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The Impact of Segregation and Desegregation Policies on Academic Achievement of Black Students in Delaware Public Schools

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The Impact of Segregation and Desegregation Policies on Academic Achievement of Black Students

in Delaware Public Schools

by

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Abstract:

Through a mixed-methods research study that incorporates some data analysis and interviews, I explore the impacts of segregation and desegregation policies on the educational outcomes and experiences of Black students in Delaware Public Schools. I aim to discover differences in achievement and experiences between students that went to Delaware Public Schools during federally-enforced desegregation and the more current era of resegregation of schools. My research questions revolve around the impacts desegregation policy has on educational outcomes, the impact of interracial relationships within schools and out-of-school activities, and cultural capital transfer and acquisition and its impact on educational outcomes. Data analysis reveals a gap between proficiency in both math and ELA amongst majority White and majority Black schools. Semi-structured interviews find 5 major themes. Findings include that cultural capital transfer does happen through peer relationships and that students use this acquisition of cultural capital to aid them in the classroom. My findings also reveal the stark difference between integration and desegregation and the immense impact that Black teachers can have on the experiences of Black students in high school.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Everyday specific people face obstacles that are placed in their way by no doing of their own and out of their control. These obstacles, set in front of individuals by fate or (bad) luck, put these individuals behind in the race of life and success. Education is an area where we can see this clearly, especially when looking at educational outcomes of Black versus White students. A number of studies show that Black students perform worse than White students in the classroom (Spector 2019). This achievement gap can also be amplified when schools are isolated by race (Stancil 2018). Although we can look back through history and note major policy changes that made an effort to eliminate this gap, we still have these gaps in schools today. Delaware, my home state, has a unique history with segregation and desegregation policies that makes the state stand out. *Gilbert vs. Benton,* a school segregation court case out of Delaware became one of the 5 cases to make up the famous *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court case (Supreme Court of The United States 2020). From there, not much change was seen until *Evans vs. Buchanan* in 1956 that made it all the way to the Supreme Court (Niemeyer 2014). This case resulted in the federal government implementing and overseeing a desegregation plan in the state. This was quite unique. Most states were not supervised or encouraged to desegregate their schools after it was deemed unconstitutional in *Brown vs. Board*. This resulted in most states remaining segregated for years following the case. This was not Delaware's history. Delaware later became one of the top two states for most integrated schools and was granted unitary status by the federal government in 1995. This may sound like a victory, but without the direct

supervision of the federal government, Delaware public schools are quickly trending back to segregation.

Scholars often turn to the sociological theory of cultural capital as a lens to understand how achievement gaps are produced and reproduced in society. Cultural capital is a theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu that refers to the resources and competencies of dominant social groups which are transmitted primarily within the family (Bourdieu 1977, 1986). This concept was created to "explain the class-based differences in academic achievement… observed while studying the educational system" (Richards 2-3, 2019). Lareau, another sociologist that focuses on cultural capital, specifically looks at how parenting styles can teach cultural capital and lead to the perpetuation of inequities within schools (Lareau 2003). Given this, I will use cultural capital as a theoretical lens to examine possible reasons for changes in academic achievement for Black students in Delaware. This is because I expect students who went to school during the desegregation period to be exposed to more White majority spaces (or simply more diverse, with White people), and as a result gaining more of the dominant cultural capital. I believe this increase in dominant cultural capital will lead to higher achievement for those students.

The history is recorded, but the effects of this history on educational outcomes for Black students are absent from research. I aim to fill this gap with the interviews I do and data analysis I conduct. I also include an activist aspect in my research by proposing possible solutions to academic achievement gaps among Black students through my research in Delaware. I'm looking specifically to policy change over time, cultural capital, available resources, school demographics, and some others to be these possible areas for solutions. With Delaware's unique

history, I feel strongly that my research in this state could serve as a case study to influence policy and solutions to educational gaps in other states and across the country.

In this thesis, I will analyze the segregation, integration, and resegregation of Delaware public schools due to changing policies and how these changes affect the educational outcomes for Black students. I will also analyze what helps Black students achieve in the face of resegregation, focusing specifically on dominant cultural capital and how it can be gained from White peers in integrated classrooms and out-of-school activities.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1: General Problem with Segregation

Education is valued by many. Especially in America, all of our childhood, and typically, much of our young adult life is dedicated to the pursuit of education. From kindergarten until college, we are taught to work hard and focus on our education because it will help us get the life we want in the future (ex. a good job and good money). But there are many factors that go into our educational achievement that begin well before we step into the classroom. Some of those factors are race and neighborhood. In America, race has separated and differentiated groups of people since its beginnings. Today, these effects still linger in many particular areas including education.

The *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court case is the most well-known education court case in American history. Before 1954, schools were segregated by race; *separate but equal*. Five court cases went to the Supreme Court together that ultimately made up the famous *Brown vs. Board* case. *Brown vs. Board* ruled that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional and that all schools should integrate.

Although this sounds like a huge victory, there was still a long way to go. Following *Brown vs. Board*, this decision that schools could not be segregated was not implemented well, allowing states to act on the decision however they wanted with no accountability. This led to years of schools remaining segregated. In many areas, especially historically southern and border states, these segregated schools have remained segregated still with little to no change.

One main reason for the segregation of schools is the segregation of neighborhoods. Nationwide, the public school system is really a neighborhood school system, districting the schools in such a way that children living in the same neighborhoods go to the same schools for geographic ease. People of color have been historically marginalized in America resulting in a myriad of inequities, including housing. From the moment African Americans could purchase houses, there were deeds and housing contracts which outlawed the sale of specific homes to Black families. This has led to Black families beginning behind the curve in wealth building (Rothstein 2017). Economics continues to present challenges for African Americans when taking the existence of the suburbs into consideration. Homes in the suburbs are specifically reserved for middle-class citizens, as reflected by their prices. Because Black people are disproportionately poor, this middle-class that had the resources to move out into the suburbs was mostly White families. This is where the term White flight comes from (Ryan 2010).

One major motivation for White flight was the integration of schools. White citizens across the country took to massive resistance, rationalizing this with the cover-up title of 'states rights', but really not wanting segregation because they did not want their children to go to school with Black children (Daugherity 50, 2008). Actions of massive resistance included White flight, parents taking their children to private schools, and even unconventional solutions such as temporary guardianships: parents sending their children to live with a relative/friend in a neighborhood with a majority White school (Pratt 50, 1993).

To add, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) only subsidized mortgages that perpetuated the segregated demographics of neighborhoods along with banks, who did not subsidize loans to families seeking to purchase homes in integrated areas (Ryan 2010).

Today, blatant forms of segregating neighborhoods are outlawed, but realtors find a way around it. Instead of discussing the racial demographics of a neighborhood, realtors get around this by talking about the neighborhood *school demographics* (Siegel-Hawley 43, 2016). In addition to realtors, a lot of this information is spread by word of mouth now as well. Families typically categorize neighborhoods 'good' or 'bad', when they are really talking about if a neighborhood is a White neighborhood or a Black one. When it comes to schools, this only leads to more segregation.

With neighborhoods segregated by race and schools reflecting these demographics, this typically leads to an achievement gap amongst these schools as well. As economic factors lead to the segregation of neighborhoods, there is also a close tie among those economic factors and the quality of the schools which serve those neighborhoods. Because schools are resourced by the taxes of the community around it, it only follows that the money that can go into funding a school in a lower income area will be much worse. "Nationally, high-poverty neighborhoods spend 15.6% less per student on schools than low-poverty neighborhoods" (Bhargava 2017). In addition to the direct taxes, families and community members are responsible for providing more resources to the school through different associations (part or school) and a slew of other funding opportunities (Bhargava 2017). To take this further, these low-income schools with less resources are more than likely the schools that serve students of color. In addition to lack of resources, lower funded schools also wrestle against the difficulty of attracting good teachers and the influence of students being surrounded by other students with lower achievement (Duncombe 2016). This is due to the fact that people of color are disproportionately poor. In the 2011 Census, "the average b=Black household in the United States reports a net worth of $6,314,

compared to $110,500 for the average White household". The gap between Whites and Blacks has actually grown wider in the last decade, exceeding the same gap in South Africa during apartheid (Siegel-Hawley 39, 2016)." With this gap in resources between children in schools that serve low-income families versus those that serve high income families, a gap in educational achievement is also expected. In addition, these low-income serving schools are also the schools serving the students of color, leading students of color to experience this lack in resources and this achievement gap in educational outcomes.

2.2: What Makes Delaware Unique

Interestingly, one of the 5 court cases that made up the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court case came out of Delaware (Supreme Court of The United States). In 1952, *Gebhart vs. Belton* was litigated after several Black students in Delaware petitioned to attend a White school that was closer to where they lived. The ruling of this case declared that schools in Delaware were segregated and this led to the ultimate Supreme Court decision that this was unconstitutional (Niemeyer 15, 2014).

Delaware is a smaller state, with the city of Philadelphia just northeast of the state and Baltimore southwest (Archbald et al. 9, 2017). Delaware, a formerly border state, has a unique story of integration that followed the *Brown vs. Board* decision. While many states continued with fairly similar looking schools even after the *Brown vs. Board* decision, Delaware had a second court case that challenged this and changed the state's schools trajectory. *Evans vs. Buchanan*, a court case against the Delaware Board of Education in 1956 began and resulted in the federal government taking initiative in desegregating Delaware schools. An elaborate

desegregation plan was started and monitored by the federal government. In contrast, an almost identical court case just a year before, *Milliken vs. Bradley*, took place in Detroit, Michigan. During this case, the government stated that they did not find the segregation of schools to be intended by the legislative and housing decisions made in the past, leading the federal government not to intervene (Pratt 1993).

Two terms became well known at this time: 'de jure' segregation and 'de facto' segregation. These two terms were ultimately the difference between the court decision in Delaware's *Evans vs. Buchanan* and Detroit's *Miliken vs. Bradley*. Brown vs. Board of Education and the many court cases focused on school segregation that followed asked the question, did the government (federal, state, local) do something intentional to make schools segregated. The courts decided, revealed by their pattern of decisions, that segregated schools would only be deemed unconstitutional if the government is proven to intentionally ensure that they are that way. In *Evans vs. Buchanan*, the courts found that the city of Wilmington, Delaware was under a state law from 1968 that created new districts in the school system, but completely left out the inner city schools, maintaining their segregation. (Archbald et al. 10, 2017). This piece of legislation made evidence that Delaware's segregation was de jure segregation: the government was intentional in creating the segregation that existed.

Following this court ruling, the federal government implemented the very first bussing program that included multiple different districts among the city and suburban areas (Archbald et al. 9, 2017). Delaware became one of the top two states in school integration. Between 1999 and 2000, 0% of schools were intensely segregated (90-100% minority) and 0% were apartheid

schools (99%-100% minority). This was accomplished by the federal government overseeing redistricting and a huge bussing system throughout the state (Niemeyer 60, 2014).

In 1995, Delaware was granted unitary status based on the progress towards integration that the state had made (Summary of Wilmington Education Reports, 2015). Unitary status declares that a state has successfully integrated schools and that the federal government no longer needs to oversee the desegregation process. Following this decision, the federal government left the local and state governments in Delaware to deal with the public school system on their own. This led to lack of accountability which lent itself to an unfortunate pattern back to segregated schools fairly shortly after.

2.3: Comparing Schools in Past to Present

First, this change led to stronger correlations between neighborhood demographics and school demographics. When comparing the correlation of neighborhood and school demographics in 2000 and 2010, this change is clear. In 2000 the correlation between the percentage of Black residents in a neighborhood and in the neighborhood school was 0.55, but in 2010, the correlation was 0.72. This is also reflected in the correlation between the percentage of people in poverty in a neighborhood and students that qualify for free lunch in the neighborhood school. In 2000, the correlation was 0.30, but in 2010, the correlation increased to 0.50 (Archbald et al. 28, 2017).

This declaration of unitary status also changed the level of segregation in the schools. Before Delaware was granted unitary status (1995), there was a low level of segregation (shown

by a dissimilarity index of around 17%). In the 10 years that followed, Delaware experienced the steepest racial imbalance the schools ever had. By 2005, the dissimilarity index had skyrocketed to above 35% (Archbald et al. 18,29, 2017).

Around the same time that unitary status was granted to Delaware public schools, policy changed around charter schools and school choice as well. In Delaware, legislation relating to the introduction of charter schools was enacted in 1995 (Archbald et al. 12, 2017), the same year that the state was granted unitary status. Charter schools do not particularly have requirements for maintaining specific demographics or racial imbalances, legislation simply states that they must not discriminate at any point in the admission process (Archbald et al. 12, 2017). This requirement is very loose and would be quite hard to regulate. By 2017, Delaware was ranked #8 in the nation for highest charter school enrollment in the country. These charter schools can take some of the blame for this resegregation of schools in Delaware especially because data shows that almost all of the charter schools are highly isolated by race (Archbald et al. 2017). Delaware's oversaturation of charter schools is something else that makes Delaware unique (Wolfman-Arent 2015). Because unitary status and the introduction of charter schools and school choice happened within the same year, it is hard to separate these two policy changes in order to track correlation between the specific policy changes. The changes in demographics and levels of segregation in the education system cannot be discussed without bringing charter schools and school choice into the discussion, especially in Delaware. All in all, it is completely clear that both of these policy changes led to an increase in the segregation and isolation of public schools in Delaware.

With these policies changing the demographics of public schools, this also would change the experiences of students drastically over time. Students in Delaware public schools during the time of the federally sanctioned desegregation plan would have attended integrated schools with a better distribution of resources and students. Faces and opinions in the classroom would vary and friend groups would more than likely be diverse. By contrast, as schools became resegregated, beginning in 1995, the experiences of these students would be totally different, even if the students compared attended the same exact schools. More recently, resources in schools would have been distributed unequally across the different public schools. Friend groups and classrooms are more homogenous.

2.4: Introduction of Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is a theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu that refers to the resources and competencies of dominant social groups which are transmitted primarily within the family (Bourdieu 1977, 1986). Something is considered "part of an individual's cultural capital only if possessing it confers benefits in social competition" (Bodovski 2007[VC3]). Bourdieu breaks cultural capital into three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized states. The embodied state includes "the set[s] of dispositions, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are unconsciously internalized" specifically while growing up and learned from one's family (Bodovski 888, 2016). The objectified state refers to objects and tangible items that are symbols of one's social status. Examples of these items include books, electronics, clothing, and more (Bodovski et al., 2017; Richards 2, 2019; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Finally, the

institutionalized state of cultural capital are the specific academic achievements one can gain, such as degrees and diplomas.

This concept of cultural capital is often used to "explain the class-based differences in academic achievement… observed while studying the educational system" (Richards 2-3, 2019). Lareau (2003) focuses specifically on how parenting styles can teach cultural capital and lead to the perpetuation of inequities within schools. Richards (2019), in *When Class is Colorblind: A Race-Conscious Model For Cultural Capital Research in Education*, criticizes Bourdieu's concept explaining that it perpetuates a class-based master narrative and colorblind assumptions through his conceptualization of cultural capital. She lays out the importance of making cultural capital race-conscious, by placing marginalized groups in the center of one's conceptualization. This includes acknowledging different forms of cultural capital, including Black cultural capital.

The educational system may favor or value one specific, dominant cultural capital, but that does not mean that they are correct in doing so. This leads to the praising of one group's culture while putting down the culture of another. Many systems and institutions are guilty of this, especially in America (Richards 6, 2019). We can see the way in which the education system favors and values White cultural capital through specific curriculums, tools, and processes. In the education system, to have more White cultural capital, means you will be more successful and achieve higher in the classroom. This makes it much more difficult for marginalized groups to excel (Richards 2, 2019). Because the education system of America was written by and for White people, Black students are forced to gain this White and dominant

cultural capital in some way if they want to succeed based on the measures the system currently lays out for them (Richards 2019).

Given this, I will use the cultural capital theory as a theoretical lens to examine possible reasons for changes in academic achievement for Black students in Delaware (DiMaggio, 1982). Much cultural capital work has revolved around the cultural capital transfer within families. I move away from this by theorizing that cultural capital gained through peer relationships works the same. I expect students that graduated from Delaware Public Schools in the 80s and early 90s, who were exposed to more White majority spaces (or simply more diverse, with White people), will have gained more of the dominant cultural capital. Following DiMaggio (1982), I believe this increase in dominant cultural capital will lead to higher achievement and attainment for those students. These integrated spaces will be the public schools themselves during the time of the federal government's oversight of a desegregation plan (1980s-1995) and, more recently, after school activities such as sports, which are becoming increasingly more popular among high school students.

2.5: Theoretical Map and Research Questions

Below I present a theoretical map that describes the relationships that I expect to find.

Figure 1: Theoretical Map.
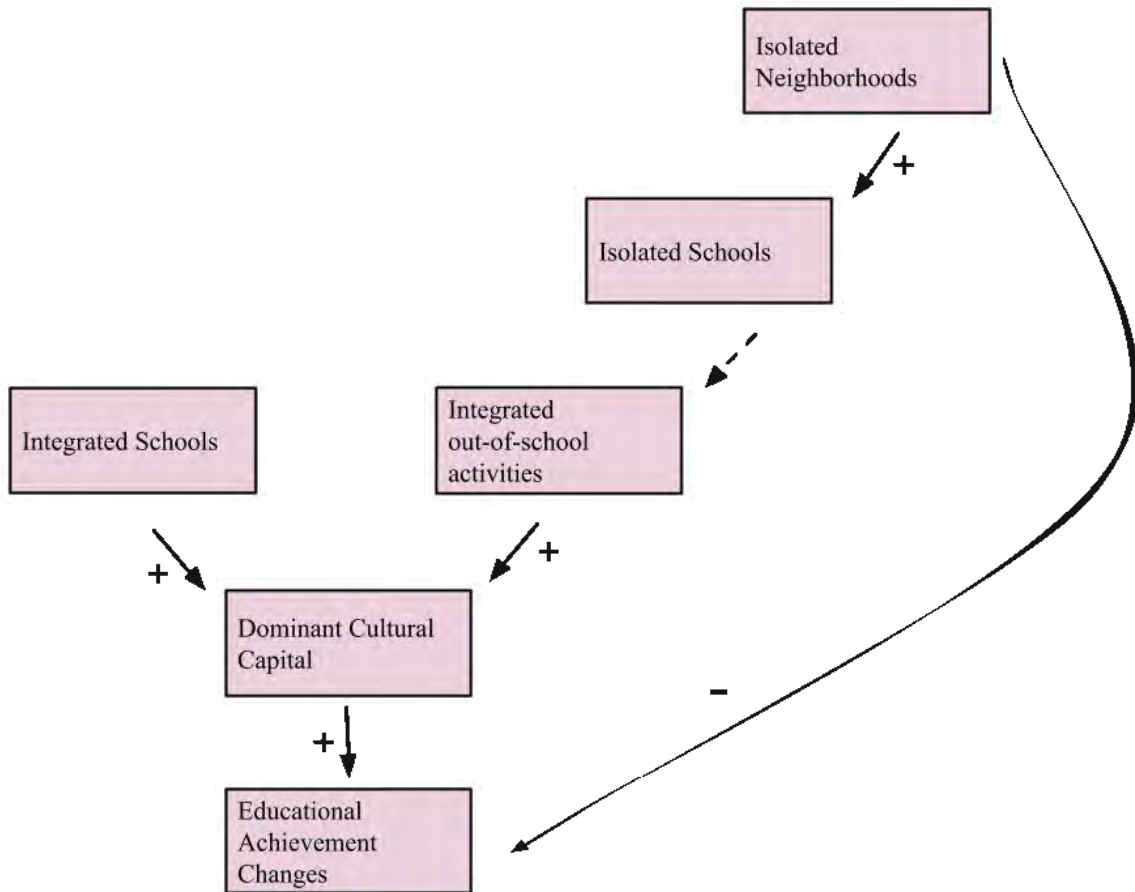
Note: Figure 1 represents a theoretical map for the relationships that I expect to find. Solid arrows represent direct relationships; dashed arrows represent indirect relationships. Plus signs indicate a positive relationship; minus signs indicate a negative relationship.

Based on the literature above, I want to explore the following research questions:

1. How does segregation of neighborhoods as reflected by segregation of public schools affect the educational outcomes of Black students in Delaware?

2. How is policy change around integration of schools related to student outcomes for Black students over time? Are there differences in educational outcomes/experiences between former students, who graduated in the 80s and early 90s and went to school during federally enforced integration and educational outcomes/experiences of more current students, who graduated from 2015-2020?

3. How does access to dominant cultural capital affect educational outcomes/experiences for Black students in the public school system? Does more dominant cultural capital lead to better educational outcomes/experiences for Black students?

4. Can cultural capital be transferred amongst peer groups and integrated social groups, such as integrated schools and classrooms or various out-of-school activities (which have become increasingly popular in recent years)?

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This thesis is a mixed methods study that combines semi-structured interviews with an examination of achievement patterns in majority White and majority Black schools in Delaware (Creswell, 2008). Employing mixed methods allows me to both examine macro patterns in achievement and zoom into micro processes that might shape those patterns.

3.1: Data Analysis

I begin by quantitatively examining achievement patterns in majority White and majority Black schools. While differences in achievement in majority White and majority Black schools in various states are well documented (Duncombe 2016; Mann 2020; Naderstat n.d.), in this thesis, I take a deeper look at these patterns in the State of Delaware. In order to do this, I collect the data for achievement patterns for all majority White and majority Black public schools in Delaware from the Delaware Department of Education website. (I explain how I define a majority White and majority Black school below.) More specifically, I collect the data for percent of students proficient in math and English Language Arts (ELA) for each school in 2020 - 2021. This means that my unit of analysis is percent of students in each majority White and each majority Black school who are proficient in math and ELA. Proficiency was assessed by the state assessment administered in every public school in Delaware as a part of the federal Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) act. I then link this data to the data on school segregation provided through the Geographies of Education project (Mann 2020), a scholarly initiative that aims at making various geospatial education data available to scholars, policymakers, and the general

public. The data on school segregation is for the 2019-2020 school year. Schools were defined as majority Black or majority White if more than 50% of students in the school were Black or White, respectively. Following this definition, 79 schools in the state of Delaware were defined as majority White and 25 were defined as majority Black. However, achievement patterns were not available for each of those schools, resulting in the analytic sample of 68 majority White schools and 13 majority Black schools for math achievement and 68 majority White schools and 15 majority Black schools for ELA achievement. Available data only allows me to examine these patterns during the current period of time. Unfortunately, no data is available to examine these patterns during the integration period, as these data were not collected systematically then.

3.2: Interview Analysis

After examining these patterns, I conduct semi-structured interviews in order to uncover whether cultural capital might play a role in differential achievement patterns in majority White and majority Black schools. Semi-structured interviews are interviews with open-ended questions that are driven by theory (Galletta 2013). My semi-structured interviews consist of 12 open-ended questions that ask about high school experiences, neighborhood experiences, and friendships throughout high school. I try to identify peer groups which were diverse racially and peer groups which were not and ask them to compare the two in various different ways. I also ask questions pertaining to the demographics of the spaces interviewees spent their time in and built their relationships in during their high school years. I ask a variety of follow-up questions throughout the interviews. Interview protocol is attached in the Appendix. I interview 6 individuals from two different groups, totaling to 12 interviewees. The first group, the older

generation, graduated from Delaware public schools between the years of 1980 and 1995. The second group, the younger generation, graduated from Delaware public schools between 2015 and 2020.

I used snowball sampling to acquire my interviewees. Snowball sampling is a method of recruiting interviewees that is non-proportional to the population (Cohen 2011).With this method, interviewees are meant to be found through the suggestion of previous interviewees. I used this by asking previous participants for contact information for new interviewees that they know. I utilized the connections that I have gained from growing up in Delaware and the connections of my mother, who is a 1988 graduate from a Delaware Public School. I also utilized community Facebook groups to find initial interviewees. Below is a table that describes the interviewees. The socioeconomic status marker (marked SES Marker) is the median household income of the city in which interviewees lived during high school. This was calculated from interviewee's zip code during their time in high school and corresponding Census data. The younger generation's median household income shown is that of 2020. The older generation's median household income is from 1990. Due to low populations in some Delaware cities, some city data was not provided. In this case, I utilized the city closest to the city in which interviewees grew up (US Department of Commerce 1993; Census n.d.).

Table 1: Introducing Interviewees.

Name	Graduation Year	Gender	Neighborhood Median Household Income
Kerry	'87	F	$44,425
Shondra	'88	F	$23,379
Ray	'87	M	$26,389
Raven	'90	F	$33.250
Luis	'88	M	$31,010
Amara	'89	F	$31,010
Kameron	'19	F	$91,663
Rebekah	'18	F	$91,663
Kiara	'18	F	$45, 948
Kristin	'16	F	$62,500
Isaiah	'20	M	$45,139
Justin	'17	M	$57,348

Note: Table 1 introduces the interviewees and presents notable information about interviewees.

My sample for each generation consisted of 2 males and 4 females. The median household income in Delaware in 1990 was $34,874 for the whole population and $24,286 for Black households. Given that, my sample is a bit below the median household income for all households at the time but significantly higher than Black households, making my sample less wealthy than the average population but more wealthy than an average Black household. The median household income in Delaware in 2015-2019 was $68,287 for the whole population and $50,361 for Black households (Guzman 2020). Given this, my sample in the younger generation

is also slightly below the median income for the entire population, but higher than that of Black households.

3.2.1: Measuring Cultural Capital

In the interviews, I also focus specifically on cultural capital. I want to find out if cultural capital transfer and acquisition played a role in their education experience, and specifically in aiding their educational achievement and attainment. To figure this out, I ask specific questions about what each interviewee learned from the specific peer groups they were a part of throughout their high school years. I also ask questions about what they typically would talk about and looked for differences in topic of conversations between their various peer groups as well as what they think made them fit into their particular peer groups.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1: Data Analysis

I begin by showing current academic achievement patterns in Delaware Public Schools that are majority White and majority Black. Figures below show math and ELA achievement patterns in majority White schools vis-a-vis majority Black schools. More specifically, Figure 1 shows math achievement in majority White schools.

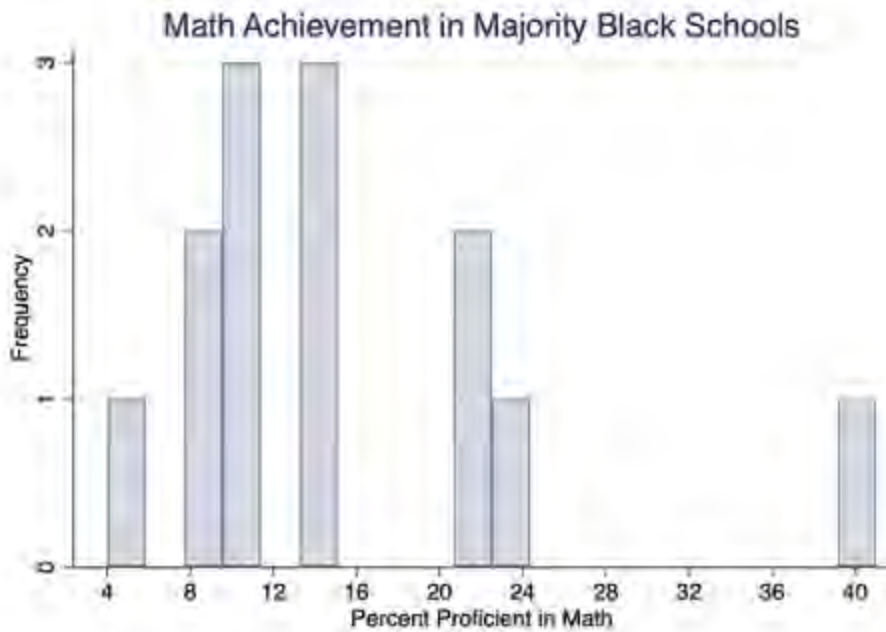**Figure 2: Math Achievement in Majority White Schools.**
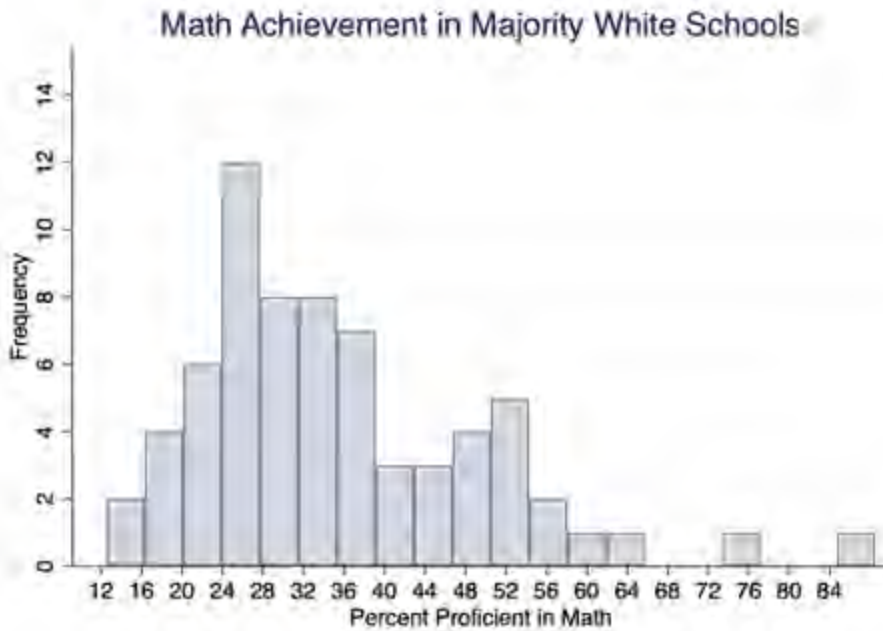
Note: Figure 2 displays math proficiency levels in majority White schools in Delaware (N= 68).

Overall, proficiency levels appear low in these schools. Only one school has its math proficiency level above 80 percent, with the majority of schools having proficiency levels lower than 40%.

Figure 3 displays math proficiency levels for majority Black schools. As seen in Figure 3, proficiency levels are lower in majority Black schools, with only one school having its math proficiency level around 40%.

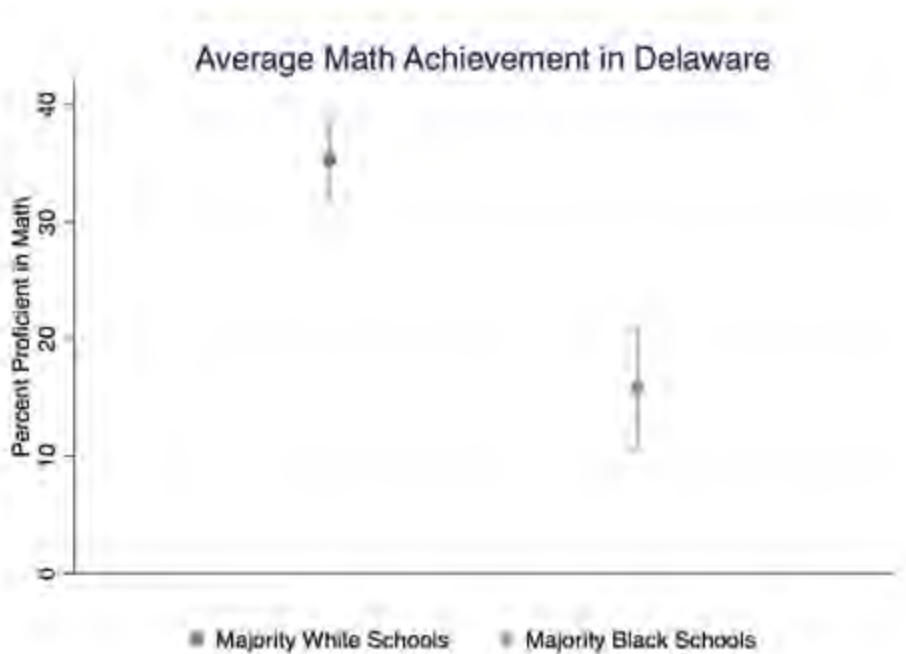**Figure 3: Math Achievement in Majority Black Schools.**

Note: Figure 3 displays math proficiency levels in majority Black schools in Delaware (N=13).

Additionally, in more than 50% of majority Black schools, math proficiency levels are less than 15%.

Figure 4 graphs average math proficiency levels in majority White schools vis-a-vis majority Black schools. Thin lines represent 95% confidence intervals. As Figure 4 shows, average proficiency levels are around 35% in majority White schools and around 15% in majority Black schools. Confidence intervals for these estimates do not overlap, indicating that the means are statistically distinct.
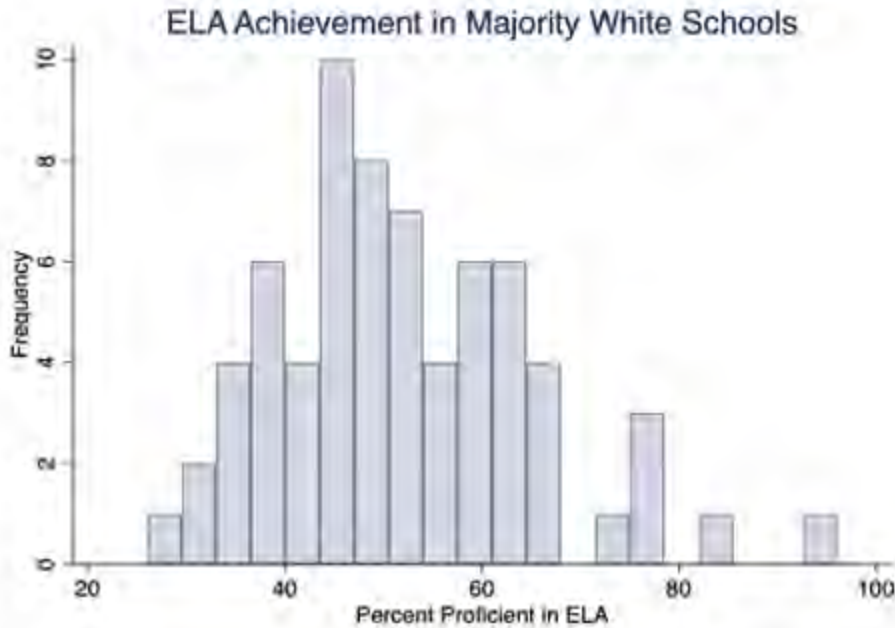
Figure 4: Average Math Proficiency in Majority White and Majority Black Schools.

Note: Figure 4 displays average math proficiency levels in majority White and majority Black schools. Thin lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Figures 5 through 6 graph proficiency patterns for ELA achievement. These figures display data patterns similar to those of math proficiency. More specifically, Figure 5 shows that ELA proficiency levels are rather low in majority White schools, although overall ELA proficiency levels appear higher than math proficiency levels. Figure 6, in its turn, shows that ELA proficiency levels are even lower in majority Black schools, although - similar to students in majority White schools - students in majority Black schools appear to perform better on ELA tests than math tests.

Figure 5: ELA Achievement in Majority White Schools.

Note: Figure 5 displays ELA proficiency levels in majority White schools in Delaware (N= 68).

Figure 6: ELA Achievement in Majority Black Schools.
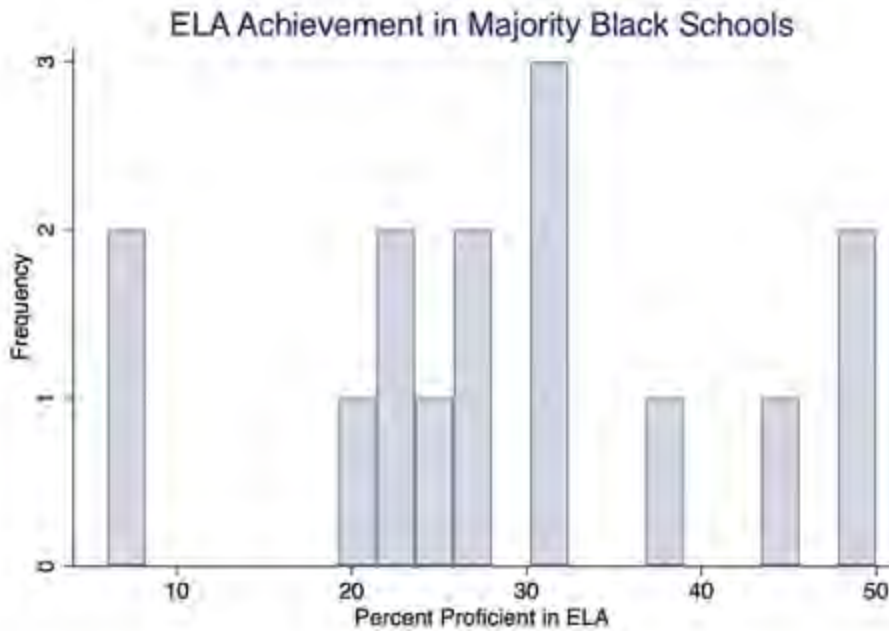
Note: Figure 6 displays math proficiency levels in majority Black schools in Delaware (N=15).

Additionally, Figure 7 shows that average ELA proficiency levels are higher in majority White schools than in majority Black schools. More specifically, average ELA proficiency level in majority White schools is around 52% and it is around 29% in majority Black schools. Confidence intervals for these estimates do not overlap, indicating that the estimates are statistically distinct.

Figure 7: Average ELA Proficiency in Majority White and Majority Black Schools.
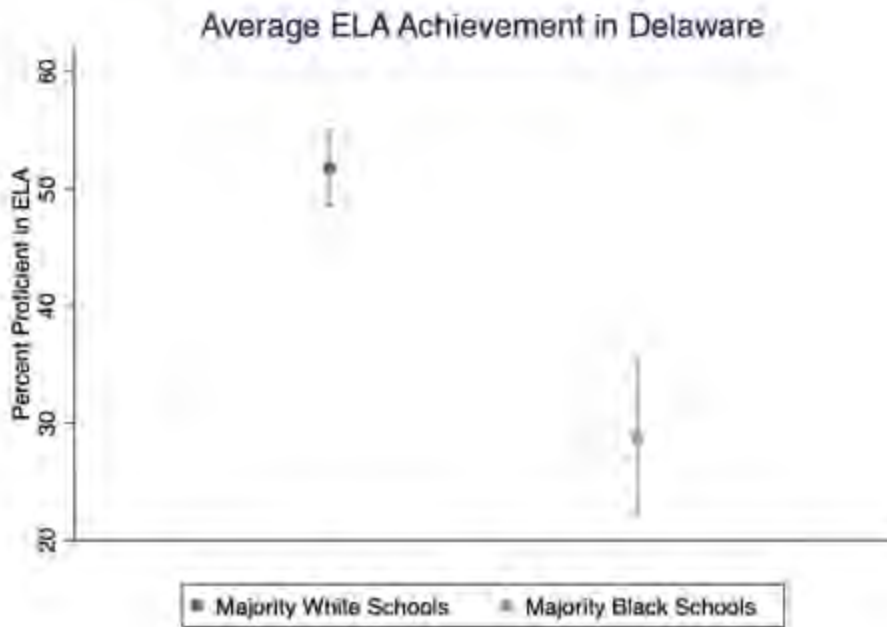
Note: Figure 7 displays average ELA proficiency levels in majority White and majority Black schools. Thin lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Overall, figures above display inequities in proficiency levels in public schools in Delaware. While many factors can contribute to these inequities in performance in majority White and majority Black schools, in the interviews that follow, I try to uncover if lack of cultural capital acquisition and transfer might at least partially explain these inequities.

4.2: Interviews

I conducted 12 interviews between the dates of 12/20/2021 & 03/25/2022. I then transcribed these interviews using Otter, an automated transcription tool, and checked each transcription against the recording, making changes where necessary. Interviews brought about five different themes that were a pattern among the interviews. The five themes include Code Switching, Socioeconomic Influence, Cultural Capital Transfer, Segregation in Schools, and Teachers as a Resource. Each was commonly mentioned and referenced by interviewees, and each relate to my theory and research questions, providing some key answers to my research questions.

Although these themes are only slightly related, they all can be brought together under the umbrella of the impacts of segregation on educational outcomes for Black students and my theory. Code switching itself is only a mechanism to deploy cultural capital in a specific setting. To be more specific, speaking in a certain way that is accepted by the White people around them, is an example of Black people displaying their disposition and preference of language that can propel them in social and educational settings. Socioeconomic Influence echoes theory mentioned above about households of color being disproportionately poorer. When talking about racial disparities and differences, socioeconomic influence cannot be taken out of the conversation. This was fully supported by the pattern of this theme throughout interviews. Segregation in Schools is a main part of my theory. The way it presented itself in interviews was not how I hypothesized. Segregation was consistently mentioned even in schools that were integrated by sheer numbers. This reveals that the integration of schools cannot and should not

just be based on what faces are in a classroom, but more. Perhaps the relationships among students should be monitored or measured to be able to call a school integrated. This lack of true integration would more than likely decrease the amount of interaction between White and Black students, also leading to a decline in opportunities for cultural capital transfer among groups.

Teachers as a resource was the most unique theme that was present across interviews. This could relate to my theory when thinking about shared experiences and cultural capital. Black students gravitate towards other Black students, as well as Black teachers partially because of shared cultural capital. Other resources may have seemed unattainable or unattractive to Black students because they may not have been a part of Black cultural capital. Additionally, Lareau (2003) discusses discomfort with dominant institutions, schooling being one of them, on behalf of minority parents and students. Having Black teachers as mentors might ease this discomfort as Black students might find it easier to build meaningful connections with same-race teachers and mentors. Additionally, seeing Black teachers and mentors successfully navigate educational institutions might serve as a model for navigating the educational system for Black students. This could be why interviewees only mentioned Black teachers as used resources and nothing else. Of course, this presents an entirely new research question and much more would need to be done to find support for this. Finally, the General Cultural Capital Transfer and Acquisition theme links directly to theory by displaying the importance of cultural capital in the educational experience and relationship-building for Black students across generations during high school. Each one of these themes were mentioned across the generational gap amongst interviewees, but differences in the frequency of mention can support my theories about the older generation, having been in more integrated schools, could have higher educational outcomes.

Table 2: Interview Themes.

Group/Theme	Number of Mentions	
	Older (out of 6)	**Younger (out of 6)**
Segregation in Schools	5	5
Socioeconomic Influence	3	3
Teachers as Resource	4	5
Code Switching	4	4
Cultural Capital Transfer/Acquisition	5	2

Note: Table 2 presents interview themes and the number of interviewees in each age group who mentioned the theme.

4.2.1: Segregation in Schools

Oftentimes throughout interviews, it stuck out to me that whether a school was integrated or segregated, most interviewees still talk about how their high school experience was influenced by segregation within the schools. This was most surprising among the older generation, as these schools were, by definition, integrated. To hear that there was still segregation within the integrated schools is definitely of note. In addition, this was the most popular theme. 5 out of 6 interviewees from the older generation and 5 out of 6 from the younger generation mentioned

this. Even when interviewees mentioned diversity in their school as a whole, when talking about their specific friends, they were almost always also Black.

From the older generation, Ray made a distinction between his Black classmates and White classmates. "I would say, if I had to say who I hung out with the most, it was probably Black folks." And when asked about interacting with White people at school, he noted that "That would have been classroom settings." Kerry said something similar. She mentioned, "My friends were from pretty much where I was from. They were the good, true, what I found to be really best friends. Everyone else was associates. Just, you know, 'Hey girl', you know? We didn't have anything in common." Shondra mentioned similar sentiments, but in greater detail.

"So, the other friends that were not from my neighborhood, it was just kind of general conversation about their family dynamics, my family dynamics, just trying to kind of get to know them. And just kind of sharing some of the things that my family did, as opposed to what their family did. So, it was more like a getting-to-know, type conversation. As opposed to my neighborhood friends. We already knew each other. So, our conversations were more detailed…. You know, high school was, I was with my crew, my crew from [my neighborhood]. So yeah, high school. I think that was like the best times of my life."

Like Kerry and Shondra, it was common that interviewees' close friends from high school were not only Black, but also from their neighborhood. This can be understood through their quotes above. Raven also mentioned this.

"I got a great education, but I was one of a handful of African American students or Black students who were actually from the suburbs… There was another young lady of color, whose family relocated to the development that was next to mine… if I'm being honest, she is

the only friend that is still a best friend that I have from school. Yeah, period… [During] my home-life, I was surrounded by people who look like me… I don't believe that we went to school with a balanced and equitable population. I was among the minority for sure. But I don't think I noticed or recognized or maybe I just didn't care until it became obvious to me that there were certain cliques…. I don't believe that segregation looks like you know, 60% White, 40% Black, and all the Black kids are special-ed."

This quote really stuck out to me and spoke to the fact that school integration can't just stop at what the diversity of the group looks like.

This segregation in schools was echoed by the younger generation as well. Kristin talked about this in her interview saying, "There is that level of being comfortable. I was more vulnerable and open to my friends who are Black. I don't know if that's just because I felt more safe. Not that I felt threatened. But it was just like, when you see somebody who looks like you or identifies with the culture that you do, and you're with people who look like your family, you're just like, you feel comfortable." Kameron noted that all her friends were Black in school. She said, "All my friends are Black.… I didn't really have any White friends. And I would just say because they're just not like, people who I would consider to be a friend. Like when I say someone's my friend, like, someone who I can call, we can like actually go hang out, or do something and not just like, be in class… We don't really have anything in common. So, I just keep it strictly to 'What do you get for the homework?' 'Hey, hi'." Kiara told a story about her time on the field hockey team at her school that illustrated this as well.

"It was like this one time we had this team meeting. And as only three Black girls, and we're all freshmen, so we're just like in our little circle. Because we're comfortable, we clung

together. So, we was like sitting we're a little away from the team but not like not like a lot and I guess she all wanted the girls to come in and she was like to us, 'Okay girls, don't be segregated.'"

Even her coach noticed the segregation in the moment. This distinction between Black classmates from their neighborhood or their Black classmates from elsewhere was not as clear among the younger interviewees.

Throughout my interviews, I did not ask specifically about segregation in their schools. This was a theme that emerged on its own. I did ask about the demographics of the interviewee's school and how they would describe their friend group or social group. It is definitely of note that this was something that emerged on its own throughout my interviews, especially considering how frequent this theme arose. Clearly, this lack of true integration was something that did not go unnoticed by almost all Black students in Delaware Public Schools in both generations.

In my research questions, I ask if acquisition of the dominant cultural capital can increase educational outcomes and if cultural capital can be transferred amongst students in integrated spaces. This strong theme of segregation even within those integrated schools would suggest that even though the possibility for cultural capital acquisition was more common, the continued segregation within the 'integrated' school may have prevented this to happen in an impactful way.

This theme links to my research questions in a few different ways. Question 2 asks how policy changes around integration of schools relate to student outcomes for Black students over time and if there are differences in educational outcomes/experiences between former students,

who graduated in the 80s and early 90s and went to school during federally enforced integration will have better educational outcomes/experiences than more current students, who graduated from 2015-2020. Due to lack of data during the time of school desegregation, Question 2 is still inconclusive, but we can draw some information from this theme. 5 out of 6 interviewees from the older generation received a college degree, while 4 out of the 6 from the younger generation did. Although this slightly supports the idea that integrated schools may lead to higher educational outcomes, it is not a large enough subset to fully support this. Additionally, getting a college degree is only one, very flawed, way to measure educational achievement. There also is not enough evidence to support that policy change to force school integration is effective in improving educational outcomes because even though the schools were integrated, the social groups remained segregated anyhow. Despite the integration policies, groups were not integrated. If cultural capital transfer does help education outcomes for Black students, as some interviewees mentioned it did, then policy change towards integration would improve educational outcomes for Black students.

4.2.2: Socioeconomic Influence

Socioeconomic influence was another common theme. This stood out to me because it wasn't something I ever asked about until the interviewee brought it up. Interviewees across the board made their own link to their high school experience and the influence of their socioeconomic background or the socioeconomic background of their peers and classmates around them. More specifically, many mentioned socioeconomic factors while describing their friends and how they fit in with their certain friend groups. They also mentioned that this was

something that they felt kept them out of certain friend groups as well. Socioeconomic factors

relating to friendships were mentioned three times in both the younger and the older generations.

From the older generation, Kerry talked about what made her fit in with her closest

friends, who also happened to be the girls at her school that were also from her neighborhood.

She answered this question by pointing out what differentiated her and her friends from the other

Black girls at her school. She said, "The group of girls from the inner city, they couldn't relate to

us. If anything, they were jealous, because they're like, 'Oh, got a Gucci Bag.' You know, back

then we were head to toe in the brand names!" Raven had a similar experience. When asked if

she was friends with her Black classmates that she remembered were bussed into her high

schools, she responded much like Kerry.

"They weren't like me! And that didn't mean I wasn't friends or that we weren't friends. It

just meant that I was cautious sometimes about the things I was privileged to experience. You

know, it's difficult to have a bestie who you're saying, you know, 'My family and I vacationed in

the Bahamas for five days and their parents don't have a car to take them to Rehoboth Beach"

These are two mentions from the older generation about how socioeconomic status

divided them from some of their other Black classmates throughout high school.

In the younger generation, this was mentioned more from the opposite side of the way it

was mentioned by the older generation. Rebekah mentioned this while talking about the

differences she felt between her and her White classmates. "When it came time for everyone to

get their driver's license. I remember when they got licenses, their parents *gave* them cars. But

for me and a lot of the Black people at my school, we had to work for it and buy cars." Kameron

talked about her neighborhood and the friends she made in her neighborhood. She explained, "So

in my neighborhood, like I always remember we used to go outside and play together, whether you're Black, White, Hispanic, it didn't matter. Like, I think it's because of our economic status. Like, we all kind of just bonded... You never really felt a sense of 'Oh, she's White', 'Oh, she's Black.' Like, I said, because I think it's because of our economic status."

It was interesting to me that the two most notable quotes about socioeconomic status from the older generation were individuals that felt that they were from a higher status, while the two notable quotes from the younger generation seemed that they felt they were from a lower socioeconomic status. Despite these differences, whether schools were integrated or segregated, socioeconomic status had an influence on student peer groups, providing evidence that peer groups – regardless of the time period – are strongly influenced by familial background, thus potentially further aggravating existing inequalities (Pugh, 2009).

This theme helps to answer my third research question. Part 3 how access to dominant cultural capital affects educational outcomes/experiences for Black students in the public school system. It also asks if more dominant cultural capital leads to better educational outcomes/experiences for Black students. The more dominant cultural capital a student gains, the better their educational outcomes will be in the current educational system (Lareau 2003). Socioeconomic status and race are so closely tied that it is almost impossible to talk about one without mentioning the other. More than likely, those with a higher socioeconomic status also have gained more of the dominant, White, cultural capital. This would be the same for Black people. There may also be different acceptable forms of cultural capital that may vary within the socioeconomic differences within a racial group. This came through in the interviews by

interviewees sharing that they felt they sometimes did not fit in with other peers in their racial group because of their mention of socioeconomic.

4.2.3: Teachers as a Resource

Almost every interviewee mentioned teachers throughout their interview. 4 out of the 6 older interviewees and 5 out of the 6 younger interviewees mentioned teachers throughout school as the main resource that they felt helped them achieve academically. It is also of note, that all but one of these individuals added that the teachers that were their main resource were also Black teachers.

Shondra, from the older generation noted, "I do remember a teacher. I can't think of her name. She was a Black teacher. And she really pushed me into being the best that I could be." Luis also mentioned a Black male teacher that he still often talks to today. Raven mentioned something similar when talking about an English teacher she had in high school.

"So, I had a teacher, an English teacher. She was the only Black teacher. She was an AKA, she was so classy, and so well spoken. And she made me love all kinds of literature. So, I ended up being an actual English major with a focus on language [in college]. … So, it was a very interesting Black woman, a Black educator who was definitely engaged in my success."

From the younger generation, all but one interviewee mentioned teachers as an impactful resource throughout high school. Kristen mentioned one Black female teacher specifically. She said, "... she definitely prepared me for college the most... I literally looked at her as like my, my mom in school." Isaiah mentioned a Black female teacher as well.

"So, she definitely was a big resource in high school. Because she's been there for a while, and she has a lot of, you know, friends and colleagues. And she will, she'll kind of fight on your behalf... She made the high school experience what it was, you know, she was, like, very caring."

This was a significant pattern and stood out to me especially since when asked about resources used by my interviewees that helped them academically, most of them couldn't think of anything else except teachers. Additionally, the interviewees that did not mention teachers as a main resource did not end up mentioning any resources that they remember to be helpful. Only one person from both the older and younger generations mentioned another resource along with a teacher. Luis, from the older generation, mentioned a specific organization and the importance of Black churches. When asked about what made these two things a helpful resource, he noted,

"They always push you. That's the other thing that helped me through high school. It's interaction with people. So there, you're exposed to collegiates, you're exposed to working class, middle class, upper class… You're exposed to, so it makes you aspire to. So, the exposure makes you want to be better. It shows you, 'Oh, that's possible'. Because if your view is only limited, your thinking is going to be limited. But if you see Black people doing any and everything, your mind is going to be wide open to possibilities

This also stood out to me because the support that this resource brought, mentorship and exposure to someone that looks like you and is succeeding in the field that they desire, has a similar effect that a Black teacher would have on students. In summary, even when another resource was mentioned, it was one very similar to teachers as a resource.

It was remarkable to me to hear that in both generations, students had and could point out an influential Black teacher within their school. Again, this tells me that Black students turn to the same resources and go through similar experiences in terms of how they interact with their educational institutions regardless of whether the school is integrated or segregated.

This theme relates to my theory because, as mentioned above, it is closely linked to cultural capital and the role it plays in relationships building. Black students gravitate towards other Black students, as well as Black teachers partially because of shared cultural capital. Other resources may have seemed unattainable or unattractive to Black students because they may not have been a part of Black cultural capital. Additionally, Lareau (2003) discusses discomfort with dominant institutions, schooling being one of them, on behalf of minority parents and students. Having Black teachers as mentors might ease this discomfort as Black students might find it easier to build meaningful connections with same-race teachers and mentors. Additionally, seeing Black teachers and mentors successfully navigate educational institutions might serve as a model for navigating the educational system for Black students. This could be why interviewees only mentioned Black teachers as used resources and nothing else.

4.2.4: Code Switching:

Code switching can be defined as "the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction. This contextualization may relate to local discourse practices, such as turn selection or various forms of bracketing, or it may make relevant information beyond the current exchange, including knowledge of society and diverse identities." (Nipel, 1, 2006). This is a term that combines the study of linguistics with sociology.

Within both interview categories, learning the art of code switching was mentioned by almost all. This was mentioned 4 times out of the 6 interviews by the older generation and 4 out of 6 for the younger generation as well. Some interviewees were aware of the term and used these words, while others referenced it as learning a new language or learning English skills that helped them through school.

The older generation was less aware of the term "code switching" For example, Kerry mentioned this in her interview while talking about the way she talks at work.

"... I flip the switch on. I can be hood rat or I can be professional. Just like my kids say when they hear me when I'm working. They'll say, 'Mom, you don't talk like that.' And I'm like, 'Son, that's my work voice!'. That's my work voice. You know, I talk to people with high net worth's, a lot of money. And I can't just be mediocre. Because they can take their business somewhere else."

Luis mentioned something similar when he talked about why he felt he was able to fit into groups of both Black and White classmates at school.

"I was accepted by everyone because I would play both roles. It was like putting on a second skin. It was easy. Boom. And then being in the honors program, White people are kinda surprised asking 'How did you get in?'. I loved destroying preconceived notions. It was awesome. You have to do that initially but then after that, you were fine. Show them that you're just like them."

Raven echoed this same theme telling me that they all "... learned two languages. You know, you learn how to code switch, if you will. And so, I think that was helpful for me. And as helpful for me in the 80s and 90s as it is for my kids in 2021."

My analysis shows that Raven was not wrong by noting that this skill of code switching is something that is still used now. The younger generation was more likely to reference the term, showing that the idea and concept of code switching may be better known by the younger generation. Kiara shared about how she felt forced to use code switching because of the way she felt the White people around her viewed her personality.

"What's that called? Code switch? I learned to do that around people. Because like, my typical personality is that I'm loud. I'm just energetic, but I kinda have to talk like more like proper and more professional. I learned I have to carry myself more professional. Yeah…I just like I just act different around like my White classmates than my Black classmates."

This sentiment was also mentioned by others in similar ways. I began to ask where these individuals felt that they learned this skill of code switching. Interestingly, this was something that no one could point out. Ray, from the older generation, may have hinted to it while talking about his experiences. Ray mentioned that during his earlier school years at a predominantly White school, he gained some tools that he felt helped him succeed academically in high school. He noted "I think I relied on the tools and learnings that I had from my previous school experience… obviously learning English somewhere along the way, and then doing it well, and then learning how to sort of articulate my thoughts and presenting them in a way that was easily understood." Similarly, Kiara, from the younger generation, when asked when she gained this skill of code switching said, "I just learned over time. I think I first started in middle school. I just act different around like my White classmates than my Black classmates. It kind of like comes naturally. You don't really learn to do it, you just kind of like to do it." Neither could exactly pinpoint the time they learned to code switch, but both thought that it was in the school

setting and before high school. Ray even mentioned that he learned this skill in a school where he was around majority White classmates.

Because this skill of code switching was and still is something Black students use in the classroom and in professional settings, it suggests that they felt this was a skill that helped them in intellectual spaces, and therefore in educational achievement. Although the frequency of the theme's mention was the same across generations in my sample, we can infer that with a larger sample, this could have been mentioned more from the older generation since this seems to be something learned from being in integrated spaces. Without being in an integrated space, the skill of code switching cannot be learned. By this, the older generation could have higher education outcomes from being in integrated schools because they would have been more likely to learn how to code switch.

This theme is an example of cultural capital. Because it is an example of cultural capital itself, it links directly to my theory and research questions. Questions 3 & 4 are as follows: 3. How does access to dominant cultural capital affect educational outcomes/experiences for Black students in the public school system? Does more dominant cultural capital lead to better educational outcomes/experiences for Black students? and 4. Can cultural capital be transferred amongst peer groups and integrated social groups, such as integrated schools and classrooms or various. Questions 3 and 4 are addressed by data from the interviews. The high frequency of the mention of code switching shows that access to dominant cultural capital can help educational outcomes, as Question 3 asks.. Most interviewees that mentioned code switching, mentioned that they used it in school instead of talking the way that they learned with their Black families.

4.2.5: General Cultural Capital Transfer and Acquisition

Finally, a general theme that persisted throughout the interviews was transfer of cultural capital. As mentioned in earlier chapters, someone's cultural capital is made up of the resources and competencies of dominant social groups that they have gained. Something is considered "part of an individual's cultural capital only if possessing it confers benefits in social competition" (Bodovski 2007). More specifically, the embodied state of cultural capital is "the set[s] of dispositions, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are unconsciously internalized" by an individual (Bodovski 888, 2016). As this is closely tied to my theory, this was something I was looking to come through during the interviews. 5 out of the 6 older generation interviewees mentioned this transfer of cultural capital in some way, while 2 out of the 6 interviewees from the younger generation mentioned this.

Shondra talked about the conversations she had with some White classmates throughout her high school years and what she learned from them.

"Rather than getting those hand-me-downs like me, they had the opportunity to go and purchase things like straight out of the store, …So it was a big, you know, big difference and just kind of comparing, you know, how we lived and what our household looked like, compared to what theirs look like. There was never any judgment… I didn't learn much from them. But you know, after talking, you kind of know that you have to be on your A-game. When it comes to certain things, you have to work a little bit harder to, to achieve some of your goals… It seemed like they were able to, to achieve certain goals easily. And, you know, the family dynamics were different. For instance, like I said, you know, my mother and my father were not together. So, learning from them the importance of having a mother and father in the home, if possible, makes

a big difference. Not that I went without, but that support factor, you know, and that kind of made me, you know, realize that, hey, you have to work a little bit harder, because you don't have the benefit of having both support systems in the home, but you want that one day."

Shondra's quote displays that she talked to her White peers about the differences in cultures they each experienced in the home. She realized from those interactions that some of those dispositions, attitudes, and preferences etc. were different. Hearing about the specific behavior of having both a mother and a father in the household, she adopted that preference and strove to mirror that behavior in her house one day. Raven attributed many of her current preferences to her peers throughout high school when asked about it. She said, "My musical taste is very broad. My literature taste is broad. I am very accepting of just culture. You know. I am fascinated by politics." She could see how her attitudes and preferences were shaped by her exposure to White classmates. Ray couldn't remember a specific thing he learned from his White classmates, but he mentioned that he was sure he learned from them. He said, "I'm sure. I mean, there were some major differences that I observed that I learned from. Are there things that I can remember? Not that I can necessarily remember."

From the younger generation, the comments were similar, but not as frequent. A quote from Kameron really stuck out to me.

"... Because we lived in a lower income area, we still went to school with a few people who lived in, like, huge houses with pools in their backyard. So, they would talk about 'Oh, pool party this; pool party that.' and then we're like, well, we're throwing jugs at each other with water. Like, we would like to often compare ourselves to them. So, we would talk about how, like, what we want

it to be when we can grow up. It stretches as far as back to when I was a kid of what we will try to figure out how we could get out of the situation that we were in."

Kameron saw the culture and the norm of her White peers around her and adopted that disposition and preference for something like having a pool in her backyard. This led her to strive to work harder to achieve that dream. She later mentioned something else she learned from her White peers in the classroom, but also notably in her extracurricular after school activity, piano.

"I would say especially in the AP classes in high school, they were never afraid to, I don't want to say speak their mind, but I guess, yeah, speak their mind…I learned that to like, kind of, like advocate for yourself… White kids are, at least from my experience, definitely go-getters. Like, most of the people who are in the top 25 with me [at her high school], were White. They are always going to go and do something good with their lives. But, yeah, so that's what helped me because I'm like, 'Okay, well, if they can do it, then, you know, I can do it too, regardless of where they live, what their family life is like, how much the economics… like it doesn't matter'. They're sitting right next to me, like, you are my equal."

Kameron also learned the behavior of advocating for herself as well as the attitude of being a go-getter from the White students around her. This is cultural capital acquisition that Kameron gained from being around and observing White students.

In addition to cultural capital acquisition from White students to Black students, there were various other forms of cultural capital transfer going on. Another type of cultural capital transfer was capital transfer from Black students to White students. This was mentioned much less, but was still of note, especially in the older generation. The transfer of Black cultural

capital, although it is typically not valued in the classroom or helpful towards success in the classroom, it is still just as important. This transfer of Black cultural capital to White students was only mentioned by the older generation. Luis mentioned it in an impactful story.

"I got called a n[…] for the first time… in my development. And I ended up fighting him right then and there. But we became cool after that…. Because I'd say 'I ain't gonna take that' and then he… I think it's just ignorance. White people aren't exposed to us because they live in a White world. But we're exposed to them; We know their culture, their history, their everything. We know how to talk like them, we know how to walk like them, we know how to do everything like them because we live in a White world. They, on the other hand, their microscope is non-existent, because they live in the world that they live in: White. So, once he got exposed to me, he understood that I was just like him other than the melanin in my skin and the curliness of my hair. I pretty much was the same dude."

Other interviewees from the older generation mentioned this, but only briefly. Similarly, though, interviewees of the older generation also mentioned the creation of new culture between White and Black classmates. For example, Shondra talked about her basketball team, mentioning that her White teammates got to learn culture from her and her Black teammates, but that they also created shared experiences.

"But even with, you know, us being the majority, you know, we all still formed that, formed that bond. But it was more like, they were kind of learning from us, in a sense, …we were able to actually meet their parents, because, you know, the parents come to the games, and they're cheering. They're not just cheering their child on, they're cheering the whole team. Yeah. So, they were able to learn our names. And we were able to recognize 'Oh that Sally's mom',

well, that's Mary's mom", you know. So that kind of created more, you know, more relationships."

Raven also mentioned the idea of connecting over shared cultural experiences with her White peers.

"If I'm in [high school] in 1988 and I'm enjoying the ski club, and me joining the ski club is going to send me on a ski trip, I'm likely going to be the only Black person on the ski trip. Maybe there's one more, right. So, what am I going to do? Am I going to socially interact? Of course I am. And in those interactions [with the White students on the trip], I'm going to understand that we have more similarities than we do differences. So, once I realized that, then that just opens a door for whatever connection is going to bloom from it."

From the younger generation, comments about Black cultural capital were only mentioned between Black peers only. Rebekah talked about how her conversations always had to be different depending on if she was interacting with Black classmates or White classmates. She said,

"I just had different conversations with my Black friends than my White ones. Let me think of an example… I could talk to my Black friends about something related to, let's say that my mom got mad at me for something, because I didn't do the dishes. I could talk to my Black friends about that because they can relate but my White friends go home, and mommy and daddy do the dishes for them. The privilege they have and the ways they were raised in general. It makes a difference."

Cultural capital transfer and acquisition was mentioned in a few different ways amongst both interview groups. The acquisition of the dominant (White) cultural capital by Black

interviewees was the transfer most mentioned and the only transfer mentioned by both interview

groups. Noting that it was mentioned more with the older generation might imply that the

integration of schools during that time, although still somewhat segregated, may have led to this.

      This theme links directly to my theory and research questions around cultural capital.

Questions 3 & 4 are as follows: 3. How does access to dominant cultural capital affect

educational outcomes/experiences for Black students in the public school system? Does more

dominant cultural capital lead to better educational outcomes/experiences for Black students?

and 4. Can cultural capital be transferred amongst peer groups and integrated social groups, such

as integrated schools and classrooms or various. These questions are both partially answered by

data from the interviews. Many interviewees said themselves that they felt cultural capital that

they acquired from their White peers helped their academic success. My data does not confirm or

deny that those individuals with more dominant cultural capital have higher educational

outcomes because of it. More research would need to be done to explore this connection more.

Finally, my theory that cultural capital can be gained through peer relationships was fully

supported. You can see that this happened in multiple different ways through the excerpts

included in this section.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1: Theoretical & Practical Implications

The data analysis indicates that there is a large disparity between majority White and majority Black schools in Delaware. Students in majority Black schools are performing much worse than their peers in majority White schools. I set out to find out some of the reasons for this disparity through performing 12 interviews. The interviews partially supported the data displayed above by the lack of mention of diversity in high schools from the younger generation. Interviews also highlighted the existence of benefits that could come from interacting with White students, supporting the data as well.

The data shows stark differences between majority Black and majority White schools in Delaware, clearly showing a disparity. This suggests that segregation of schools is a negative phenomenon, as it exacerbates inequality. Black students in Delaware are far below proficiency and lagging extremely behind when compared to their White peers in other schools. This should be alarming. This trend is not unique to Delaware and is present across the entire country.

Another implication of my findings includes ways in which language around integration is used. Throughout this thesis, I have focused on segregation and integration. These terms are at the root of my research questions. Through interviews and the theme of Segregation in Schools, this existence of segregation even in spaces that should have been integrated was clear. As I unpacked this, I discovered a thought process of trying to find out what integration truly means in a school setting. This led me to think about and look into the differences between integration and desegregation. Desegregation is a term that is most often used in legal terms to describe

policy processes that refer to the diversity of people in a physical space. Integration, on the other hand, is used to talk about the social aspect of a physical space. It speaks more to the social groups and relationships within a diverse physical space also being diverse and mixed (Krovetz 247, 1972; Hasa 2021). While I focus on and talk about integration all throughout my research, and don't mention desegregation nearly as often, this is a distinction that I have to think about. Due to the fact that this is research focused more on social processes rather than legal ones, it supports my use of the term integration. The discovery that schools were never truly integrated, even when policies encouraged this, brings this distinction to light. This would mean that desegregation occurred in Delaware, but integration never did.

This desegregation that we saw in Delaware through the 80s until 1995 was only that and not integration. This meant a mix of students in a school. Students came from various different neighborhoods and backgrounds. There are definitely some positive impacts of this. Desegregation in schools leads to more equity in resources. Now that classrooms are mixed, the higher socioeconomic status families and the families with resources can share their resources more equitably. This would be the same for teachers. The good teachers will be spread amongst schools. These are some of the impacts that integration by desegregation can bring. Interviewees from a time where this type of integration was successful mentioned some other benefits such as learning from some of their White classmates, noting that some of these things learned helped them in the classroom (Siegel-Hawley 2020).

Although this desegregation presents some positive impacts, true integration could have even more positive impacts on students. Integration should be redefined to mean that not only are

the faces in a classroom diverse but also that the relationships and social groups amongst those students within the classroom are diverse and integrated as well.

My research question and theory around the transfer of cultural capital could only be partially supported because of this lack of true integration in the time of desegregation in Delaware Public Schools. Despite this, interviewees could report the transfer and acquisition of cultural capital from their White classmates. I believe that this could happen so much more and in so many different and beneficial ways if those classrooms were truly integrated, meaning that the social groups reflected this.

True integration is achievable, but unfortunately it will take a lot more than just policy. Although this is a long path, the first step to integration is indeed desegregation. Policy change around desegregation, like what occurred in Delaware, is the only way the physical spaces of education will include diverse faces. Then, with diverse faces, integration can begin to be achieved by implementing additional practices that encourage different types of interactions, including diverse relationships and social groups. Desegregation is a step towards integration but certainly isn't the only step or the main step.

The overarching mention of code switching was also a major finding. Although it is not clear where this is learned, most interviewees from both groups learned this skill and were able to acquire this specific cultural capital at some point before high school. This implies that there is a different culture, other than the Black cultural capital that is learned and used in Black households, that is praised and becomes necessary for success in the classroom. Although they could not remember where they learned to code switch, every interviewee did mention at least one space in which they were exposed to White people before or throughout high school. I

wonder if this isn't the case for a student, if academic success would even be possible for them or if code switching is a requirement for success. Due to the frequency of its mention, my data would suggest that is essential.

General cultural capital is also proved to be transferred among peers in this data. This introduces a new layer to cultural capital transfer, adding peers to a short list of individuals in which cultural capital can be gained from.

Additionally, these findings suggest several strategies that schools administrators and policy makers might employ in order to raise achievement of Black students. First, how integration is defined should be changed. In the 1980s and early 90s, Delaware's schools were integrated, by definition. They were so integrated that the federal government granted them unitary status and stopped overseeing the bussing policies. Even in this time, almost every interviewee from my sample talked about the existence of segregation in their particular high school. True integration could come with many different benefits for all students. But these benefits would not be reaped if the definition of integration remains to be only about who is in the room. The definition of integration is too broad and should be more specific. True integration should include descriptions about the interactions, relationships, and level of comfortability between various races. My research suggests that the older generation may have had a greater possibility of higher educational outcomes because of some integration. I believe this should be done again, and in more places than just Delaware. This is practical and possible! Although currently, Delaware Public Schools are no longer integrated, the past shows that they can be. But the past also shows that more would have needed to be done in order to be truly integrated.

I'd propose creating and maybe even forcing opportunities for all students to share experiences with their other classmates that look different from them. Extracurriculars, such as sports, could be a great way to do this. Creating groups or teams within school would be effective as well. By this, I mean creating groups that are consistent in events and competitions year-round. This would allow students to get to know each other through collaboration during the specific events, but also give them shared experiences and a shared cause that they can bond over. This may lead to true integration.

My research also emphasizes the importance of mentors that can relate to one's experiences. The frequency of Black teachers being a resource to my interviewees was eye-opening. It leads me to believe that same-race mentorship is something that truly brings value to life and can also be a great academic resource for Black students. Knowing this, I also propose mentorship programs for Black students. Students should be paired specifically with a Black teacher or administrator within their school as a go-to resource for them. This could have many benefits, making Black students feel more comfortable in a space that isn't built for them (the American education system), increasing educational outcomes, and more. This is something that has been proven to be helpful in college settings and I propose that high school students would benefit from a program like this as well.

Finally, I propose that all education systems and curriculums must be restructured to represent all groups. Throughout my research, I research questions only revolve around the acquisition of White cultural capital helping educational outcomes. Although I believe that this is currently true, I do not believe that the education system should be that way. It would be an incredible step towards equity if all cultures were a part of every classroom. For Black students,

Black cultural capital must be included, valued, and even taught in classrooms. It should be the same for every racial and ethnic group. This should be done in an effort to level the playing field for students, no matter what they look like or where they come from. This would result in the necessity for all types of cultural capital to be valued and rewarded in the classroom and, therefore, a transfer of all types of cultural capital to all students. This would also eliminate the need for Black students to learn just White cultural capital in the classroom, while White students currently have no need to learn other cultures except their own. Imagine a curriculum that taught a bit of each culture and used strategies that were utilized and learned in all different kinds of households. Ultimately, this would make education more equitable, by taking Whiteness out of the center and allowing all culture to be rewarded and necessary in all classrooms.

5.2: Limitations

Some limitations presented themselves throughout this research project. The first was a lack of data in Delaware for the data analysis. My desire for the data analysis was to gather more current data that would reflect Delaware public schools around the time the 'younger generation' went to high school, which was achieved. But I also wanted to gather similar data for the 'older generation' to track achievement and achievement differences between both generations. Unfortunately, there is no data that dates back far enough to do this. This only allowed me to take a snapshot of the data. Additionally, Delaware, being a fairly small state, does not have a large amount of public schools. This made for a smaller data set, which limits types of statistical analyses that I can implement. Data also comes from achievement on a specific standardized test that students took. While state tests tend to be used as a proxy for student knowledge, it is

important to recognize that knowledge can come in forms different from those assessed on state tests.

Additionally, during interviews, I used snowball sampling which presented some limitations as well. Because I recruited my participants using snowball sampling, my sample is unrepresentative of the larger population of Black students that went to Delaware Public Schools in the 80s and early 90s as well as 2015-2020. Because I recruited using my family's and my own connections, my sample may have been skewed to be of a higher socioeconomic status.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Woods, K., URIRB211101

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Kayla Woods

Interviewee:

My student research is titled The Impact of Segregation and Desegregation Policies on Academic Achievement of Black Students in Delaware Public Schools. I'm aiming to find out the level of the achievement gap amongst black students and other students in these schools and aim to find solutions that may alleviate this. I also hope that my research findings can influence educational equity nationally.

Please review and sign the consent form.

Interview Questions:

1 Where did you attend high school?
   a. Why did you attend this school (asking about zoning vs. school choice situation etc.)
2 What was your high school experience like?
3 How would you describe the demographics of your high school?
4 How would you describe your friend groups throughout high school?
   a. What did you talk about in this friend group?
   b. What did you learn from this group of friends?
   c. What do you think made you fit into this group?
   d. Are there any stand-out moments/memories with this group?
5 What kind of activities did you participate in outside of school, if any?
6 How would you describe the group you participated in this activity with?
   a. What did you talk about in this friend group?
   b. What did you learn from this group of friends?
   c. What do you think made you fit into this group?
   d. Are there any stand-out moments/memories with this group?
7 What was your neighborhood like growing up?
   a. Zip code?
   b. Did you spend a lot of time in your neighborhood?
   c. Have any neighborhood friends?

8 How would you describe the demographics of your neighborhood?

9 How would you describe your group of neighborhood friends that you hung out with?

    a. What did you talk about in this friend group?

    b. What did you learn from this group of friends?

    c. What do you think made you fit into this group?

    d. Are there any stand-out moments/memories with this group?

10 Tell me about your family.

    a. What race/ethnicity are they?

    b. Your relationship with them.

    c. Their education levels.

11 What resources did you use in high school that you feel like helped your academic achievement?

12 How far did you take your education? (Ex. high school diploma, went to college, got a Master's degree, etc.)