this approach as IPA because it expresses "the detailed examination of the lived experience of individuals" (p. 260). Additionally, all interviews and notes were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim because it was critical that the researcher captured the context of the recorded interviews. Bodgan and Biklen (2007) stated, "The digital recorder misses the sights, smells, impressions, and extra remarks said before and after the interview" (p. 119). Participants' quotes gave the insight and cleared up any misconceptions that the reader may have.

Therefore, field notes were used to offer an account of observations and experiences that may have been missed during the audio recording throughout the interview process (Bodgen & Biklen, 2007). Bodgen and Biklen (2007) indicated that field notes are "a written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in a data collection session" (p. 119). In addition, "reflexivity is the process of

reflecting critically on the self, as researcher, the human as instrument” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). I kept field notes and observations as additional sources of data. Finally, I also used a reflexivity journal to record methodological and reflective entries, and as another source of data to support that collected through the interviews and field notes.

### Coding

In order to allow common and reoccurring themes to become visible and recognize meaning, I identified key phrases and sentences (and their variations) from the transcripts of the interviews related to the participants’ experiences. The method I used is the constant comparative method for data analysis. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparative method is a research design that breaks data down into discrete incidents or units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by coding them into categories.

A code is defined as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2009, p. 3). Bodgan and Biklen (2007) described coding as “certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, and subjects’ way of thinking standing out as data is read through” (p. 173). Following recommendations outlined by Bodgan and Biklen, I searched for regularities, patterns, and topics that the data will reveal. I wrote down words and phrases to represent these regularities, patterns, and topics in the data from my field notes and reflexive journal. The codes will originate from the actual statements of the study participants being specific to each interview.

I took a four-step approach to coding. In the first step of coding, I created groupings of codes by analyzing low code levels to determine the ways in which the stories of study participants relate to each other. Low levels were developed from reading

the data multiple times (Thomas, 2003). In the second step of coding, I analyzed the groupings to determine whether they are coherent. According to Saldana (2009), “when major categories are compared with each other and consolidated in various ways, you begin to transcend the ‘reality’ of your data and progress toward the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical” (p. 11). In the third step of coding, I analyzed high and middle levels, “more abstract generalizations that subsume the initial set of categories yet are grounded in them” (Creswell, 2005, p. 282). Finally, I returned to the original interview and recode them using the refined coding and categorization structure.

After the coding processes was complete, I then determined the themes. Themes and subthemes will surface as a result of the common repeating ideas expressed by the participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). CRT was used as a framework to interpret the data, and major themes were expressed as tenets of CRT.

#### Credibility and Trustworthiness

Credibility in research determines confidence in the truth of the finding, and trustworthiness is important to evaluating the worth of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of trustworthiness is to “support the argument that the inquiry’s findings are worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). For this study, to establish credibility and trustworthiness, I collected data from multiple sources such as interviews, field notes, and observations. In addition, per Creswell and Plano Clark (2008), information gathered from the interviews was checked for accuracy. Furthermore, I read the transcripts several times in order to forge a connection with the perceptions and experiences of the interviewees and to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants who did and did not participate in the walkout. Finally, to ensure credibility

and trustworthiness in this qualitative study, I used the strategies of member checking and peer briefing.

### *Member Checking*

I used member checking to check for accuracy of themes, interpretations, and conclusions based on interviews. The process of member checking uses participants for checking to ensure that data are accurate (Byrne, 2001). In member checking, I reiterated the interviewees' statements during the interview. The interviewee was allowed to review the transcribed information to ensure that the information recorded is what the interviewee provided (Bloor, 1997). Thus, it was important that my understanding of what was going on in the setting of the Burglund High School walkout corresponds with the recollections of the members of the study (Bloor, 1997).

### *Peer Debriefing*

Lincoln and Guba (1995) stated, "Peer debriefing is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). I used my committee chair to assist with peer debriefing. She is someone asked probing questions, question biases, and question methods but was not involved in the study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). Peer debriefing was also a guide to the researcher's own perception of the data analysis by keeping the researcher honest and using someone unrelated to the research to point out the implications of the research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

## Ethical Considerations

The inclusion of human participants in my research required approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi. After receiving approval from IRB (Appendix A), participants were contacted by a formal letter, by telephone, or by e-mail about the purpose of the study and about participating. Furthermore, I introduced or reacquainted myself with participants of the study, offering any personal background information and explaining the purpose of the study and the interview process. The potential participants were given two-weeks to respond; if there was no response in the two-week time allotted, I performed a follow-up contact. Participants were given the opportunity to read the information sheet and ask questions before the process of interviews began.

The next step in the process consisted of attaining informed consent, included each participant's agreement to participate to the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The informed consent form (Appendix B) addressed participants' right to privacy, which included confidentiality. As a part of the confidentiality plan to protect the identities of the participants, each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym in place of his or her name in all documents relating to the study. The research project and confidentiality plan were explained to each participant.

Participants were given the option to opt-out of participation at any time without consequence. Guidelines for opting-out were explained to the participant in the letter that requested their participation in the information sheet and the consent form which was reiterated verbally before participants were interviewed. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed, and participants were notified in advance that they would be

audio recorded. Participants was also provided with an opportunity to review statements and notations collected during their individual interviews. Final copies of recordings, transcripts, and interview notes were provided upon each participant's request.

### Summary

This study employed a qualitative approach using purposive sampling. Participants were chosen because they shared similar characteristics such as, race, and they attended Burglund High School, during the walkout. IPA is most appropriate for this study because it will allow me to focus on the participants' lived experiences and participants' perceptions regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration from the time of the walkout.

In addition, this study employed the five CRT tenets to better understand and interpret the data. These tenets are interest convergence, Whiteness as property, voice/counter story, critique of liberalism, and racial realism. I conducted face-to face and interviews via telephone semi-structured interviews and the data was coded for reoccurring themes. Credibility and trustworthiness were established through member checking, and peer debriefing, and multiple sources of data such as interviews, field notes, observations, and the use of a reflexive journal.

## CHAPTER IV – FINDINGS

### Introduction

Chapter IV contains a detailed description of the lived experiences of participants who did and did not participate in the Burglund High School (BHS) walkout. The study involved 10 participants who lived in McComb, Mississippi and shared their experiences of being students at BHS during the walkout. I conducted one interview with each participant at his or her convenience. While most of the interviews were face-to-face, some of the interviews took place via telephone because the participant lived outside of McComb. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to over an hour.

In the findings, a number of themes emerged from the data and aligned with the core tenets of CRT. One of the core tenets was whiteness as property, which was expressed by the participants as fear. Participants of the BHS walkout addressed their perceptions of segregation and fear due to White superiority. Another tenet was racial realism. Whites in McComb were able to use their Whiteness as an advantage. Because Whites did not experience negative consequences for their actions, they could use their "rights" to punish Blacks without fearing any repercussions. Because Whites were considered superior in McComb during the time of the walkout, Whites could assault, ridicule, or fire Blacks for committing any action they disapproved of. Blacks in McComb were afraid of the consequences that would come from speaking out against the inequality they felt at the time.

Before, during, and after the walkout, participants were of the belief that Blacks could not do anything without permission from Whites. According to all of the participants, there was a sense of superiority among the Whites in the town of McComb

and the Blacks knew it. Participants stated that Blacks were required to give Whites respect and recognize their superiority. It did not matter what the White person's age was nor did it matter the age of the Black person addressing them,

Racial Realism is a CRT tenet that reveals that racism is a persistent part of society. Inequality for Blacks was a part of the Black experience of racism in McComb. Blacks in McComb desired to have what Whites were entitled to regarding such things as education, facilities, and housing. Blacks were seeking equality; however, participants believed Whites did not care about the inequality of their actions. This apathy was evident in how Black students at BHS were treated; Black students were given what White students at Wilson High School (the White school in McComb) had either grown tired of or could no longer use.

Voice or counterstory was not a theme; however, it emerged as a CRT tenet as participants expressed their lived experiences of the BHS walkout and their perceptions of the Civil Rights Movement in their community. Some participants of the BHS walkout were members of SNCC and NAACP. At the time, the organizations' members were attempting to convince other Blacks to vote. These SNCC and NAACP members were often rejected by their neighbors because of intimidation from the police and Whites in the area. Blacks in the community would not allow SNCC or NAACP members in their homes due to fear of retaliation from White law enforcement, and their White employers. The participants reported facing isolation from their neighbors, because of fear of retaliation from Whites.



## Review of the Research Questions

The research questions for this study were designed to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of participants who did or did not participate in the BHS walkout. Participants shared their own perceptions and experiences related to the walkout. This phenomenological study was guided by the following central research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of former students who attended Burglund High School and were expelled for participating in the walkout on October 4, 1961 regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration?

2. What are the perceptions and experiences of former students who attended Burglund High School but did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout on October 4, 1961 regarding segregation, desegregation, and integration?

## Description of Participants

During the data collection process, I discovered that 7/10 of the participants participated in the walkout and 6/10 were members of SNCC. Table 1 provides participants' demographic data. To protect participant confidentiality, I replaced participants' given names with pseudonyms. The following is a brief profile of each participant.

Rhonda, who was involved in SNCC, was in the 10th grade during the BHS walkout. Rhonda was heavily involved in the civil rights movement in McComb. She had been arrested and expelled from BHS for her participation in prior civil rights-related events. The walkout occurred because of how she was treated by the school board. Rhonda participated in the walkout, despite being expelled from school. Because of her

heavy participation in the Civil Rights Movement, she was sent to reformatory school and was barred from returning to McComb by court mandate. Rhonda has never returned to reside in McComb.

Mary, who was involved in SNCC, was in the 10th grade when she participated in the BHS walkout. As a result of the walkout, she was arrested and expelled for one year. Mary continued her education at a school formed by community members in the local area. After her expulsion was completed, she returned to BHS and graduated in 1965. Mary later received a bachelor's degree in education and returned to McComb to become a teacher, where she is a current resident, and has taught for 35 years.

Alice was a 10th grade student who was involved in SNCC and participated in the BHS walkout. While she participated in the walkout, she did not complete the march to the courthouse, and therefore did not go to jail. However, she was expelled for one year for her participation in the walkout. She completed her sophomore year at Moore College in Jackson, Mississippi, and returned to BHS the following year she completed her junior and senior year and graduated in 1964. After her graduation, Alice left McComb and never returned as a resident.

Jordan, who was involved in SNCC, was in the 10th grade when she participated in the BHS walkout. She was arrested and expelled for one year. Like Alice, Jordan attended Moore College, but did not graduate there. She also chose not to return to BHS to graduate once her expulsion was complete, however, she did finish her schooling. Jordan later returned to McComb where she is a current resident.

Kenneth was in 9th grade when he participated in the BHS walkout. He was not involved in any civil rights activities prior to the walkout. Kenneth was arrested and

expelled for one year and he travelled to California, where his father resided, to complete his high school diploma before returning to McComb. Kenneth is a current resident of McComb. Unlike most of the participants, Kenneth believed the walkout was for voter's rights, not to protest the treatment of Rhonda.

Katie, who was involved in the NAACP, was in 7th grade during the BHS walkout. She did not participate in the walkout. Although her mother picked her up from school to prevent her from joining the walkout, the school believed she had participated, so she was expelled. She attended Moore College until her expulsion was complete, then returned to BHS the following year and completed her high school diploma. Katie is a current resident of McComb.

Tyler was in the 9th grade when she participated in the BHS walkout. Tyler had not been previously involved in any civil rights activities and had only participated in the walkout to “follow the crowd.” She was arrested and then expelled for one year. She went to Moore College until her expulsion was complete, then she returned to BHS the next year and graduated. Tyler left McComb shortly after graduation and has not returned.

Janice was in the 8th grade during the BHS walkout. She did not participate in the walkout, but left school early to go home. However, because she left the school early, she was still expelled. She attended Moore College until her expulsion was complete and then returned to BHS. After graduating from BHS, she left the city for a period of time; however, Janice is a current resident of McComb.

Kimberly, who was a member of SNCC, participated in the BHS walkout. Despite completing all activities of the walkout, she was not arrested. Because of her

participation, however, she was expelled for one year. Kimberly attended Moore College until her expulsion was complete. She graduated from BHS and is a current resident of McComb.

Anna was in the 9th grade during the BHS walkout. Despite her desire to participate, a teacher prevented her from leaving. Because the school was closed early that day, she simply went home. Anna completed her education at BHS but no longer resides in McComb.

After all participants were recruited, I discovered that none of them had been seniors or 12th graders at the time of the walkout. Because all participants were freshmen, sophomores, or juniors, none of them were faced with being denied a diploma due to expulsion.

Table 1

*Participants Demographic Data*

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	SNCC	NAACP	Grade	Participated in Walkout?
Mary	Female	Yes	Yes	10th	Yes
Alice	Female	Yes	No	10th	Yes
Jordan	Female	Yes	No	10th	Yes
Kenneth	Male	Yes	No	11th	Yes
Katie	Female	No	Yes	7th	No
Tyler	Female	No	No	9th	Yes
Janice	Female	No	No	8 <sup>th</sup>	No
Kimberly	Female	Yes	Yes	9th	Yes

Anna	Female	No	No	9 <sup>th</sup>	No
Rhonda	Female	Yes	Yes	10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes

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### Presentation of the Findings

After the interviews were conducted and then transcribed, I coded the data to determine the emergent themes. I categorized the participants' responses based on the following tenets of CRT: (a) whiteness as property, (b) racial realism, and (c) voice/counterstory. During the analyses, the subtheme of fear emerged from the tenet of whiteness as property; the subtheme of inequality emerged from the tenet of racial realism.

### Overview of Findings

The first theme that emerged is the CRT tenet whiteness as property and the subtheme fear emerged from whiteness as property. Whiteness as property refers to the White identity and its value in terms of human rights (Bell, 2004). The participants expressed their lived experiences with White superiority during the time of the walkout. Black people in McComb, Mississippi were afraid that Whites would use their superiority, which is conferred solely by being White, to put them in a number of adverse situations. As a punishment to Blacks, these situations included house bombings, intimidation and threats towards family members, arrests, and assaults.

The second theme is racial realism, meaning that racism endures in society due to the history of racism within the culture (Bell, 2001). The subtheme of inequality emerged from the larger theme of racial realism. The participants believed that racism was etched

into society and being provided unequal and inadequate second hand materials, books, and equipment from the White school was a part of that realization.

The participants lived experiences were reflected in voice/counterstory. The participants shared their involvement in civil rights groups. Some of the participants joined groups like SNCC and NAACP; through these groups they were able to share their voice with other Blacks in an attempt to get involved with the Civil Rights Movement in McComb.

### Whiteness as Property

According to Bell (2004), property ownership has particular rights and privileges, therefore, Whiteness has a property value in terms of rights. Furthermore, according to the participants the Whites in McComb displayed their superiority and Whiteness had its advantages.

Mary believed that Whites in McComb and in other places felt and acted as if they were superior to other Blacks. Blacks in McComb, including Mary, felt that they had to succumb to this same reasoning in order to stay safe. Alice stated, “we would have to say yes ma’am and no ma’am and no sir when they told us to “go tell yo mammy, or go get yo mammy.” Alice also stated, “White people have more privilege than we have now. We don’t have the same privilege that they have, you know. Whatever we do, we are punished to the end for it.” Mary indicated that, “we knew that they had the superiority in the town because, in all the towns White people had the superiority.” For Mary, it was obvious that White people were able to have this superiority simply because of the color of their skin.

Alice also felt that Whites held the belief that they were superior. Whites in McComb condescended to Blacks, even if the Black person was older than they were. Despite the disrespect received from Whites, Alice and other Blacks in McComb still expressed undeserved respect to Whites in order to avoid repercussions that could come from disrespecting White people. For Alice, Blacks felt obligated to express pleasantries to Whites even when it was uncomfortable to do so. Alice believed that Whites in McComb have authority because of their Whiteness.

Anna also felt that Whites in the community established a hierarchy based on race. Anna believed that Blacks could not refute or dispute the actions of Whites in McComb. According to Anna, the opinions and desires of Blacks in McComb were considered less important than their White counterparts simply because of the color of their skin. She stated that, “Whites thought they were better than us, looking down at us.”

Kenneth also shared his experiences regarding Whites and the privileges they had in McComb. Kenneth suggested if a White person spoke, then they got what they wanted. Kenneth, who had been arrested for participating in the walkout, was immediately released when a White neighbor spoke on his behalf and demanded he be released from jail. Kenneth believed that the only reason he was released from jail was because his neighbor was White. Kenneth commented,

A White guy that I talked to daily asked my momma where I was, and she told [him] I was down in their jail. So he called down there and told them to turn me loose. Back then if a White person speak for you, that’s all it took. He called up there and told them to turn me loose and they turned me loose.

It was obvious that Whites had advantages in McComb because of the color of their skin. Based on the responses from the participants, it was evident that there was a hierarchy that had developed in McComb. Whites in McComb were superior to Blacks simply because of the color of their skin, not for any other specific reason. Participants felt that Whites in McComb had to be given respect, as there were consequences that may have come from speaking out against Whites. While participants and other Blacks in McComb may not have agreed with the sentiment that White people were superior, they were not in a position to fight against the ideology that had been developed. Despite their misgivings about the situation, most Blacks in McComb were too afraid to challenge the status quo.

### *Fear*

In most of the interviews, the CRT tenet of whiteness as property emerged with the emotion of fear. There were several different types of fear that the participants reported. The most prominent types of fear that I discovered were the fear of job loss and the fear of violent repercussions.

### *Fear of Job Loss*

Mary informed me that her family prevented her from participating in the walkout due to the fear of potential consequences. She stated she did not know how her grandmother knew that the walkout was occurring or that she was participating. Yet, Mary's grandmother had heard about the walkout, and she came to the school to get Mary. The grandmother was afraid that if Mary participated in the walkout, she would lose her job. Mary stated, "My grandmother really didn't like it [the idea of Mary participating in the walkout] because she worked for years, and she thought she would



lose her job.” Mary did not specify where or for whom her grandmother worked. Mary did not participate in the walkout because she knew her grandmother would not approve of her involvement in any protests or civil rights activities.

Mary informed me her family affected her participation in the walkout for fear of other potential consequences. For example, Mary stated “During the walkout my grandmother pulled me out of the line when we went go marching down Summit Street.” Mary continued by stating Blacks lived in the fear that if you participated in fighting for Blacks rights, you were not in line with what the Whites wanted, “the police... could come into your home and kick your doors down.”

Another participant spoke about how the teachers at BHS were afraid of losing their jobs due to any potential involvement with the movement. Alice commented on encounters she had with her teachers at BHS after she returned from her expulsion. She stated that, “during that time there were maybe one or two [teachers] who would say something [about her expulsion], but I think it was because they was fearful of their own jobs.” The teachers, who knew of the potential consequences, did not talk about the events of the walkout in order to distance themselves from the situation. The principal and other teachers at BHS were afraid of losing their jobs, so they chose not to engage in any type of interaction with any of the students who participated in the walkout. The principal followed the direction of the White superintendent in charge of the school district in an effort to keep his job.

Rhonda also indicated there was a sense of fear among the community during the time of the walkout, noting that Blacks in McComb did not want to participate in civil rights activities for fear of losing their jobs and other consequences. Rhonda commented,

“It was difficult even getting people out to vote because there was fear and intimidation and people were afraid of losing their jobs, you know? If they became involved and how they would get hurt or killed.”

Overall, fear appeared in many stories; participants stated their family members and teachers were afraid of losing their jobs due to the events of the walkout. Blacks understood that during the time of segregation they had to adhere to the parameters that were set in place by the Jim Crow system and by Whites in McComb. Whites had the authority, simply due to the established hierarchy based on skin color, to strip Blacks in McComb of their jobs, their livelihood, and their careers if they or their children did something outside of one of the established parameters without any recourse from Blacks.

*Fear of Violent Repercussions.* Most of the participants expressed the violent repercussions that permeated McComb. Many participants felt like they had to constantly be on guard because Whites were not reprimanded for any of their actions, whether those actions were legal or otherwise. Participants shared the violent repercussions they experienced in McComb during the early 1960s. These violent repercussions included property damage, physical damage, and sexual assault.

Mary spoke of the fear that Blacks in McComb held related to the superiority of Whites in town. Mary stated,

We knew that they had the superiority in the town because in all the towns White people had the superiority. With the notion that all police were White during this time and we knew they would come and kick our doors down.

Kenneth expressed his concern for his mother's feelings of fear about his participation in the walkout.

My momma was afraid for me and did not want me participating in the walkout or anything else. A policeman told her that I was a high-strung, I was a high-strung nigger. He had slapped me over and over again and I decked him right in the middle of all of them police out there. They beat me up pretty bad; they broke my nose and stuff. My momma feared for my life because I would not bow down to the White police, so she sent me away to live with my father in California after they released me from jail.

Kenneth's parents were afraid for his wellbeing. Kenneth's aggressive encounters with the police in McComb gave them reason to believe that he would not survive after the walkout. It appeared that Kenneth had become a target due to his resistant behavior.

As noted in my field notes, I observed Tyler's tone of voice as she shared her experiences of riding the bus to school each day, passing the White school. Her voice began to crack during the interview as she expressed her fear. Tyler expressed her fears regarding Whites' treatment of Blacks. She shared the hostility she felt every time her school bus would pass the White school. She believed that Whites mistreated Blacks and instilled fear in the Black community.

Tyler indicated,

When we would get to the traffic light that was right there by the White school, my heart would beat fast and I would pray that the light would not stop the bus. If the bus would stop at the light, the White kids would throw rocks and eggs at us while we were on the bus. They would call us the N word and it was very stressful

and frightening. We felt like they were always wanting to hurt us. They always wanted to spit on you and abuse you so it's a tight rope all the time. That was during a time it was very spiteful. It was during a time when the Ku Klux Klan was very active when they was burning crosses in front of peoples' houses and burning down churches. They were hanging Black people and raping the children, you know girls. You know we couldn't walk at night in our neighborhood because then they would come through at night and they would see you and they would rape and kill you so you couldn't go out at night at all you know in the community.

Janice shared that she wanted to participate in the walkout, but because of her mother's fear of violent repercussions due to the voters' rights movement, she knew she could not participate. On the day of the walkout, Janice did not participate but she did leave the school early. Janice's parents were aware of all the violent events going on and made a conscious decision to protect their children from it. Janice's family had already seen some of the repercussions of the hostile environment in McComb. Her grandmother's house had been bombed prior to the events of the walkout in 1961. Janice stated,

I did not participate in the walkout because I was young and my mother feared for us so she made sure we were sheltered from a lot of the stuff that was going on at that time. They bombed my grandmother's house and the lot where our neighbors lived. We were home that summer, but every summer after that my mother sent us to Girl Scout camp.

Jordan indicated although she and some other students were involved with SNCC and were trained in nonviolence techniques, such as to ignore Whites who screamed at them and threatened them, they still felt afraid while participating in the walkout. Jordan stated,

I can tell you this one thing that stayed in my mind and it just never will leave.

There was, on the march to the courthouse steps, there was this little old White guy, and he was so frail you know, if you would just blow at him he'd fall over. He came with a monkey wrench in his hand and he said "I'll kill all of you god damn niggas," we had to just keep going and try to get around him as he kept coming at us. That was frightening, I will always remember that.

According to the participants, most of the Black community was hesitant to protest the state of civil rights in McComb because of the violent property destruction that had occurred in the years leading up to the walkout. Janice commented,

As far as Black involvement was concerned, the majority of the Black community was involved to the point where they use to sit up at night, the older adults, and guard each other's houses, like my grandma. They would sit on the porch, so that nobody would come through and bomb the houses. Because of our mother's protection, we were not allowed to walk anywhere or go downtown; however, we were concerned about other kids when they had to go someplace else.

Some of the parents of participants had their own experiences with Whites and were afraid for their children. For instance, I recorded in my field notes a conversation between myself and Kenneth regarding the murder of Johnny Lee. Johnny Lee was a resident in a neighboring area who had nine children and was killed prior to the walkout

because he was attempting to register to vote. Kenneth spoke about how shaken the Black community was, because all Johnny Lee wanted to do was vote. Kenneth stated that his mother often reminded him of what happened to Johnny Lee and she did not want that to happen to him. Despite knowing about Johnny Lee, Kenneth still participated in the walkout because he believed it was the right thing to do. Because of prior violence towards Blacks, participants' parents were afraid of repercussions.

Anna was prevented from participating in the walkout by a teacher, who informed her that her parents would not want her to be caught up in the repercussions of the walkout. While Anna's family was involved in the civil rights movement in McComb, they had been warned of the violent repercussions that may come from continued involvement. Anna spoke of the bombings her family had been involved with because of their participation in the Civil Rights Movement prior to the walkout. According to Anna,

I remember during the bombings going to church where the men had to stay outside by the children and the women, and the pastor would stay inside to guard the church because of the bombings that were done at other places. I remember my father being on top of the roof of our house when we'd get word that there was a chance there was gonna be some problems, up on the roof with his gun, a shotgun. We tried to sleep... it was frightening really.

Anna also stated her father was warned of these repercussions by NAACP members. Anna stated,

[NAACP members] would call my father and they would tell him "Tell your girls to be careful when they go to the meetings cause they writing down the license plate numbers, and they identified people who they know going to the meetings,

telling them to be careful. So we would go to the meetings and my father would just tell us, be careful, watch your back. It was really something.”

Katie stated her mother would not allow her to participate in any meetings or any part of the Civil Rights Movement because of fear of getting hurt. Katie commented, “Mama was part of the NAACP and she knew what was going on. She told us, “Whatever you do, you better not leave that school, then she came to get us, she said “no, y’all coming out of here.” Katie expressed that her mother heard what happened to Rhonda and that something was happening at the school. We were not allowed to participate in anything my mother felt would cause me harm. She came to the school to get us.

Kimberly agreed that Blacks were hesitant to participate in the walkout and in other civil rights activities because of the fear of the hostility and potential for violent repercussions from Whites all over the South. Kimberly stated,

... we were on the way to Pearl, Mississippi to see Rhonda after she was arrested and sent to jail. The Klansmen found out what we were doing and stopped our bus in Pearl and got on the bus dressed like you know, Klansmen, with guns and told us to turn the bus around before they kill us. We turned the bus around in Pearl.

The Klan was waiting on us.

In conclusion, Whites and Blacks in McComb had their respective perspectives of what being “White” meant in their respective societies. Both groups of people understood there were advantages to being White as revealed in the theme of whiteness as property. In conclusion, the emotion of fear permeated the participants’ responses. Although most of the participants were not personally afraid, their parents and loved ones feared the

negative impact they would experience from Whites as a result of student participation in the walkout. There was a fear of bodily harm to the participants or family members, or at the very least the loss of jobs and income.

### *Racial Realism*

Bell (2001) described racial realism, as permanence of racism, which renders the belief that racism is enduring in society due to the history of racism within the culture.

Because Whites in McComb believed wholeheartedly that they were superior to Blacks, they continued to enforce these ideas by treating Blacks unequally. According to the participants this inequality was manifested in education. The participants lived with the fact that segregation was a way of life. During the time of the walkout, it was understood by Blacks and Whites that it was an era where Whites dominated Blacks. Therefore, BHS and all other schools in McComb were under the authority of an all-White school board, who made all the academic decisions for Black and White students. Those academic decisions were systemically in favor of the White students. Therefore, the theme of inequality emerged from the CRT tenet racial realism. According to the participants, inequality was manifested in three spheres: academic, legal, and political.

*Inequality.* Alice explained that Whites controlled every aspect of the community and that she and other Blacks could not make decisions without the approval of Whites. Alice stated, “I grew up in that era where we couldn’t do anything, you know what I am saying, without the White man’s permission, that was just the way it was.” Alice believed that White people actively enforced and moderated the activities of Blacks in McComb.



Furthermore, Rhonda spoke of how she was treated unfairly by the all-White school board in McComb. For her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, she was expelled and sent to reformatory school. This expulsion had nothing to do with her academic career and should not have fallen under the jurisdiction of the school board. Rhonda explained that the principal of BHS informed her of the details of her expulsion.

She said, I was expelled from school and I asked him [the principal] why I was expelled, and he told me that he was told that I could not come back to school. And I said by whom? He told me that it was the school superintendent. And I asked him how are you going to allow this White man to tell you what to do with this Colored school?

In addition, according to Mary, Blacks were well aware of the hierarchy put in place by Whites. Mary stated, “We knew that they had the superiority in the town because in all towns, White people had the superiority.” Mary believed that Whites in town were superior because of the ways they established the hierarchy. For example, Whites determined that Blacks could only eat at certain restaurants. There were certain places that Whites barred Blacks from entering including stores, restaurants, and public places such as the White schools in McComb. Whites in McComb, however, could go where they pleased, without restriction.

Jordan believed that the segregation she and other Blacks in McComb faced was simply their way of life. Jordan stated,

So in terms of equality you knew that it wasn't so. During the segregation era you knew Blacks had their place and Blacks knew their place and the Whites were in their place you know. As far as we were concerned at that particular time,

segregation was all we knew, we knew we came in the world and it was segregated. We just knew the White folks had their thing and we had ours. It was a fact of life you know one of those things that's how it was then.

During the time of segregation, Blacks knew their expected place of inferiority and Whites' assumed place of superiority, as Whites had made the belief of Blacks assumed inferiority painfully clear to them. Segregation was all the students of BHS knew; they assumed it to be a way of life until they were introduced to the possibility of having equality and being free from segregation. The participants indicated that they were not satisfied with their unequal treatment as citizens of McComb.

*Unequal Access to Businesses.* Participants addressed the inequality that occurred in all aspects of their lives, not just in the school setting. All of the stores, offices, and restaurants in McComb were designed to not only separate Whites from Blacks, but also to make Blacks feel inferior. Anna recalled how Blacks and Whites were segregated and how Blacks had colored-only signs or entrances to keep them separated from the Whites. She recalled that the areas designated for Blacks only were never as nice or well-equipped as the places with White-only signs. Anna stated,

I remember one time my grandmother she had a doctor's appointment, she had to go around the back, it says, for colored." Anna also stated that "when you're living in the South, and what you're part of as a child, you just about know what you could and couldn't do.

Alice discussed how the inequality was also a systemic issue, as Blacks were not afforded the same treatment as Whites when it came to purchasing homes and other financial affairs, and noted these same actions have continued. Alice stated,

If we were going to make a loan or something like that to purchase a home or something like that we are put on the back burner. You know they still have just as much privilege they had during the 60s, as you know now. You go for a job, you know, 9 times out of 10, you will be the last to call. They still doing it. Slavery is still going on, it's just a different way.

Blacks were well aware of the expectations that Whites had for them regarding segregation. Blacks held a position of inferiority in the McComb community. Segregation was the way of life, and most of the Blacks in McComb knew and accepted their position. However, there were some positives in the Black community; the participants felt that they had teachers who cared about them and their well-being. There were Blacks who owned their own businesses, and everyone looked out for each other. Participants stated that some Blacks in McComb believed if they didn't cause any trouble, they would not be bothered; while violent activities like bombings had occurred, this violence typically only occurred to people who were active within the Civil Rights Movement in McComb. Some Blacks believed if they just stayed quiet and on their side of town, they would not be bothered.

*Inequality of Educational Resources.* Anna revealed that some of the educational materials they received were damaged to the point that students at BHS could no longer use them to complete assignments. Anna stated,

I just felt we were treated badly as far as our education and stuff, the materials we were given, books with pages torn out. I had one friend, we were talking about it, he was saying he had an assignment he had to do, but his book had pages missing,

so he had to call another classmate to see if he had those pages that were missing. So it was really bad, especially the material we had to work with.

Furthermore, Kenneth also explained his feelings regarding the lack of equality for Blacks during the era of the walkout. Kenneth spoke about the outdated textbooks that BHS always received. Kenneth indicated, “I was sitting up in class one day, and I got a textbook, and I looked in the textbook, and it was dated back to 1930. That book was that old. All I wanted was an equal opportunity.”

Kenneth continued by talking about the athletic equipment that was also secondhand. Kenneth stated,

What they were doing is when they (the white school) would get new stuff; we would get their old stuff. I was playing football and they would bring stuff up there. The coach would tell us when they put the boxes out there, go look through the boxes and find y’all some stuff. I was on the field running one night, and I went to limping, and there was a nail sticking in my feet. We were wearing White boys’ shoes and stuff, and it was old and used, and no good.

Katie also discussed how she was dissatisfied with the inequality they experienced at BHS regarding equipment and materials. Katie shared, “for Black children to get old books and read and learn out of them, we couldn’t get nothing except what they had left over from [the White school], such things as books, sewing machines, whatever else that we needed.”

Janice also believed that students at BHS were treated unequally because of the second hand and inadequate resources that they were given. These inadequate resources included typewriters and even athletic equipment.

We knew that we had hand-me-downs. We knew that even when it came to typing, everything that we had came from the White school, even down to our young men playing football, basketball or whatever, we had used stuff.

Alice spoke about equality and what it meant for her and Blacks in the Black community. Alice shared that, “We weren’t able to get new books, we had to get books from them you know, the White schools after they finished with it.” Alice continued by stating that “Whatever equipment that we had, musical... this and that and the other, but we were always a hand me down school.”

Despite the inequality they faced with inadequate educational, musical, and athletic resources, there was a consensus among the participants that they were not interested in attending school with Whites. Blacks wanted equality; they wanted a quality education, materials, books, and equipment equal to Whites but not necessarily with Whites. As I recorded a conversation in my field notes, one participant, Jordan, shared her lack of interest in going to the White school. She and other participants only wanted to be treated equally, but not necessarily to be in the same building with White students and teachers. Mary stated, “I was not interested in going to school that White school with them White folks, I liked my school with my Black teachers that cared about me and taught me something.”

In conclusion of racial realism, the participants believed that racism and segregation was all that they knew and it was a part of their way of life. Participants expressed their satisfaction with their teachers. Mary stated, “I enjoyed the Black school and my teachers. I had no kind of inkling to integrate. We wanted equal, but it could be

separate for me, I was happy.” Participants expressed their disinterest in integrating and being with Whites. Kenneth stated,

We can’t have it one way and then have it the other. You’ve got to have it for the good of all. I’d say I would have had it go on. I’m just saying, for myself, [segregation] could’ve stayed the same, you know. Our kids wouldn’t be as bad as they are now, I think.

The participants expressed that they wanted equality; they wanted to have what the White students had to function as a school. That is, they did not want to receive old outdated materials, books, and equipment from the White schools.

#### *Voice/Counterstory*

Voice/counterstory reflects on the real-life racial experiences of people of color and inspires the oppressed to raise awareness of racial and social injustice (Yosso, 2006). The study will allow for study of the system, because racism is a systemic issue (McCoy, 2015). The subtheme of civil rights involvement emerged from the CRT tenet of voice/counterstory. While some Blacks in McComb were content to stay on their side of town and not fight for equality, other Blacks felt they were racially oppressed and sought to eradicate the social injustice in their community.

*Civil Rights Involvement.* Many BHS students felt the injustices in the city of McComb and many of them participated in SNCC to offer their contribution to the Civil Rights Movement. Other participants had participated in the Civil Rights Movement prior to the BHS walkout. Jordan stated that she recalled her involvement with the local SNCC chapter that formed in town. According to Jordan,

I was going to SNCC meetings, they would have little meetings around town and they were kind of like bringing subjects up and talking about things that we was subjected to and we knew it was wrong and you knew some of the treatment in the South at that time was very very bad.

Jordan also recalled the unfair treatment of their classmate Rhonda. Because of her participation in the Civil Rights Movement in McComb, Rhonda was not allowed to return to school. Jordan stated that the walkout was directly related to the unequal treatment of Rhonda. According to Jordan,

I think Rhonda was about 16 and so that's when they start to doing the demonstrations so she sat she went and sat at the luncheon counter... she was arrested so when it got back to school well they kicked her out of school. She could not come back to school ever, never never come back. So we organized to protest her being kicked out of school. That's what the walkout that I was in was about, her being expelled from school indefinitely. We were marching to the courthouse and protesting on her behalf of being...you know expelled from school.

The students of BHS could not understand why their classmate was kicked out of school and told she could never return. Turning to their principal for answers and not being able to get any answers added to the agitation of the injustices that they were already experiencing with the voting rights movement that had come to McComb.

Rhonda spoke of her heavy involvement with both the NAACP and SNCC. She had participated in several activities, including sit-ins and rallies for both organizations in an attempt to protest for voters' rights for Blacks in McComb. Rhonda indicated, "We

canvassed the neighborhood, trying to get people to come in and go down to register to vote.”

Rhonda was becoming a part of a greater movement in McComb. Her intensive involvement in the movement of trying to get residents of McComb to register to vote, and trying to integrate McComb businesses appeared to affect her throughout her personal life, spilling over into her education. It appeared that her political involvement of trying to integrate McComb businesses put her within the sight of Whites who wanted her removed from the area. She was arrested and expelled for her actions.

During this time, the BHS students felt that Rhonda was served an injustice when she was arrested and expelled from school because she participated in a sit-in prior to the events of the walkout. This was the catalyst for the walkout, as other students wanted to protest her unfair treatment. Mary stated, “When our classmate was arrested and not allowed back in school, and the Principal could not tell us why, we all walked out.”

Despite her being expelled from the school, Rhonda informed me she still went to the assembly to participate in the walkout. Rhonda explained how the students who participated in the walkout marched downtown and how they made it clear they were marching in protest by singing and chanting. Rhonda stated, “after the assembly the students began to walkout with me and we walked from Burglund School to the Masonic temple.”

In conclusion, students shared their voice/counterstory about being active in SNCC or NAACP in McComb. As recorded in my field notes, various participants spoke about their personal involvement which included attempting to convince their neighbors and community members to register to vote. These participants were able to express their



desire to see change in their city by participating in sit-ins, marches, and walkouts, including the BHS walkout in 1961. While the walkout was the first time some had actively protested, due to the unfair treatment of Rhonda, others had also participated in marches, rallies, sit-ins, or other walkouts that eventually helped to bring change to McComb.

### Summary

Participants who did and did not participate in the BHS walkout discussed their experiences regarding the events of the walkout and their perceptions of segregation, desegregation, and integration. During the interviews, the themes that emerged from the data were whiteness as property, racial realism, and voice/counterstory. The related subthemes were fear, inequality, and civil rights involvement.

Fear emerged from the CRT tenet of whiteness as property. Participants stated that Blacks in McComb were afraid of Whites due to their superiority over them. This superiority was not just individualized; it also affected Blacks' lives due to White authority in political, legislative, educational, and financial areas. Participants stated they were afraid of what Whites would do as a result of Blacks being noncompliant. Because Whites owned most of the businesses in McComb, participants stated some Blacks were afraid to be involved in civil rights activities because they feared they would lose their jobs if they protested against the actions of Whites.

A number of the participants expressed fear of violent repercussions as a result of participating in the walkout. As recorded in my field notes, Janice stated that Whites in McComb had targeted local members of the Black community and had threatened to bomb and murder Blacks. Some of the participants were informed by their parents they

could not participate in what Whites considered militant activity such as the BHS walkout, sit-ins, marches, or voter registration due to their fear of the potential fallout from their participation.

The theme of inequality emerged from the CRT tenet of racial realism. Racism is a reality. Racism was realized by Blacks in McComb through segregation. Participants stated that because Whites were the superior group in McComb, Blacks were treated unfairly. Not only could Blacks be turned away from stores, restaurants, and other locations in McComb that were designated as "Whites Only," they were also hindered from an institutional perspective; Blacks were unable to get loans to purchase houses or other businesses because the banks were also owned by Whites, which allowed Whites to maintain control.

This inequality was also evident at BHS. Participants indicated that they routinely received old, outdated, broken, or inadequate materials, such as used athletic equipment, typewriters, sewing machines, and books that had been previously used by White students. While participants expressed some satisfaction with their, teachers, and BHS in general, they also desired equality in their education. Kenneth stated, "I didn't have any problems with my school, I liked my teachers. We did not want to go to school with those White people, we just wanted to be treated equally."

Many of the participants shared their voice/counterstory by being involved with a number of civil rights groups in McComb. This included organizations like SNCC and NAACP which were designed to promote equality for Blacks by protesting unequal treatment and institutionalized racism. Some of the participants had been involved with

these organizations prior to the BHS walkout, while others had no involvement with the Civil Rights Movement until after the walkout.

## CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of 10 former students who did and did not participate in the walkout of Burglund High School on October 4, 1961. Chapter V consists of a discussion and summary related to the research findings. The findings of the data were coded according to the three tenets of CRT that emerged from the participants' interview responses: whiteness as property, racial realism, and voice/counterstory. There was insufficient evidence to support the remaining two tenets, interest convergence and critique of liberalism. The chapter concludes with my reflections on the study.

During the time of the BHS walkout, the “separate but equal” doctrine was in effect. According to Butchart (2007) the doctrine stated that separate facilities based on race would be legally accepted if the facilities were of equal standard. Blacks were certainly separated from Whites in facilities, but they were not treated with equal standards during segregation (Schiller, 2008). For example, facilities for Blacks such as schools were inadequate, run down, and in need of repairs. According to Sparkman (2011), the “separate but equal” law was heavily enforced by Mississippi’s legal system, which made it difficult for civil rights organizations to assist with Blacks receiving equality both in and out of school. However, some students of BHS, particularly Rhonda and some of her classmates wanted to be a part of the movement to remove “separate but equal” from McComb facilities so that Blacks could experience equality. Rhonda and her BHS classmates participated in a sit-in at the Woolworths in McComb in 1961, and they were subsequently arrested and jailed. Eventually students were released from jail to their

parents, but in addition to being jailed they were expelled from school. However, Rhonda was not released, and in addition to being expelled from school she was sentenced to reformatory school. In order to analyze this entire system of segregation, I employed CRT to explore the lived experiences of students that did and did not participate in BHS walkout of 1961.

### Summary of the Study by Research Question

The purpose of this section is to discuss the research findings.

#### *Discussion Related to Research Question One*

The following broad themes emerged as perceptions of participants who attended BHS, but did not participate in the Burglund High School walkout. The participants who did not walk out on October 4, 1961 were hesitant to share information during the interview. The participants did not feel as though they had anything to contribute to the interview process regarding the walkout because they did not walk out. However, participant responses were very informative regarding the events that surrounded the walkout. The participants who did not participate in the walkout understood why their parents did not want them to participate in anything they thought would bring harm to them or their families. They knew that Whites controlled the legal system and they feared that their children could get trapped in it. However, they felt regret for not being a part of the movement, now that the far-reaching impact can be witnessed today. Participants who did not participate in the walkout appeared to have great remorse and felt some shame because they did not participate.

### *Discussion Related to Research Question Two*

According to the data, there were three main reasons why participants walked out. Participants either walked out because they were protesting the unfair treatment of their classmate, Rhonda, because of the voting rights movement, or following the crowd. There were also some participants who walked out because they were only following the crowd, they did not know why they were walking out.

#### Application of the Critical Race Theory to the Theoretical Framework

The interpretation of the findings and recommendations are discussed below using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory. The findings are categorized according to recurrent and common themes, which emerged throughout the study. During the study, the participant responses were reviewed and analyzed through the tenets of CRT. The tenet whiteness as property emerged and as a subtheme, fear, including fear of loss of jobs and fear of violent repercussions. The participants expressed feelings of inequality, which I associated with the tenet racial realism and the subthemes of inequality, unequal access to businesses, and inequality of educational resources. In conclusion, the participants were able to share their voice and counterstory by their active involvement in civil rights groups in McComb.

While pertinent information was discovered in the participant's responses that related to whiteness as property, racial realism, and voice/counterstory, none of the participants' responses evidenced signs of critique of liberalism or interest convergence. The participants' responses regarding the walkout and events of the Civil Rights Movement directly related to the CRT tenet of voice/counterstory.

### *Whiteness as Property*

The tenet whiteness as property occurs when property ownership has particular privileges (Bell, 2004). Participant responses revealed Blacks in McComb were well aware of the advantages Whites had simply because of the color of their skin; the asset of being White gave them power that Blacks in McComb did not have. The challenges of inequality Blacks experienced were a common occurrence. Participants said that their parents feared the repercussions of what would happen if the students participated in the walkout. Today's Black students still live in a culture of fear.

### *Racial Realism*

Racial realism is described as permanence of racism, which renders the belief that racism is enduring in society due to the history of racism within the culture (Bell, 2004). According to the participants, racism was an intrinsic part of their society and it was all they knew. In Burglund High School, racial realism existed and the students were well aware of racism and the inequality they experienced in their school. Participants indicated that they accepted that racism came with segregation, and they were content with having their own teachers and school. Participants stated that they were also content with having their lives on their own side of town and were not interested in integrating with the Whites.

Several of the participants spoke about the possibility of desegregation and integration and stated that they were against it. They all had similar sentiments that desegregation and integration, was the downfall of Black students receiving a quality education compared to when they were in their own Black schools being taught by their own Black teachers. According to Bolton (2009) when the state of Mississippi was to

desegregate, a lot of its schools did not. It took 16 years for desegregation and later integration to happen. According to the research, when it did happen, the fears participants had of diminished quality of education for Black students being educated were validated. Bolton (2000) indicated, that the new move toward integration was on the terms of Whites. Black teachers lost their jobs and were replaced by White teachers and Blacks lost control over their children's education. Although participants expressed how they understood their plight of segregation and their acceptance of it because that was all that they knew, they were in disagreement in the treatment of their classmate and they expressed it by walking out of school.

#### *Voice/Counterstory*

According to Yosso (2006), voice/counterstory happens when people of color can reflect on the real-life racial experiences of the oppressed to raise awareness of racial and social injustice to ensure a better quality of life that includes equality to the next generation. Participants of this study expressed their voice and counterstory by being involved with civil rights groups, such as NAACP and SNCC. Respondents were involved in the non-violent protests by participating in sit-ins and protesting for voters' rights. Despite their involvement in the walkout, some of the participants were confused regarding the motives behind the 1961 walkout. Some of the participants thought that the walkout was about equality and the right to vote. Other participants knew that the walkout was in reaction to the incarceration and injustice rendered towards their classmate, Rhonda. Regardless of the reason, students who participated in the walkout were able to share their voice and counterstory through their interview responses.



Integration and desegregation was not a prominent part of the discussion because desegregation and integration did not happen until 10 years later.

### Conclusions

The research questions regarding perceptions and experiences of those who did and did not participate in the walkout allowed me to explore the participants lived experiences of the walkout. After investigating the phenomenon of the Burglund High School walkout of 1961, the findings from this qualitative study add to the research information regarding participants' perceptions and lived experiences of the walkout. The results contribute to the body of research on the Civil Rights Movement and educational leadership. There were three themes that emerged from this study using CRT. The first was whiteness as property. Whites in McComb were superior to Blacks solely because of the color of their skin. Because of this, Whites in McComb had the ability to negatively impact the lives of Blacks with fear of repercussions; family members of the participants were afraid of the consequences that would occur if students participated in the walkout or any other activities of the Civil Rights Movement. The study exposed many situations and circumstances where White superiority was evident to Blacks, such as students being jailed and expelled from school for participating in sit-ins. Teachers and leaders must acknowledge that even in today's time that Whiteness has its advantages in society. However, teachers and leaders can assist with Black students' awareness of this fact, but also be aware that they do not have to be content or give in. Teachers and leaders can help Black students realize their own self-worth and how to function and co-exist in a White dominated society.

The second theme that emerged using CRT was racial realism. Because Whites in McComb believed they were superior to Blacks, they continued to enforce these ideas by treating Blacks unequally. Participants understood that segregation and racism were just ways of life. Many responses from the participants revealed that racism and segregation was just the way things were. This thought pattern or attitude was evident for all participants in this study, regardless of their level of participation in the BHS walkout.

#### Implications for Practice

After investigating the phenomenon of the Burglund High School walkout of 1961, the findings from this qualitative study add to the research information regarding participants' perceptions and lived experiences of the walkout. The results also add to the body of research on the Civil Rights Movement and educational leadership. The study will inform teachers and leaders of the rich history of McComb regarding segregation during the time of the walkout. The information will assist teachers and leaders to understand and identify with the students they serve.

This study is important because it will influence teachers' and leaders' awareness of the history in McComb, MS to understand the students' they serve. The implications of this study is that students, teachers and leaders can learn from the information provided by the participants who did and did not participate in the BHS walkout of 1961 in McComb, Mississippi. It will allow them to understand the students' culture and background, which will in turn assist current students in reaching their full academic potential. Understanding students' culture will allow teachers and leaders to be sensitive to and aware of students' environment in which they teach. The sensitivity and awareness gained by teachers and educational leaders will improve how teachers teach Black

students and consequently the drop-out rate of Black students will decrease, which will eventually impact student achievement by increasing the number of students graduating from McComb high schools.

Teachers today can use the gained information from the walkout to assist students with understanding the fear the BHS students experienced and comparing it to students' fears of today. Teachers can use the information from the walkout to show how the BHS students overcame fear and fought back. Guidance from teachers and leaders will assist students in attaining information about the walkout which would assist them with facing their own fears by building their confidence and making them aware that they have the ability to make change.

Although racism is systemic, today's students can think about how much progress has been made and they will not be content with continuing racism. Information from the participants lived experience of the walkout will help students to remember that they should continue with the mindset that racism was a part of society then and remains a part of society now. However, 55 years later, what the participants accomplished with the walkout influenced change in McComb, and students today must keep pushing forward to keep change happening.

Teachers and leaders can gain insight from the participant's perspective of their lived experiences of the BHS walkout of 1961. They can use the information from the participants' voice/counterstory to reach students by connecting the events of the BHS walkout to students' experiences in schools today. Teachers and leaders need the information to translate the counterstories to the students to provide real world connections and provide hope.

Furthermore, teachers and leaders can use the information from the perspective of participants that did not participate in the BHS walkout to relate to students. Although they did not have a direct impact on the walkout they could still assist in impacting change. Students can be enlightened about the idea that there is always a way they can contribute to change and have an influence on society. Teachers and leaders can use the results of the study to build Black students' confidence and make personal connections to help relate to their students.

Teachers and leaders can use the information gained from the perspective of the BHS participants who participated in the walkout as a guide to influence Black students to become societal leaders. Teachers and leaders can provide information to the students connecting the relevancy of current students' experience with inequality or racism with the reasons BHS students walked out. Some of the students walked out for reasons other than Rhonda being jailed. Some of the students did not know why they were walking out; they were only following the crowd. Today's Black student can connect this information to today's leadership to stand and fight for something, but she or he should know what she or he is fighting for, and be a leader, not a follower.

After internalizing the information shared from the perspective of the participants that did and did not participate in the BHS walkout, teachers and leaders will be charged with connecting past racial issues to students' current experiences with racism and inequality in the public school system. Teacher and leaders can make the information they have gained from the study relevant to Black students by assisting them in comparing their present experiences with racism and inequality with the experiences of the students of BHS in 1961. Teachers and leaders will assist with building students'

confidence so that students will be able to continue to move forth in education with a positive impact from the information gained.

### Limitations

There are a number of implications of this study. Some of the limitations of this study included the small demographic base of students at BHS during the time of the 1961 walkout. Unfortunately, I was unable to recruit any participants who were seniors during the time of the walkout. Most of the seniors who participated in the walkout were expelled and were not able to graduate from BHS. Interviewing them to get their perceptions of the education system and how their academic careers were disrupted by this event are worthy of investigation.

It would also serve the body of research well to examine the perceptions of White students in McComb during the time of the walkout. Many participants stated that they had to express pleasantries to Whites, even if the Whites were younger than them. Exploring the concept of White superiority from the perspective of those in power may offer a new viewpoint from which to analyze this phenomenon.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Viewing the Civil Rights Movement from the perspective of teachers and parents in McComb who were facing difficult challenges with racism and inequality during the era of the 1961 walkout warrants further investigation; however, due to the current age of these individuals, it would probably be difficult to recruit participants. Some participants stated that teachers at BHS were afraid of the consequences of any direct involvement with students who walked out. Participants stated their parents and other family members were also frightened of the consequences of the walkout.

This research provides information about experiences of racism and inequality from the participants in McComb during the BHS walkout of 1961. The information from this research can be expanded for further research to assist with race relations and the dropout rate in the McComb schools. It is my hope that the lived experience of the participants will bring new awareness of inequality and racism to Black students, teachers, and leaders in McComb today. If current students, teachers, and leaders understood and appreciated the struggle and challenges that BHS students endured in the 1960s to bring equality to the educational system in McComb, then perhaps students would value their education more and the dropout rate could potentially be lowered.

#### Recommendations for Practice

I recommend that students of McComb become aware of the history of the inequality and racism that existed in education in the area in which they live. Students should be required to participate in a provided course in African American studies in the public school system. I also suggest that a mentorship program be developed for students that express signs of a lack of racial knowledge, such as, students considering that racism is a natural part of society, or that there is superiority in being White. The mentorship program should allow for shared information and collaboration about students' feelings of racism and inequality and how to overcome those feelings by mentors becoming an active successful member of the student's educational process.

Furthermore, I recommend that teachers be trained in race relations, and trained in African American studies provided for students on the history of McComb. Teachers lack sensitivity with Black students on such issues as discipline. According to Gomez (2015) Black students are suspended at a higher rate than students of other races. If students are

being suspended from school excessively and they are missing valuable instructional hours, they will not pass, which will contribute to the dropout rate. Gomez indicates that:

In a study of the Equity Project at Indiana University, researchers found that white students were more frequently disciplined for objective offenses like smoking, vandalism, leaving without permission, and obscene language. On the other hand, black students were more likely to be disciplined for more subjective reasons, such as disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering (2015).

I also recommend that educational leaders participate in the race-related trainings with the teachers so that they may assist in guiding teacher's racial sensitivity towards Black students regarding student's individual culture and background in McComb. Dialogue between teachers, students, and parents on racial sensitivity should be initiated through the leadership in public schools to eventually diminish the drop-out rate for Blacks. Additionally, I suggest that the research be expanded to assist with other areas of inequality and discrimination, such as, racism with other races, and homosexuality.

### Summary

Blacks were denied the privilege to be educated properly and Whites were determined not to allow it. However, with much tenacity Blacks tore down barriers that Whites placed before them. Blacks began to take the initiative to educate their own children in their own homes and churches, which gained much opposition from Whites.

Eventually, Blacks were permitted to be educated, but only on the terms of Whites, and they had to be educated separately. The initial segregation laws began with *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), and education fell under the "separate but equal" law, or what was also known as Jim Crow. Education was anything but equal for Blacks. Blacks began

to fight for equality during the 1950s and through *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), segregation in schools became unlawful and schools were ordered to desegregate. The challenge of desegregation in Mississippi was met with much opposition. Nevertheless, schools in Mississippi eventually became desegregated which brought much tension between Blacks and Whites.

Therefore, due to attempts to challenge the known way of life that included segregation, McComb “gained the reputation of being the bombing capital of the world” (Dittmer, 1995, p. 268). The youth in the area, including the students of Burglund High School became involved in organizations such as SNCC, and the NAACP (Umoja, 2011). Rhonda and many others were arrested in 1961 due to their participation in civil rights activities (Dittmer, 1995). It was evident in the interviews with the participants that the education of Black students in McComb suffered because of the “separate but equal” law (Irons, 2003). The students who attended the all-Black BHS did not view the possibility of integration as a positive experience (Dittmer, 1995).

In protest of the perceived inequality experienced by Rhonda and other students who attended BHS, over 100 students walked out of BHS On October 4, 1961 (Burglund High, n.d.). While not all students participated in the walkout, it was evident through all participants’ responses that Blacks in McComb during the time of the walkout were oppressed and they believed they were treated unequally in comparison to their White counterparts. They felt they were not educated properly due to a lack of resources.

Hopefully, this study can be used to address problems of today and make institutional changes such as inequalities in the school system with high suspension rates of Blacks, high numbers of Blacks expelled and placed in special education programs to



mitigate changes that students face today similarly to those students faced in the past. Results of this study could be used to bring awareness to students and staff of McComb High School, where the school has struggled with a less than 50% graduation rate for the last seven years. Information from this study can be shared with students and staff members to assist with the knowledge of the past to assist with managing education for the future and decreasing the dropout rate by impacting teacher and leader's sensitivity to Black culture.

## APPENDIX A - IRB Approval Letter



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/irb](http://www.usm.edu/irb)

### NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15063001  
PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions of Segregation, Desegregation, and Integration from Burglund High School Students in McComb, Mississippi  
PROJECT TYPE: New Project  
RESEARCHER(S): Cynthia Lamkin  
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology  
DEPARTMENT: Education Leadership and School Counseling  
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A  
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval  
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 07/08/2015 to 07/07/2016

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**  
Institutional Review Board

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