

5-29-2018

Anti-Black School Policy Making: A Critical Policy Analysis of the Wellston/Normandy Merger

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Anti-Black School Policy Making:
A Critical Policy Analysis of the Wellston/Normandy Merger

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A Dissertation Submitted to
The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

August
2018

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Abstract

This study explores the closing of Wellston School District as an act of contempt and oppression. This study looks at the history of the Wellston community and also examines many micro-aggressive acts of oppression. Also, examined and discussed will be the impact of economic disenfranchisement, demographic change, historical memory, and school funding and accountability. This study uncovered a counter-narrative that helps to usurp the prevailing master narrative and rhetoric surrounding the closing and subsequent merger of the Wellston School District with the Normandy School District.

This historical analysis will rely heavily upon the use of CRT to undergird the conceptual analysis, while looking through the lens of history with objective eyes to uncover the real reason the state of Missouri closed the Wellston School District.

Keywords: CRT, school closure, economic disenfranchisement, school accountability, school funding, anti-Black.

Dedication

This journey has been tremendous and gratifying. I have come to terms with so much and have forgiven myself for much more. This forgiveness and acceptance of my lack of knowledge of self and of my history has been a humbling experience. I would first and foremost like to give thanks to the most high. This journey has connected me to a spiritual, mental, and physical space unlike any other. I would like to thank my family and friends who have sustained me in my journey. I can only hope that my successes will be a small gift of gratitude for all they have done for me. To my grandmother Lizzie Tobias and Grandfather Morris Tobias, I owe so much to you for your sacrifices, both known and unknown. From a dirt road in Mississippi to Saint Louis and raising a black family in a time of so much darkness, I appreciate you. I thank you the life lessons taught from your words and from your discipline. Also, my mother Diane Higgins who has shown me the importance of hard work and a life of service dedicated to the ones you love. Raising 5 girls and 2 boys, I applaud you for giving to me through your actions what words never could. A special gift of thanks goes to my wife, Shonda who has diligently supported me and encouraged me to fight the good fight to the end and carried me through many points of this journey. Many times my mind and body told me to stop you cannot go any further. She always reminded me of who was watching and that I can still do so much more. Thanks to my children Devon, Carter, and Jackson who have

brought me so many years of joy. Who through their smiles and frustrations motivated me pushed me on; my committee for dedicating their time to helping me pursue my dreams; my ancestors who sacrificed so much for me to live to realize my dreams.

This would not be if not for the guidance and leadership of Dr. Matthew Davis. This labor of love was a product of his leadership, understanding, and persistent pushing. He has challenging me to think critically of accepted histories and analyze conventionally to discover the depth and insidious veil of master narratives. A special thank you is needed to those individuals who helped and served on my dissertation committee. The task of helping the next generation of critical thinkers is a tremendous responsibility. I believe that my committee has pushed me to explore and question like never before and for that I am eternally grateful.

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Chapter One

Introduction

“Until the lion learns to speak, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” (African Proverb)

The significance within the message of this old African proverb still rings true today. This research will usurp the current master narrative that Wellston School District was closed and merged with the Normandy School District for the benefit of the students. Despite public rhetoric, neither the closure and subsequent merger were preordained. The policy decision was deliberate and strategic with a small number of goals involved. This precedent helped set in motion the tipping point for the reorganization and restructuring of predominately African American schools within the North County area of Saint Louis. This restructuring effort includes charter schools, school choice, and state controlled schools. The counter narrative will offer a rich in-depth explanation for the closing of Wellston School District that goes beyond public speculation and the premise of school accountability.

Growing up in the North County area of Saint Louis metropolitan area near Wellston, I never thought about why the majority of African Americans not residing in Saint Louis City lived in the North County area of Saint Louis. I grew up in Berkeley, which is a small community located in the North County section of Saint Louis. I attended school at the old Berkeley High located near the airport before the talk of airport expansion helped close the school doors. However, the researcher I am today believes it had more to do with containing the African American population. Berkeley was one of three schools within the Ferguson Florissant school district. Growing up, Berkeley was considered that black school in the district with

African American student population always hovering above 90% in the 1990's and still currently today population demographics remain the same.¹ Berkeley High and Wellston High mirrored each other significantly in many demographic areas such as: school size, socioeconomic class, and racial composition. However, when Berkeley High closed its doors it was reborn as McCluer South-Berkeley while Wellston was merged with the Normandy School District.

It never occurred to me that the many different municipalities that fuse together to make up the region of the metropolitan area called Saint Louis County is the exception for city planning and not the norm. I can vividly remember questioning the purpose of having so many smaller municipalities and having a separate city and county. As a teenager and young adult, I had various encounters with white law enforcement officers driving through predominately African American municipalities. This situation was so bad that many of my friends and other African American acquaintances routinely choose not to drive to and through these areas. Recently, tactics like ticketing for profit has come under much scrutiny. However, disenfranchisement of African American peoples in these areas has caused much strife, confusion, and animosity in the Saint Louis areas. The individuals in control of these African American places do not look like the people occupying these spaces. African Americans current level of discontent has been observed and evident with recent riots and protesting in the North County area of Saint Louis. These riots and protests were spurred by the murder of an unarmed Black teen in the Ferguson area of North County by a white police officer. The connection between policing and policies that negatively target African Americans disproportionately has

¹ DESE

been a topic of much discussion of many researchers.² The anti-Black sentiments have been incessant in the Saint Louis region and across the United States. It is what researcher Saidiya Hartman describes as the “afterlife of slavery”. She insists that; “Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery, skewed life chances limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration and impoverishment.”³ Many would argue that we are in a post-racial America, an America where race has less of an implication on success and hard work determines success as evident by the election of our country’s first biracial president. However, through the work of researchers like Michael Dumas, we can conclude that there is a strong sentiment of anti-Blackness permeating underneath antiquated “melting pot” rhetoric. Dumas substantiates and confirms that race relations are still that of Master and Slave.⁴ Dumas, also theorizes that “Black people exist in a structurally antagonistic relationship with Humanity.”⁵ To bolster his claim of an anti-Black America, Dumas enlist the work of many Afro-pessimism scholars, researchers such as Frank Wilderson and Orlando Patterson reinforce the anti-Black or Afro-pessimism stance of Blacks and race relations. Wilderson in particular argues,

“Our analysis cannot be approached through the rubric of gains or reversals in struggles with the state and civil society, not unless and until the interlocutor first explains how the Slave is of this world. The onus is not on one who posits the Master/Slave dichotomy but

² Brunson, Rod K. ““police don't like black people”: African-American young men's accumulated police experiences.” *Criminology & Public Policy* 6, no. 1 (2007): 71-101

³ Hartman, S.J.V., (2007) *Lose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave route*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

⁴ Dumas, Michael J. "Against the dark: Anti-Blackness in education policy and discourse." *Theory Into Practice* 55, no. 1 (2016): 11-19.

⁵ *Ibid*

on the one who argues there is a distinction between Slaveness and Blackness. How, when, and where did such a split occur (11)?”

Dumas, Wilderson, and Hartman all posit that racism and anti-Blackness has never left. This speculation is important as it helps frame the biased decisions formerly and currently affecting African American school districts within Saint Louis and nationwide.

Wellston, Missouri is one of the many municipalities located within the Saint Louis County region. Currently, Wellston is in a state of decay, devoid of industry and much business except for local corner stores. Much of the rich history of Wellston has been forgotten and the documentation has been lost or destroyed. Various efforts have been made to reach out to the Normandy School district in an attempt to gain access to crucial records and information. These efforts have been in vain. After many discussions and various failed attempts, Normandy conceded to not having the information and further stating it may have been destroyed. The master narrative surrounding the merger of a school district is shrouded in fiscal accountability, school funding and inadequate state assessment performance. However, my research will delve into many more factors that signified the end of an era.

Likely, if any had been prescient at the time, we would have seen the writing on the wall for Wellston. The United States government waged war on African American schools through the ruse of improving student achievement by way of various accountability measures that negatively impacted African American schooling from the beginning.⁶ One such tactic was to attach student performance with federal funding and penalizing districts that underperformed.

⁶ Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 1988.

This tactic of penalization only helped to exacerbate the problem of underperforming schools and gave policy makers ammunition to close Black schools. Couple student achievement with discriminatory housing that devalues African American neighborhoods and an assessed property valuation funding scheme that penalizes low socioeconomic areas such as Wellston and policy makers have ammunition to close schools and the emergence of the business formula driven charter schools. This new school choice initiative in Missouri is slowly seeping into North Saint Louis County and will only further the void of educational opportunities withheld from Blacks based on racist policies.

Saint Louis and Wellston have both changed drastically since segregation was outlawed. Older white individuals will speak with a flare of nostalgia in their tone, questioning and wondering what went wrong with the country and how did things get so bad. I contend that for the African American things have always been bad and that their ideas or nostalgia are skewed with overt racism, Jim Crow, redlining, segregation, lynching, and white supremacy. For many like my grandparents struggling in Mississippi the conditions became too harsh. This set in motion for many blacks a great exodus.

Moving North

Economic opportunity made St. Louis City one of the most populous cities of the early 20th century as the black population nearly quadrupled in size.⁷ Soon more southern blacks came north in search of jobs and economic advancement.⁸ My own grandmother and grandfather

⁷ Gordon, Colin. *Mapping decline: St. Louis and the fate of the American city*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

⁸ Heathcott Joseph. "Urban activism in a downsizing world: neighborhood organizing in postindustrial Chicago." *City & Community* 4, no. 3(2005): 277-294

migrated from the hostility of south, specifically Mississippi, in hopes of a better life and opportunity for themselves and their children. However, this was not the reality of the North. Many African Americans encountered much racial hostility and exclusion in the form of de jure segregation. Colin Gordon stated, “The migration of African Americans from the rural South to St. Louis, Missouri, must have resembled a Negro invasion.”⁹ Subsequently an attempt was made by local whites to corral and contain the influx in black population in the area. Local whites began instituting various measures of bigotry and Jim Crow Laws that resembled the racism of the South.¹⁰ These Jim Crow laws had only one purpose, which was to significantly improve the situation of whites while in turn systematically discouraging blacks away from equality.¹¹ This is also the beginning of suburbanization and the creation of Wellston, a small densely populated suburb that will serve as the inspiration for this research.

The origins of Wellston appear in the outskirts of Saint Louis city’s west side. Wellston was started as a product of “home rule” legislation designed to further the aspirations of local government without the cumbersome meddling from the state government.¹² Home rule is the equivalent to small and local government. Home rule was originally created to manage the fast-paced growth of large cities and aspirations of local politicians. Home rule was supposed to fix the quandary of the growing city, however in Saint Louis it became a bridge for local government and the creation of countless municipalities in the Saint Louis region. Wellston was one of the many new municipalities born in the ruins of the Saint Louis City’s separation from

⁹ Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 13.

¹⁰ Heathcott, Joseph. "Black Archipelago: politics and civic life in the Jim Crow city." *journal of social history* 38, no. 3 (2005): 705-736.

¹¹ Woodward, C. Vann. *The strange career of Jim Crow*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

¹² *ibid*

Saint Louis County. According to research conducted by Colin Gordon, home rule was available to any city in Missouri with a population over 5,000 or and assessed property value of 4,500,000.¹³ While Saint Louis City became landlocked, increasingly minority, and unable to lengthen its boundaries, industries began to move away from the city and sought whiter suburban areas along the outskirts of the city to operate their businesses. Industries followed the demographic change and flight of Saint Louis city's white residents and headed toward suburbia.¹⁴ White flight and economic decline instantly became very problematic for the city of Saint Louis as it was unable to annex land and stood landlocked to the burgeoning growth of Saint Louis County.¹⁵

Currently Saint Louis is the battleground for school choice. This notion of school choice has been moving to the forefront of education and serves as an interesting irony. While Wellston was undergoing multiple punitive measures from the state of Missouri, the option of school choice never came into the equation.

Merging Districts

The *Saint Louis Post Dispatch* reported that many families within the Wellston and Normandy community were worried about the impending merger between the Normandy and Wellston School Districts.¹⁶ Was this a merger or was this a way to dissolve a district and gain control of another. Wellston was consumed by the Normandy School District under the orders of

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Williams, Barbara R. *St. Louis: a city and its suburbs*. Rand, 1973.

¹⁶ lthorsen@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8126e, Leah Thorsen. "School merger draws fire - At forum that draws more than 400 people, Wellston district residents question whether Normandy schools are much better.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (MO), December 15, 2009: A2, accessed December 28, 2016, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/12C9E4F3DBEC4120?p=AWNB>.

the Missouri Department of Education. Numerous public conversations were held to discuss the transition while parents and community members vocalize their discontent. Public discontent with the merger was noticeably visible when the state's commissioner of education, Chris Nicastro, held a town hall forum for a crowd of more than 400 concerned citizens. Many citizens routinely shouted out their disapproval of the merger and remained staunchly opposed as they expressed feelings of resentment and anger that their opinions were not heard nor considered before the merger vote.¹⁷ This opposition to the merger was due in large to notion of sending students from one struggling district to another struggling district. This fact largely undermines the argument that school accountability was one of the main factors associated with the merger of The Wellston and Normandy school districts.

However, many proponents of the merger cite the lack of fiscal responsibility on the part of the district, the decaying state of many of the schools within the district, and failure to maintain adequate yearly progress as defined by the U.S. Education Department. These concerns were also echoed by Chris Nicastro at subsequent town hall meetings with citizens concerned about the merger. Currently, much of Wellston is a ghost town marked by many abandoned properties, liquor stores, and despair. Wellston's current status is a far cry from its past heyday when the city was home to many industries and businesses. These industries include ABEX Corporation, Wagner Electric, and Saint Louis Street Car Company. Lack of fiscal responsibility on behalf of the district is also a moot point when the district is merged and students are sent to another impoverished school district that eventually transitioned to state control within five years after the merger. Leaving the formidable question to ponder, why did the state of Missouri merge

¹⁷ iBid

The Wellston School District with Normandy? Funding and accountability issues beleaguered many other school districts within the North County region, however these districts were not selected for mergers but remained intact.

My research will examine the policies and decisions that led to the state takeover of Wellston School District. Wellston was targeted for state takeover through accountability measures and subsequently merged with Normandy. This study will examine the conditions that contributed to the school district's decline and its eventual merger. Many of the ills that plagued Wellston as a small community have also plagued other communities and school districts within and outside of the Saint Louis area. However, despite the size of Wellston many other districts share a commonality with Wellston. These districts also happen to be predominately African American and significantly affected by annual yearly performance.

Overview

School district accountability and funding have been focal points of many debates.¹⁸ From equity in school funding to school accreditation the debate is ongoing.¹⁹ However, when examining school accountability measures, one must consider the impact merging school districts and state-controlled schools have on student achievement. Wellston was not the first school district to shutter its doors, however, the reason why is still a question left unanswered. To begin understanding why the state merged Wellston with Normandy we must first sift through the ramifications of school accountability in urban areas. Most urban areas are seen as

¹⁸ Fryer Jr, Roland G., and Steven D. Levitt. "Understanding the black-white test score gap in the first two years of school" *Review of Economics and Statistics* 86, no. 2 (2004): 447-464.

¹⁹ Noguera, Pedro A. *The trouble with black boys: And other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

being synonymous with high degrees of poverty, economic decline, and African American populations. Many researchers believe the dire condition of many urban and minority suburban areas are the products of design and not chance.²⁰ This research exams the impact of poverty and economic decline and analyze the conditions that provided the heavy handed reactionary measures of accountability and state takeover of school districts.

This research will also delve into current rhetoric surrounding education since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation which has been focused on school accountability and school funding.²¹ The current formula used for school funding in Missouri and accreditation has placed a stranglehold on many Saint Louis area districts. Wellston, Jennings, Normandy, Riverview, and Saint Louis Public Schools (SLPS) were some of the first school districts within the Saint Louis region to lose state accreditation. Many of these districts have regained control but are still struggling financially and are teetering on the edge of losing accreditation every year. Wellston and Saint Louis City's stories are as closely intertwined. The same forces; economic decline, fragmentation, demographic change, and suburbanization helped pilot both areas into state-controlled school districts.

The Failing of African American Schools

Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice and others perceived *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to be the “great equalizer.” The NAACP claimed *Brown* to be a great victory for African Americans.²² *Brown* was touted as a progressive

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Act, No Child Left Behind. "No child left behind." *nochildleftbehind.gov*(2001).

²² Love, Barbara J. "Brown plus 50 counter-storytelling: A critical race theory analysis of the “majoritarian achievement gap” story." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 37, no. 3 (2004): 227-246.

step toward improving and remedying the past. Brown was a monumental decision that overturned the prior Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) decision which stated that separate facilities for blacks were constitutional as long as they were “equal.”

Separate but equal was the mantra for the Civil Right era racists. However, legal equality and social equality are different and the remnants of racial segregation and white privilege are still abundantly clear in the Saint Louis metropolitan area. The lack of diversity in the Saint Louis Metropolitan area is a clear and present reminder of racism. This is exemplified by the existence of only a few predominantly African American neighborhoods residing outside of the North County, Saint Louis City, and the East Saint Louis area within the entire metropolitan area as documented by the 2010 U.S. Census report.

Ladson-Billings and Tate stated that “school equity in particular, is based on three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. United States society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and consequently, school) inequity.”²³

This last statement is inherently important to school equity and the closure of schools due to financial reasons. Property taxes from businesses and residents still help fund public education in Missouri. Brown v. Board of Education led people to expect equality would be granted, but

²³ Ladson-Billings, Gloria, and William Tate IV. "Toward a critical race theory of education." *The Teachers College Record* 97, no. 1 (1995): 47-68

failed to account for the remaining obstacles led people to expect led people to expect equality would be granted, but failed to account for the remaining obstacles to equity.

Wellston was the first of many predominantly African American school districts that suffered tremendously under NCLB. Many other predominantly African American school districts in the Saint Louis area are teetering on the edge of state takeover. The Normandy School District which was selected to merge with Wellston has already fallen victim to state takeover. Riverview Gardens School District has lost accreditation, Ferguson Florissant and Hazelwood School Districts once considered the jewels within North County have also grown closer to losing accreditation with every passing year.²⁴

The notion of accountability and failing schools only helps solidify white rhetoric, along with black/white achievement gap and other stereotypical propaganda spewed to the masses about African Americans and education.²⁵ The issue of equality has little to do with seats on the bus or white only drinking fountains but rather opportunity, opportunity denied to the African American. Data as current as 2018 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website shows Missouri has over 500 school districts. Of these over 500 school districts only predominately Black school district have seen the state of Missouri take over their schools. Of the aforementioned 500 school districts only predominately Black school districts have been labeled as provisionally accredited or unaccredited.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Card, David, and Jesse Rothstein. "Racial segregation and the black–white test score gap." *Journal of Public Economics* 91, no. 11 (2007): 2158-2184.

With new accountability measures in tow, the federal government under (NCLB 2002) expanded federal control of education. Significant and punitive policies were put in place to pressure schools and school districts like Wellston to increase student achievement in various categories; most notable was reading and math on state standardized test. Schools and school districts performance on yearly state issued standardized test in math and reading were used to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP). Failure to meet AYP brought certain sanctions into play, which included state takeover of failing school districts. These sanctions have generated much fear in many predominantly African American and minority school districts like Wellston. Many predominately African American school districts within the Saint Louis area were already well below the proficiency standards and now they are being penalized and threatened with state takeover and financial restrictions if progress is not made.²⁶ State administered testing only helped bolster the rhetoric of accountability punishing underperforming African American school district without addressing the systemic oppression that contributes to curriculum choice, suspension rates, and racist policies that undermine the education of the African American.

Problem Statement

While some research has been conducted about the failure of the Wellston School District and its subsequent merger with the Normandy School District, much remains unknown. Crucial components including economic decline, a stagnant community, low student achievement and unfair policies all played a part in the demise of Wellston. After years of public education

²⁶ Ibid

reforms intended to narrow the achievement gap and improve urban school performance, such as, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and ESSA, African American children are still overrepresented in categories associated with deficiencies.²⁷ The Wellston School District was labeled as failing and underperforming. The state of Missouri's cure for these ills is state takeover, and when the takeover failed and the special state appointed board could not improve the district, more plans were made to close the school district and send its students to another neighboring school district. This researcher asserts that by doing so they are completely ignoring the impact of local schools on community stability and disallowing the existence of insidious structural and systematic problems that are at fault.

Many assumptions have been made about accountability measures and African American education. The post-Brown era of education for blacks has not been the "great equalizer" it was intended to be. Some would argue that the African Americans are in a far worse position after the Brown decision. This sentiment is expressed in *Silent Covenants*, by CRT theorist and scholar Derrick Bell. In his book he noted a female member of the community as stating, "We got what we fought for but we lost what we had."²⁸ What we had prior to Brown was an overt racism condoned and legitimized by the United States government. Now racism is covert hidden in rhetoric propaganda. The legacy of slavery and racism are still present within the education

²⁷Noguera, Pedro A. "The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males." *Urban education* 38, no. 4 (2003): 431-459.

²⁸Bell, Derrick. *Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

system. African American inferiority is promoted and taught within the curriculum of U.S. schools.²⁹

School administrators are tasked with finding ways to close the mythical “achievement gap” or suffer the consequences. African American students are constantly assaulted with the notion of inadequacy and assimilation from media outlets telling them they are ghetto, poor, unattractive, and criminals. This misrepresentation has infiltrated mainstream thought and tainted public perception.³⁰

However, African Americans make up a small percentage of the poor persons or people living below the poverty line. The actual number is 29 percent of the poor people in the United States are African American.³¹ This misrepresentation fuels white superiority and subsequently reinforces negative stereotypes that African Americans must diligently fight to erase

Purpose of Study

Using archival published data and interviews, the researcher hopes to present a counter narrative of events that resulted in policy changes, closure and concluded with a merger. This will be done while simultaneously showing that racism and oppression tactics still exist in many facets of educational policy and decision-making. Wellston was not a unique situation. Factors and conditions imposed by outside sources helped fuel public rhetoric and misconceptions.

²⁹ King, Joyce E. "Dysconscious racism: Ideology, identity, and the miseducation of teachers." *Journal of Negro Education* (1991): 133-146.

³⁰ Gilens, Martin. "Race and Poverty in America Public Misperceptions and the American News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1996): 515-541.

³¹ U.S. Bureau of Census 1990a

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze policies contributing to state controlled schools that led to dismantling of the Wellston School District and subsequent merger with the Normandy School District. This will be done by examining The Wellston School District and the contextual conditions that contributed to its merger along decisions made by the DESE as it pertained to the Wellston district. Policies and practices after the Brown v. Board decision in Saint Louis through (2015) will be examined and disaggregated. Also demographic change, racism, economic decline and disenfranchisement, and school accountability will be examined throughout this study.

Data provided will offer a snapshot into the racial foundation of the Wellston merger. The researcher will use summative data kept by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to provide a glimpse into the academic achievements of the local school districts within the surrounding area and the financially strapped Wellston school district. My research will help support and define trends and inequities. Variables previously hidden will be exposed such as fragmentation and suburbanization. These inequitable trends only serve to help support the conclusion that Wellston was about much more than school funding and accountability.

Research Question(s)

Numerous outside factors helped contribute to the demise of The Wellston School District. These factors helped to place a community at a disadvantage. From restrictive deed covenants that helped centralize African American poverty to general economic decline, as

industries left urban areas and followed the path of white flight. This disadvantage subsequently moved into the area of education. This research asks the following questions:

1. Why did the state close the Wellston School District?
2. Why was Wellston merged into the Normandy District School District?
3. Why did the state exclude other surrounding districts?
4. Was the merger racially motivated?

It must be noted that the researcher understands that merger is not closure. However, in this instance the Wellston School District was closed and no remnants of the past district remain intact within the Normandy School District. The unjust irony: penalizing failing schools by imposing financial punitive measures that restrict the district even more from educating with equity and reaching the goal of a high quality education for every student. The merger of Wellston and the demise of the city of Wellston happened without much contestation. The signs were evident yet were ignored. These signs include NCLB implementation, charter schools' initiatives, and standardized testing.

Significance of Study

Accountability has become a popular term when referring to policy toward underperforming schools. State and federal government agencies have refocused efforts to close underperforming schools or schools not meeting annual yearly performance (AYP). Many of these underperforming schools are housed in predominately African American neighborhoods

within the Saint Louis metropolitan area. From separate but equal schooling and facilities, Jim Crow laws, and the questionable black/white achievement gap, African American students are in a constant state of oppression and trauma. Mainstream society has become numb to the tragedies of the past and how they still play a prominent role in Missouri's accountability standards and mandates that more often than not have a negative impact on African American school districts. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the foundation of this study and building upon the significant writings of authors such as Derrick Bell (1987), Kimberlié Crenshaw (1995), Richard Delgado (1995), Alan Freeman (1978), and Colin Gordon (2009), the researcher's goal is to present a counter narrative. Daniel G. Solózano states, "A critical race theory in education challenges ahistoricism and unidisciplinary focus of most analyses, and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods."³²

This study will also help dispel the stigma of African American progress in the aftermath of the Brown vs. Board decision. This will be done by retelling the story of the Wellston School District, an urban school district located within the suburbs of Saint Louis.

Delimitations

The researcher acknowledges that the disparities that exist with the Wellston School District as compared to more racially diverse districts are not very unique. Many school districts both local to Saint Louis and across the United States are experiencing oppression through accountability education. This study would undoubtedly benefit from comparison studies of

³² Solózano, Daniel G. "Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars." *International journal of qualitative studies in education* 11, no. 1 (1998): 121-136

other school districts. However, Wellston is unique in that it was merged with another lower performing school district. This research will focus on the Wellston School District and the disparities that occurred that led to the Normandy merger. The researcher has also chosen to focus on the time period leading up to the decision to merge and the subsequent merger.

Limitations

One of the many travesties that occurred with the merger is the mishandling of records. Many of the documents for the Wellston School District are not available. After several very unsuccessful attempts to gain access to public information from superintendents meeting about policy and school board meeting minutes' access was not given. The researcher was routinely promised access and turned away. Subsequently, on my final attempts the researcher was informed via email that all information about the district was either lost or destroyed. The trajectory and timing of this travesty is devastating. Normandy as of 2015 is under state control, and the narrative continues to get muddled with inaccuracies of accountability. It must also be noted that during the final years of Wellston the former Superintendent Ronald Stodghill had filed a lawsuit against the district for wrongful termination. In his lawsuit against the district he asserts that his termination was based false accusation that he knew, permitted, condoned, or encouraged teacher and/or administrators to falsify test scores.³³

³³ Ibid

Summary

The history of public schools in urban areas in the United States has always been tumultuous for African American students. From Normal Schools and County Training Schools to Common Schools whites have always sought to control the education of African Americans. Wellston and Normandy endured this in the form of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and reforms. NCLB education reform includes the following measures:

1. All states are expected to choose their own assessments with three performance levels (advanced, proficient, basic)
2. All schools receiving federal funding are required to test all students in grades three through eight. They must also disaggregate scores based on race, ethnicity, and etc.
3. States were required to establish timelines to show 100 percent proficiency in reading and mathematics.
4. All schools and districts must make AYP for every subgroup.
5. Any school not making adequate progress would be labeled a school in need of improvement (SINI).³⁴

The need for whites to control the destiny of the African Americans and other macroaggressions against African Americans to protect white space is often unrecognizable in today's society.

One explanation of this is "cultural theory" and "group threat" theory which both try to explain anti-Black prejudice. Dixon and Rosenbaum researched extensively on this phenomenon of anti-Black stereotypes. Cultural theory emphasizes that prejudices and stereotypes are historical and

³⁴Ravitch, Diane. The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education. Basic Books, 2016.

passed down through cultures.³⁵This anti-Black sentiment seems to be raging in educational areas such as public and private schools which were once considered a white space. Whites get to define blacks and subsequently define what is acceptable and what is not.³⁶ These attacks and anti-Black rhetoric helped fuel the biases and stereotypes that are associated with Jim Crow and de facto racism. The American Dream was never meant to include the African American and equal education for all has only become an extension of privilege for whites.³⁷ The ill-reputed President Bill Clinton, whom through his 1994 crime bill help destroy countless African American homes described the American Dream as: “The American dream that we are all raised on is a simple but powerful one – if you work hard and play by the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you.”³⁸ Whites view race and racism as a zero sum game; that for every equality or privilege given to African American they in turn have lost something or something is being taken from them.³⁹ This was extremely evident through school desegregation laws, restrictive deed covenants, and punitive school accountability measures. Researchers Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith have deemed this new era of racism as Laissez - Faire racism.⁴⁰ Wellston School District serves as the canary in the coal mine. The demise of Wellston serves as a warning to the other predominantly African American schools within Saint Louis. Why did the state close the Wellston School District? This researcher will attempt to

³⁵ Dixon, Jeffrey C., and Michael S. Rosenbaum. "Nice to Know You? Testing Contact, Cultural, and Group Threat Theories of Anti-Black and Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes." *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2004): 257-280.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Hochschild, Jennifer L., and Nathan Scovronick. *The American dream and the public schools*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Harvard

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Norton, Michael I., and Samuel R. Sommers. "Whites see racism as a zero-sum game that they are now losing." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 3 (2011): 215-218.

⁴⁰ Bobo, Lawrence, James R. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith. "Laissez-faire racism: The crystallization of a kinder, gentler, antiblack ideology." *Racial attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and change* 15 (1997): 23-25.

unravel the convoluted case of oppression tactics through state funding, testing, and economic disenfranchisement.

Definitions

Achievement Gap - Used to illustrate the empirical difference between the percentage of individuals from one particular sub-group and the individuals from a different sub-group as measured by proficiency on high-stakes testing.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – “The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) increased the federal oversight and involvement in the test-based accountability movement with its goal of all children meeting standard by 2014. To measure progress toward this goal, each state created a series of intermediate goals (Radmer, 2012).”

Anti-Black – Policies or attitudes that are opposed or hostile to Black people.

Brown V. Board of Education, Topeka, KS. – Supreme Court ruling that deemed racial segregation in the school setting to be unlawful.

Counter Narrative – A perspective generated by those outside of the dominant group. The Counter Narrative is a tool utilized by the oppressed to dispel and challenge the Master Narrative.

Critical Race Theory- “Recognizes that racism is engrained [sic] in the fabric and system of the American society. The individual racist need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color” (UCLA School of Public Affairs).

De Jure Segregation- Segregation that is imposed by the law.

Home Rule- Any city having more than 10,000 inhabitants may frame and adopt a charter for its own government. (Westbrook, 1968)

Institutionalized Racism- “Structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, opportunities of society by race.” (Jones C.P., 2002)

Inner-Ring Suburb- “Community located within a very close proximity to a more densely populated urban setting” (Jacobson, 2013).

Internalized Oppression – As a result of racism and oppression acts of self-deprecation and self-destruction that stem from one's internalized self-hatred.

Institutionalized Oppression: “privileged groups that have institutional power and the ability to systematically enforce their views” (Goodman, 2001).

Master Narrative – The mainstream assumptions promoted by the dominant group. The Master Narrative creates and assumed reality in society, which is a tool utilized by the dominant group to maintain supremacy.

Restrictive Covenants: “Before the 1970s, these covenants were legally used for segregationist purposes. A covenant promised that only members of a certain race could occupy the property. However, many African Americans openly defied these covenants and attempted to "pioneer" restricted areas” (Journal of Urban History 36:4 (July 2010), 485-506).

Redlining: “Redlining is the practice of withholding mortgage credit from an entire neighborhood with the ultimate result that the neighborhood succumbs to deterioration” (Kantor and Nystuen, 1982).

Subgroup- Specific demographic group or groups consisting of 40 or more students in a school or district setting who share similar characteristics. These characteristics can include race, gender, physical or learning disabilities, and socioeconomic status to name a few.

White Privilege- The patterning of racial advantage and dominance for White people imbedded into cultural norms. White privilege is facilitated through the tacit practices of White power-holders and policy-makers. The condition of White privilege places the needs and interests of White people in the foreground while relegating the needs of interests to the background.⁴¹ White privilege can also be explicit, direct and confrontational as opposed to the calmer tacit version.

White Space: Space dominated explicitly and/or implicitly by Whites. White space refers to those areas that honor and protect Whiteness at the expense and exclusion of other races and

⁴¹ Gillbourne, D. (2005). “Educational Policy as an Act of White Supremacy: Whiteness, Critical Race Theory, and Education Reform. Journal of Education Policy, 20, 4: 484-505.

cultures. Endres and Gould describe White space as areas that “exhibit ongoing performances of White privilege through discourse and other practices.”⁴²

White Supremacy: A political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions, and social settings. (Francis Lee Ansley)

⁴² Endres, Danielle and Gould, Mary(2009)“I Am Also in the Position to Use My Whiteness to Help Them Out”: The Communication of Whiteness in Service Learning’, *Western Journal of Communication*,73:4,418 — 436.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review
Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide an assortment of literature associated with African American education and oppression, school accountability, and white privilege. This chapter will serve to set the foundation for examining the true reason for the Wellston and Normandy merger. The themes, although separate, will help to paint a vivid picture of privilege and oppression and racism in the policy-making decisions.

White Schools and Black Faces

When former Arkansas Governor, Orval Faubus, ordered National Guard troops to prevent African American students from entering an all-white school, a tone was set. White America did not want African American students in its schools. An image of nine African American school children being ushered into the hostile environment of Little Rock's Central High School in 1957 made headlines around the world.⁴³ What it also did was reinforce that black faces did not belong in white spaces and force must be used to alter this. A state sanctioned blockade and disregard for the federal law was carried out for nearly a month before then acting President Eisenhower ordered U.S. troops to assist the students and protect them from the National Guard who was ordered by Governor Faubus to not allow them entrance to preserve the peace. What was so important about this school that civilian whites were willing to arm themselves and the Governor

⁴³Lyons, James E., and Joanne Chesley. "Fifty years after Brown: The benefits and tradeoffs for African American educators and students." *Journal of Negro Education* (2004): 298-313.

would send in National Guard troops to protect it. The conflict at the school showed African Americans were willing to demand equal access to contested space. African American integration was a symbolic invasion of what was considered white space. As most major invasions in history war is the subsequent outcome. This war is still being fought in the arena of education and education policy.

Decades prior to the debacle in Little Rock was Plessy vs. Ferguson. This was a landmark case waged in 1896 that helped bring about the discussion of “separate but equal” as it pertains to African Americans in the United States: “Homer Plessy refused to give up his seat to a white man on a train in New Orleans...contending that the Louisiana law separating blacks from white on trains violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.”⁴⁴ This court battle and subsequent battles would lead to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Today the NAACP still advocates for the fair treatment of people of color, women, and minorities. However, during the time of segregation fighting for equal rights was a perilous task.

Segregation and white supremacy during the early 1900’s was a way of life. The Supreme Court decision would cause much hysteria across the nation. An anonymous source from the U.S. Supreme court stated: “In 1953, Chief Justice Warren was able to...bring all the Justices to agree to support a unanimous decision declaring segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The decision was announced May, 14, 1954.”⁴⁵ However, the United States

⁴⁴ Anonymous. History of Brown v. Board of Education. US Supreme Courts. <http://www.uscourts.gov/educationalresources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx> . 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid

court could mandate separate but equal as illegal, but it could not prevent white flight, red zoning, blight, and continued education disadvantages and lack of opportunity associated with white supremacy and economic oppression. Many stood in the way on integration and as Thomas O'Brien asserts, "Most governors and legislators in these states [southern states] vowed to uphold state law over federal law and to resist the ruling's implementation."⁴⁶ This anti-Black sentiment still continues today in various forms.

The farce of freedom through hard work and education has still eluded countless African Americans. Dumas identified schools and "schooling a site of Black suffering." Dumas insists that through historical memory and current status the African American is constantly in a state of trauma at schools.⁴⁷ The reality of anti-Blackness in schools is still present as African American students are the unwelcome guests at the educational table of opportunity. Dumas and other researchers such as Salamishah Tillet bring to the forefront of anti-Blackness a condition of Black melancholia or collective experience of social suffering.⁴⁸ African Americans social suffering does not know any boundaries. The trauma ensnares African American students in a white supremacy ideology and pain.

Theoretical Framework and Key Concepts

⁴⁶ O'Brien, "Whatever Happened," 1881.

⁴⁷ Dumas, Michael J. 2014. 'Losing an arm': Schooling as a site of black suffering. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 17 (1): 1-29.

⁴⁸ Ibid

This study will be firmly grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework. CRT has many basic tenets that will be present in this study. They include the following but are not limited to:

1. Expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims or neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
2. Presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.⁴⁹

CRT insists on recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society. CRT's framework is comprised of the five tenets. These tenets are as follows:

1. Racism is a permanent fixture in society, it is deeply embedded in everyday practices, national policies and actions, and it contributes to people's everyday experiences in society;
2. Interest convergence or material determinism because racism advances the interest of the dominant groups in society, there is little incentive to eradicate it. Therefore, and changes beneficial to the minority groups will happen only if the majority has an invested interest in it.
3. The "social construction" thesis holds that race is a social category that society invents, manipulates or discards at convenience, rather than a biological concept.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

4. Differential racialization based on the need of the labor market. Racial classification changes with the political, social, and economic changes in society.
5. People of color have a unique voice that is used to combat popular discourse through personal experiences and counter-stories and therefore have their experiential knowledge validated.⁵¹

CRT begins with its first tenet which is the permanence of racism is engrained in the fabric of society. Racism has permeated through society and is so entrenched that it has almost become indiscernible. CRT helps expose racism, which undergirds a white privilege society. CRT helps to unmask the treacherous face of racism and its practices by challenging the status quo.⁵²

The second tenet of CRT is the concept of counter-storytelling. This method is used to challenge the popular narratives of history and its whitewashing. According to Barnes, “Critical race theorists...integrate their experiential knowledge, drawn from a shared history as “other” with the ongoing struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial harmony.” Using counter storytelling CRT promotes “naming one’s own reality.” CRT urges defiance of the master narrative and instead promotes exploration and analysis of history through a critical race lens.⁵³

Third CRT challenges the approach of liberalism and its perspective. CRT bemoans liberalism and its slow and gradual change and favors broad aggressive and drastic change. Liberalism promotes color blindness while CRT relies heavily upon color. Being color blind

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² IBid

⁵³ iBid

leads one to ignore gross inequities experienced by people of color and ignores the history or racial oppression and its current ramifications in a colorblind society.

Fourth, CRT insists that whites receive tangible advantages and rewards for having white skin. Whites and white supremacy are the direct beneficiaries of racialized exclusion and subjugation. According to Harris, whiteness as property have three levels: the right of possession, the right to use, and the right of disposition.⁵⁴

The last and final tenet of CRT is interest convergence. This tenet states that whites will only support racial justice initiatives if they: also receive some benefit from it. This can be illustrated through affirmative action reform. This reform has always been directly tethered to African Americans and benefiting only them. However, Katznelson, exemplifies through his writing that affirmative action has been and still currently benefits more whites than blacks exponentially.⁵⁵ Additionally Derrick A. Bell asserts, “Whites simply cannot envision the personal responsibility and the potential sacrifice inherent in the conclusion that true equality for [B]lacks will require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for [W]hites.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as property." *Harvard law review* (1993): 1707-1791.

⁵⁵ Katznelson, Ira. *When affirmative action was white: An untold history of racial inequality in twentieth-century America*. WW Norton & Company, 2005.

⁵⁶ Bell, Derrick. "Racial realism." *Conn. L. Rev.* 24 (1991): 363.

Review of Research

Anti-Black

Wellston has always existed as a black or white space.⁵⁷The Economic Policy Institute has a report by Richard Rothstein that gives a sense of the forces that contribute to the anti-black sentiment in the Saint Louis area and across the nation. Rothstein asserts, “That governmental actions, not mere private prejudice, were responsible for segregating greater St. Louis was once conventional informed opinion. In 1974, a three-judge panel of the federal Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that “segregated housing in the St. Louis metropolitan area was ... in large measure the result of deliberate racial discrimination in the housing market by the real estate industry and by agencies of the federal, state, and local governments.”

Similar observations accurately describe every other large metropolitan area; in St. Louis, the Department of Justice stipulated to this truth but took no action in response. In 1980, a federal court order included an instruction for the state, county, and city governments to devise plans to integrate schools by integrating housing. Public officials ignored this aspect of the order, devising only a voluntary busing plan to integrate schools, but no programs to combat housing segregation.”⁵⁸

Accountability, School Finance and Funding

William of Ockham was a Franciscan friar and philosopher who developed a theory of philosophy that concluded the “simplest answer is most often correct.” This is referred to as Occam’s razor. Throughout the course of history, the plight of African Americans in the United

⁵⁷ HDC Handbook

⁵⁸ Rothstein, Richard. "The Making of Ferguson." *American Prospect* (2014).

States has been a tumultuous relationship filled with despair and desperation. This relationship for many of my ancestors begins on slave boats, being denied education, dismantling the family, emasculation of African American males, Jim Crow, Black Codes, and countless other systematic racially biased initiatives to maintain white supremacy at the expense of the African Americans. White supremacy ideology and its persistence and perseverance has evolved through generations and still thrives because of this one must only look to Occam's razor to conclude white supremacy exist because white people directly and indirectly benefit from it. Anderson, laments in his research the uneasy relationship African Americans have had with access to an adequate and equitable education. To illustrate this relationship, Anderson used the rise of universal schooling and how whites have always manipulated, controlled, or denied the education of African Americans, free or slave.⁵⁹ Anderson further expounds on this point by describing in great detail the violence towards blacks who tried to seek an education and the various attempts by southern planters to thwart newly freed Blacks from receiving an education. Beyond violence whites tried countless control mechanism of African American education including the Freedman Bureau and Normal schools. These pervasive tools of white supremacy and its persistent perversion through generations one must only conclude that white supremacy exist because white people directly and indirectly benefit from it.

Jerome Morris introduces a counter narrative that refutes the mainstream rhetoric that Black schools and students are endemically inferior. Morris describes and challenges a master narrative that depicts "African American people and culture, as inferior and deficit oriented" this

⁵⁹ Ibid

ideology in the basis and foundation of white supremacy.⁶⁰ "[By] 'White supremacy' I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings."⁶¹

Labels are a mechanism determining meaning and objective truth of the dominant right to determine meaning and objective truth.⁶² White supremacy has imagined many labels for African American schools that include but are not limited to names such as failing, at risk, and low achieving. This naming has influenced many generations of African American students, while simultaneously giving whiteness power and privilege. This naming and subsequent denial of choice is also a vital piece of the puzzle when examining the failure associated with the merger of Wellston and Normandy school districts. Before Wellston was closed it was given labels of a failing school and provisionally accredited school district. Gloria Ladson-Billings helps illustrate the power of labels as she states:

Conceptual categories like "school achievement", "middle classness", "maleness", "beauty", "intelligence", and "science" become normative categories of whiteness, while

⁶⁰ IBid

⁶¹ Ansley, Francis Lee (1997-06-29). "White supremacy (and what we should do about it)". *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror*. Temple University Press. p. 592. ISBN 978-1-56639-532-8.

⁶² Lopez, Ian F. Haney. "Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice, The." *Harv CR-CLL Rev.* 29 (1994): 1,

categories like “gangs”, “welfare recipient”, “basketball players” and “under class” become the marginalized and de-legitimized categories of Blackness.⁶³

The slow death of Wellston began in 2003 when the state stripped the district of its accreditation. Was the death of Wellston necessary? Research conducted by Mintrop and Sunderman examine and try to answer the question of: Does accountability and sanction measures work? Does the current system produce the expected outcomes? The answer is hidden in ambiguity. The researchers attest in their research titled; Predictable Failure of Federal Sanctions-Driven Accountability for School Improvement-And Why We May Retain It Anyway that they system of high stakes testing will prevail even in failure because of the secondary beneficiaries committed to its persistence.⁶⁴

CRT suggests that current instructional strategies presume that African American students are deficient. As a consequence, classroom teachers are engaged in a never-ending quest for the right strategy or technique to deal with (read:control) “at risk” (read: African American) students. Cast in a language of failure, instructional approaches for African American students typically involve some aspect of remediation.⁶⁵

Stanton Lawrence, former superintendent of the Normandy District wrote article in a blog titled, “How Missouri Killed The Normandy School District.” This article could have easily been about the Wellston school district. In his article Dr. Lawrence questions the motivation for merging the two struggling, impoverished, and predominantly African American school districts

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Mintrop, Heinrich, and Gail L. Sunderman. "Predictable failure of federal sanctions-driven accountability for school improvement—and why we may retain it anyway." *Educational Researcher* 38, no. 5 (2009): 353-364.

⁶⁵ Ibid

while ignoring other options such as The University City and Clayton School District.⁶⁶ Dr. Stanton Lawrence began his tenure as superintendent of the Normandy School District in 2008. At the time of the merger only 12% of Wellston 550 students passed the state communication arts assessment, and barely 5% passed the state math assessment.⁶⁷ Normandy a district servicing over 4500 students fared slightly better with 24% of students obtaining proficiency on state standardized test. ⁶⁸ Dr. Lawrence again reiterates the issue of the two adjoining districts located next to the Wellston school district with much higher state standardized score and a more diverse population racially and economically.⁶⁹ It must also be noted that Wellston did receive provisional accreditation in 2005. However, the decision was reversed after scores were disallowed after student scores improved too quickly and the state determined the test cannot be legitimate. This decision effectively accused the Wellston School District of cheating and stripped away the district's provisional accreditation.

In education, accountability, race, and anti-Blackness are linked by property lines and property value. Along with whiteness as property value Harris asserts in his research that whiteness is viewed as having a property interest.⁷⁰ This is very problematic in an educational system dependent on property values for school funding. Whiteness as property also allows for exclusion from areas based on race. This exclusion mirror lines of segregation and have

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⁶⁷ Hunn David et al., State Schools Chief Moving to Dissolve Wellston District, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, Dec. 8, 2009, at A1.

⁶⁸ Id. For current data, see Missouri Comprehensive Data System, MO. DEP'T ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUC., <http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/SitePages/DistrictInfo.aspx> (search school district via "Missouri School District" pull-down menu; then select desired option under Performance Data)(last visited Sept.15,2015)

⁶⁹ Hoerner, Jonathan K. "A FAILING SCHOOL DISTRICT AND A FAILING STATUTE: HOW BREITENFELD v. SCHOOL DISTRICT OF CLAYTON AND THE UNACCREDITED DISTRICT TUITION STATUTE NEARLY DESTROYED A STRUGGLING SCHOOL DISTRICT AND DISRUPTED THE EDUCATION OF ITS STUDENTS." *St. Louis LJ* 59 (2015): 559-617.

⁷⁰ Ibid

circumvented integration with de facto segregation. Higher property values are directly linked to more resources, more technology, and a better teaching staff.⁷¹

All these things and more help form an accountability system of bias or anti-Blackness toward the African American student. The notion of accountability means to hold someone in contempt or recognition for results. In the realm of education these results are based upon “standards”. However, these standards are shrouded in ambiguity. White America’s standard is what African American school children are measured upon despite external factors that may significantly influence the performance outcome of the African American students.

Paul Sharkey, Robert Sampson and Steven Raudenbush conducted a number of studies examining some of the external factors that influence school performance. One of these studies looked at the effects of concentrated poverty on the vocabulary of African Americans. This study concluded neighborhoods, “is an important developmental context for trajectories of verbal cognitive ability”⁷²; young African Americans who live in severely disadvantaged neighborhoods tested 6 “IQ” point- behind this equates to a magnitude of missing one year of school.”⁷³ This study is of great importance, Sharkey states, “when we consider that the vast majority of black families living in America’s poorest neighborhoods come from families that have lived in similar environments for generations... continuity of the neighborhood

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Sampson, Robert J., Patrick Sharkey, and Stephen W. Raudenbush. "Durable effects of concentrated disadvantage on verbal ability among African-American children." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105, no. 3 (2008): 845-852.

⁷³ Ibid

environment, in addition to continuity of individual economic status, may be especially relevant to the study of cultural patterns and social norms among disadvantaged populations.”⁷⁴

Demographic Change and White Flight

With an influx of the African Americans in Saint Louis city many whites began to seek refuge from what many deemed the coming “Negro Invasion.”⁷⁵ This was enacted through restrictive land agreements, deed covenants, and unscrupulous realtors blacks were herded into predatory loans and segregated neighborhoods. This only helped fuel and intensify the efforts by whites to control and contain the black population. Thus racial restrictive covenants blossomed in cities like Saint Louis.⁷⁶ However, some researchers like Leah Platt Boustan asserts that racism was not the motivation for whites to move to suburban areas, instead it was their desire to separate by income.⁷⁷ However for places like Saint Louis and Wellston this was not true. Colin Gordon suggest a more sinister plan, he asserts, “Suburbanization robs inner cities of their tax base.”⁷⁸ Kenneth T. Jackson argues that “economic causes have been even more important than skin color in the suburbanization of the United States.... Because of public policies favoring the suburb, only one possibility [for homeownership] was economically feasible.”⁷⁹ Currently, according to information obtain from the U.S. Census Bureau, Wellston has an over 96% Black

⁷⁴ Sharkey, Patrick. "The Intergenerational Transmission of Context1." *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (2008): 931-969.

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ Jones Correa, Michael. "The origins and diffusion of racial restrictive covenants." *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 4 (2000): 541-568.

⁷⁷ Leah Platt Boustan, “Was Postwar Suburbanization ‘White Flight’? Evidence from the Black Migration,” (paper presented at the Applied Economics Workshop at University of Chicago Graduate school of Business, Chicago, Illinois, October 22, 2008).

⁷⁸ Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 8.

⁷⁹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

population.⁸⁰ This number is 38.2 times more than the next closest ethnic group of whites who only have a 49 residents living within the city limits of Wellston.

Racial and class hierarchies exist because of racially restrictive policies put in place when referencing the middle class and those living below the poverty line. Many would argue that racial hierarchies don't exist. However according to research conducted by Paula Rothenberg these denials have many instances that exist that confirm a sense of privileged obtained through color.⁸¹ Nonetheless, for my research I need only highlight two examples of privilege.

1. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I want to live.
2. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant toward me.

This privilege afforded many whites an opportunity of mobility never experienced before. Subsequently this new opportunity for mobility helped facilitate white flight and encourage de facto segregation. Within Saint Louis a "steel ring" was erected, this ring encapsulates blacks in blighted areas of St. Louis city and county.⁸² Wellston was and is an "inner rings". Demographic change and economic decline transformed the area. Realtors associated home values with homogeneity of the neighborhood.⁸³ According to information gathered on the St. Louis Government website the city of Wellston has had a constant decline in population since the 1950's as reported by U.S. census data. Looking at Wellston now, it is hard to imagine that it was once a white space. According to documentation obtained in the Human Development

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ Rothenberg, Paula S. *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study*. Macmillan, 2004.

⁸² *iBid*

⁸³ *iBid*

Corporation handbook, Wellston was 92% white in 1960. A mere six years later we see an almost complete reversal with the African American population increasing to 80-85%.⁸⁴

While the white population of Wellston was decreasing the African American population was growing. According to research conducted by Colin Gordon, African American school enrollment jumped from “47 percent to 90 percent in Wellston between 1965 and 1969.” This subsequently contributed to the demographic change within the region as white families fled the area. What was lost by many African American communities and the historical memory of the exclusion is still being studied and analyzed today. The impending “negro invasion” seemed to be the tipping point for white residents and businesses in Wellston. Joseph Heathcott reasons, “Working -class Blacks faced an uphill battle against the psychic violence of segregation and the physical decline of their communities.”⁸⁵

The table below illustrates the historical population of Wellton, Missouri. The table shows a consistent drop in population beginning in 1950. The population of Wellston during the census of 1950 was at an historical high for the city with over 9,000 residents. The data also shows a downward trend at each ten-year census interval of double digit population decline until the last census of 2010.

Historical Population of Wellston, MO.

⁸⁴ HDC Handbook

⁸⁵ Heathcott, “Black Archipelago,” 707.

Census	Population	%±
1950	9,396	N/A
1960	7,979	-15.1%
1970	7,050	-11.6%
1980	4,495	-36.2%
1990	3,612	-19.6%
2000	2,460	-31.9%
2010	2,313	-6.0%

This swift demographic change help facilitate a hyper-segregated city of Wellston. The term hyper-segregation refers to racial segregation along geographical lines often in inner cities to primarily African American residents. Many have called it “American Apartheid”.⁸⁶ Today Wellston once a formerly thriving African American neighborhood is in ruins.

Douglas Massey asserts in his research; *Why Housing Segregation Still Matters* that separate is not equal.⁸⁷ In his research Massey uses a measure of residential segregation called the index of dissimilarity. This measure uses a scale system of 0 (no segregation) to 100 (total segregation). This index also looks at how two different groups are distributed across social or spatial units.

⁸⁶ Massey, Douglas S. "American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass." *American journal of sociology* (1990): 329-357.

⁸⁷ *ibid*

According to research by Massey and Denton, African Americans are the only group that can be considered hyper-segregated.⁸⁸ Their research also suggested that segregation assumes five definitive dimensions. These five dimensions are evenness, exposure, clustering, centralization, and concentration.⁸⁹ *Evenness* refers to the relationship between the numbers of minorities residing in residential areas as it equates to the number of minorities city wide. *Exposure* is defined by the level of potential contact between member of the minority and majority group. This also includes the extent of those connections such as through common schools, neighborhoods, and churches. The third dimension of segregation is *clustering* which studies the magnitude of minority neighborhoods and their adjoining areas. This scrutinizes large continuous ghetto areas as opposed to isolated spaces or non-minority adjoining areas. *Centralization* is the scope minorities residing around a centralized urban location. Lastly, *concentration* is the amount of actual land mass or physical space occupied by the minority group. Wellston is a city experiencing hyper-segregation.

Looking at Wellston's population many drastic changes are evident. Information in **Appendix C** illustrates dynamic shifts in population and race within Saint Louis City and Saint Louis County. Also, there is a staggering difference in the number of white residents of Saint Louis City as opposed to black residents. There is a clear trend in the population percentages and numbers that suggest something more than African American coincidence that much of the African American population are isolated in specific areas such as Wellston and much of North County. The tables show that the number of white residents in the city of Saint Louis decreased

⁸⁸ Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy A. Denton. "The dimensions of residential segregation." *Social forces* 67, no. 2 (1988): 281-315.

⁸⁹ *ibid*

by almost 40 percent from 1950-2010. While at the same time the number of African American residents in the city of Saint Louis increased triple fold during the same time period. Many including Colin Gordon have attributed this migratory trend to red lining and unscrupulous practices and from real estate agents.

According to the United States Gazetteer 2010, the city of Wellston covers an area of approximately .93 square miles and is one of the tenth poorest counties in the state of Missouri ranking at 967 out of 972 counties according to the 2010 US census.⁹⁰ With borders that connect with St. Louis City, University City, Normandy, and Pagedale. The Gazetteer also listed the city as having a population that is over 95% African American. Wellston is an area experiencing persistent levels of segregation that could only be attributed to the racial tactics of exclusion.

Fragmentation

With high levels of poverty and exclusion from social mobility crime and generational poverty demographic change along with economic decline decimated Wellston. This system of segregation that promotes autonomy and private wealth for whites also promotes poverty and despair for African Americans.⁹¹ According to the St. Louis county government website there are more than 90 municipalities and just fewer than ten unincorporated areas making up the Saint Louis County region. Of these 90 plus municipalities the largest municipality governs over 50,000 residents and the smallest communities having fewer than 100 residents.⁹² They are divided into four geographical areas consisting of Mid County, North County, South County, and

⁹⁰ *ibid*

⁹¹ Oliver, Melvin L., and Thomas M. Shapiro. *Black wealth, white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality*. Taylor & Francis, 2006.

⁹² *ibid*

West County. According to American fact finder which is a government run site associated with the U.S. Census bureau at the time of the 2010 census the racial makeup was 70.2% white and 23.3% black. The majority of the African American population of Saint Louis County is confined to the North County and parts of the Mid County. Of all the municipalities incorporated and unincorporated no area had a concentration of over 20% African American. This is the result of decades of de jure and de facto segregation.

Fragmentation refers to the process of being broken down into smaller parts or fragments. Much research has been compiled on the fragmentation of urban and suburban schools. According to research conducted by, Orfield and Franklin they attest, “suburban public schools fragmented and racially/ethnically segregated.”⁹³ What this means is white flight still occurs when African American students enter white-space. The continued racial polarization of African Americans along with the threat of economic and educational sanctions has helped to decimate communities like Wellston all over the United States.

The potential for reunification has been debated for decades. Many have talked about all the possible benefits of combining the city and county. However, reunification has yet to happen. The reason why the merging of municipalities inside St. Louis County is so important to the larger issue of the reasons why the city and county need to reunite is because of the duplication of services, divided government, and failure to plan as a collective region for future economic growth. When St. Louis is divided into two counties and the one county, St. Louis County has 91

⁹³ Wells, Amy Stuart, Bianca Baldrige, Jacquelyn Duran, Richard Lofton, Allison Roda, Miya Warner, Terrenda White, and Courtney Grzesikowski. "Why boundaries matter: A study of five separate and unequal Long Island school districts." *Center for Understanding Race and Education (CURE), Teachers College, Columbia University. recruitment: A test of the similarity-attraction hypothesis for race and sex. Educational Administration Quarterly*33, no. 1 (2009).

municipalities and other incorporated areas, the region as a whole fails, because each municipality will consistently compete against each other for jobs, people, and money. Also, by having this many municipalities the region wastes valuable tax dollars on duplicating services that could otherwise be spent for other things.⁹⁴

As mentioned earlier the fragmentation of the Saint Louis region has stifled African Americans. Additionally, the fragmentation of the poor from resources and opportunities has also served as a deterrent and an aid to white supremacy.

Economic Decline

Swanstrom, Casey, Flack, and Dreier study titled, “Pulling Apart: Economic Segregation among Suburbs and Central Cities in Major Metropolitan Areas explores municipal economic segregation. Economic segregation refers to, “the degree in which economically classes live spatially apart from one another.”⁹⁵ The researchers conclude that the region's poor areas are a result of a much more severe form of segregation that cannot be attributed to income inequalities. Wellston was once an economically thriving community is now economically segregated from prosperous neighboring communities such as, Clayton, University City, and the Central West End. This aspect of segregated areas of disenfranchisement is explored in a study by Paul Jargowsky. In his study he concluded what this researcher and many others hypothesized an increasing trend of economic segregation of African Americans and Hispanics.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Levitt, A. *The Great Divorce: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the City/County Split*.

⁹⁵ Swanstrom, Todd, Colleen Casey, Robert Flack, and Peter Dreier. "Pulling apart: Economic segregation among suburbs and central cities in major metropolitan areas." (2004).

⁹⁶ Jargowsky, Paul A.. 1996. “Take the Money and Run: Economic Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas”. *American Sociological Review* 61 (6). American Sociological Association: 984–98. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2096304>.

In order for Jorgowsky to come to this conclusion he conducted his study in spatial and economic organization of economic areas based on five dimensions:

- (1) The spatial segregation of racial and ethnic groups from each other, usually measured by the index of dissimilarity;
- (2) Economic equality, either overall or within racial groups, which is non-spatial;
- (3) The spatial segregation of social and economic groups from each other;
- (4) The spatial segregation of racial groups from one another, after controlling for income or social class, which measures the degree to which spatial assimilation follows from economic assimilation (“direct standardization”);
- (5) The spatial segregation of economic groups from one another, controlling for racial group (i.e., economic segregation within race), which bears on issues as the “flight of the black middle class” proposed by Wilson and which is measured by Massey and Eggers (1990) measure of interclass segregation (DI), the Neighborhood Sorting Index (NSI), and similar measures.⁹⁷

The researcher also noted the increased poverty only added to the already tremendous spatial segregation. This directly correlates to Massey and Eggers previous work that concluded increased poverty produced increases in economic segregation.⁹⁸ Economic segregation coupled with residence restrictions help produce countless African American ghettos of despair.

Within the African American community there is an old saying that states, “last hired first fired.” This saying insinuates that the African American will be the last to be hired and when time call for layoffs he will be the first fired. Looking at information provided by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics the unemployment rate of African Americans is 9.6 percent while it is 4.6 percent for whites.

Historical Memory

⁹⁷ ibid

⁹⁸ ibid

The impact of historical and cultural histories has made for a dystopian narrative of hostility and anguish for African Americans. Many scholarly articles have been written concerning the historical and cultural memory of African American suffering from Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) or Post Traumatic Slave Disorder (PTSD). A quote by Carter G. Woodson summarizes the magnitude of historical memory and its effect on African Americans. In his writing Woodson states, "When you control a man's mind you don't have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him to stand here or go yonder. He will automatically find his proper place and stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit."⁹⁹

Is this the case with Wellston? Has historical memory diminished the hope and fight for a fair and equitable education? Historical memory helps protect white space as sacred; as a result, the educational opportunities of African American students are diminished. Many scholars today suggest that past transgressions of whites specific to African Americans.¹⁰⁰ Racism has played a significant role in the way African Americans are perceived and treated by whites.¹⁰¹ Salamishah Tiller's assertions about historical memory are profound. She declares:

Because racial exclusion has become part and parcel of African American political identity since slavery, it cannot simply be willed or wished away. This protracted experience of disillusionment, mourning, and yearning is in fact the basis of African

⁹⁹ Woodson, Carter G. *The mis-education of the Negro*. Book Tree, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, Carol D. "Why we need to re-think race and ethnicity in educational research." *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 5 (2003): 3-5.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, William J. *More than just race: Being black and poor in the inner city (issues of our time)*. WW Norton & Company, 2009.

American estrangement. Its lingering is not just a haunting of the past but is also a reminder of the present-day racial inequities that keep African American citizens in an indeterminate, unassimilable state as a racialized ‘Other.’ While the effect of racial melancholia was bred in the dyad of slavery and democracy, it persists because of the paradox of legal citizenship and civic estrangement.¹⁰²

According to reports published in the Saint Louis Post-Dispatch the parents of Wellston students expressed concerns over violence and fights but missed the significant impact of merging two lower performing underachieving schools together would have on student learning and school funding. Parents never questioned the state’s legitimacy for the merger, benefits of the merger, or other alternatives.¹⁰³

One of the most significant testimonies about the psychological impact of segregation came from doctors Kenneth and Mammie Clark. The doctors conducted an experiment that would later simply be known as the “doll test.” In this experiment the doctors used four dolls, each identical except for the color of the dolls. Children were asked specific questions about the doll. Black and white children assigned negative characteristics to the darker dolls. While giving the lighter complexion doll more favorable characteristics. The self-hate of and negative

Oppressive Policies

It is as there is a political through which all issues pass. Disputed from the moment they are in sight of it - and more hotly as they approach- they pass (if they pass) through, and drop out of controversy for a time. Managing the processions are certain ‘gatekeepers’ not just the Cabinet

¹⁰² Tillet, Salamishah. *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination*. Duke University Press, 2012.

¹⁰³ Ibid

of the day, but bureaucrats, journalist, association heads, and individual specialist camped permanently around each source of problems.

(Davies 1964:3)

As early as 1994 the Saint Louis Post-Dispatch began reporting on Wellston losing its accreditation. This recommendation to move Wellston to an unaccredited status was issued by Missouri Commissioner of Education Robert Bartman.¹⁰⁴ These consequences ultimately bring on various measures of reform.

However, school reform is often reduced to fads and trends.¹⁰⁵ The ever changing elusive target of student performance is always on the radar of policymakers. While these rules and policies are often made and enforced by school personnel, school officials are not always included in policy decisions, and are expected to implement decisions they may disagree with. One of the biggest reforms in recent years has been NCLB which happens to be a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. One of the key goals of NCLB is “closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers.”¹⁰⁶ This is of much concern as the NCLB tries to eliminate the questionable black/white achievement gap through punitive measures. According to information obtained from DESE (appendix I) Wellston consistently missed the targeted goal

¹⁰⁴ Little, By Joan. "WELLSTON SCHOOL ACCREDITATION IN JEOPARDY," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 26, 1994: 3B, accessed August 13, 2016, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/0EB04E82D2E612E1?p=NewsBank>.

¹⁰⁵ Ravitch, Diane. *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. Basic Books, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Wright, Peter WD, Pamela Darr Wright, and Suzanne Whitney Heath. *No child left behind*. Harbor House Law Press, 2006.

for proficiency.¹⁰⁷ This failure of a school district to make progress under the guidelines of NCLB hold the following consequences listed below.

Year of AYP Failure	Consequences
1st year	No consequences
2nd year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School identified as “needs improvement” 2. Must develop school improvement plan 3. Allow inter-district transfer to successful schools 4. Spend 10% if Title 1 funds on Professional Development
3rd year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All consequences above 2. Implement school improvement plan 3. Provide supplemental education opportunities
4th year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All consequences in year 2 and 3 listed above 2. Corrective action which may include replacing staff, curriculum overhaul, reducing admin authority, and hiring outside experts.
5th year	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All consequences listed above 2. Plan for restructuring which may include school becoming a charter school, contracting private management firm, state intervention.
6th year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All consequences listed above • Initiate restructuring.

However, in Missouri another special provision was enacted. This provision was the downfall of the Wellston School district. Section 162.081 under the Missouri Revised Statutes has many different components. One such component states, “Whenever any school district in

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

this state fails or refuses in any school year to provide for the minimum school term required by section [163.021](#) or is classified unaccredited, the state board of education shall, upon a district's initial classification or reclassification as unaccredited.”¹⁰⁸ This provision effectively disposed of districts like Wellston who routinely swayed between accreditation and provisional accreditation. More detailed provisions of this statute or listed in **appendix I**.

Wellston Merger: Timeline

As previously stated the road to school closure began for Wellston in 1994.¹⁰⁹ The process of policies used to help close the school district initiated when the state of Missouri began implementing a new accreditation process and phasing out the old process. Wellston had a top rating under the old system. However, with the new rating system things seemed bleak for Wellston. This dismay reached reality with the district losing its accreditation in 1994 and officially becoming unaccredited in 1996.¹¹⁰ In the 1994 evaluation the state found the district's students to be performing below standard despite Wellston spending more per students than the majority of the school districts within Saint Louis and Saint Louis County.¹¹¹ While progress at Wellston remained stagnant the state designated two schools in Wellston as being “schools of concern.”¹¹² These two schools were Bishop Middle and Central Elementary. Wellston still managed to move from unaccredited and receive a partial accredited status.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Bower, By Carolyn. "STATE WILL REVIEW DISTRICT, CONSIDER ITS ACCREDITATION," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 22, 1996: 1, accessed August 13, 2016, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/0EB04FBEB20B4742?p=NewsBank>.

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Hacker, Holly K.. "STATE OFFICIALS TARGET 14 SCHOOLS WITH POOR SCORES IN ST. LOUIS AREA TEAMS WILL VISIT TO DECIDE IF THE SCHOOLS ARE DEFICIENT," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO),

This status did not last long. Wellston would eventually fall back into the unaccredited' category. DESE reviews district every five years for accreditation using a 109-point scale. Wellston would need 55 points for partial accreditation and 75 points for full accreditation, Wellston scored nine points.¹¹³ Then the state designated two schools in the Wellston as "deficient". A label of deficient would signify stiff financial penalties from the state.

Summary

"When you control a man's mind you don't have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will automatically find his place and stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one out for his special benefit." (Carter G. Woodson)

The literature analyzed in this research study helps bring forth many findings along with the theoretical framework for the study of the Wellston school district. Much of the history of the Saint Louis North County region has been idly dismissed. Wellston has been congested with racism, exploitation, economic decline, suburbanization, and a failing school district. The historical and presently ongoing effect of these elements has had a lasting stranglehold on schools, neighborhoods, and opportunities for African Americans in Wellston. This lasting remnant is the effect of years of second class citizenship. The true impact it has had on the shared memories of the African American educational still remains unexplored. The residents of

October 18, 2001: A1, accessed August 13, 2016,

<http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/0EF3B8B467B56C79?p=NewsBank>.

¹¹³ Holly K. Hacker Of The Post-Dispatch, Rick Pierce. "REPORTS CITE DECLINE IN CITY'S SCHOOLS," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO), December 08, 2001: 14, accessed August 13, 2016,

<http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/0F048B505E015C05?p=NewsBank>.

the city of Wellston and the students in the former school district have been oppressed for many years.

The brazen nature of racist accountability standards shrouded and masked and performance policy measures has only now been brought to the forefront. History is happening and much of it is currently going unnoticed. African American children, in districts and neighborhoods like Wellston are under attack. Court cases and statutes serve to show a racialized blueprint of white supremacy. The literature reviewed in this chapter helps explain and expand the current state of Wellston. Currently more school districts in Saint Louis County are awaiting the same fate.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

History belongs to those who tell of it. Often this method of retelling history tends to leaves out less than desirable parts, scrupulous acts, and most notably the views and perceptions of African American affected by it. The story of city of Wellston and the demise of the Wellston School District have suffered a fate not too kind by the authors of history. The story of Wellston is not a unique story but a story that must be told nonetheless. The demise of Wellston helps illustrate a time in place in history, where overt racism and systemic racism and oppression have become kindred spirits. These kindred spirits united to blight an area, close a school district, and keep the foot of oppression firmly planted on the neck of the African American residing in Wellston. This research will attempt to display what Jerome Morris calls a master narrative that, “African American people and culture, inferior and deficit orientated.”¹¹⁴ This paper will utilize Critical Race Theory as a method of analysis. This will be done by specifically looking at the time period leading up to desegregation and the ultimate demise of Wellston through the merger with the Normandy School District. A concentrated focus will be placed on institutionalized racism and its presence throughout the Wellston closure. I will attempt to tell a counter narrative

¹¹⁴ iBid

and usurp prevailing ideologies of African Americans as inferior and show that many concentrated efforts took place to stigmatize and racially ostracize African Americans with the closing of the Wellston School district.

According to Bell, integration directly bolsters white privilege and instead of concentrated efforts directed toward school integration more effort should be placed on improving already existing black schools.¹¹⁵ This coincidentally was the topic of research for Daniel Monty, his research also cites white privilege and anti-Black sentiments as reasons for desegregation and integration.¹¹⁶

Methods

The methodologies used in this qualitative study are historical analysis and CRT. Qualitative research involves the interpretation of information obtained. History is understood not as facts presented in chronological order disaggregated by order of importance and event but instead by competing and compelling interpretive narrative. Qualitative research is fixed on achieving a heightened level of understanding around a specific topic or event.¹¹⁷ Additionally with the incorporation of Critical Race Theory a discourse surrounding African American and school policy will emerge.

¹¹⁵ iBid

¹¹⁶ Monti, Daniel. "A semblance of justice: St. Louis School Desegregation and Order in Urban America (1985).

¹¹⁷ Fraenkel, Jack R., Norman E. Wallen, and Helen H. Hyun. *How to design and evaluate research in education*. Vol. 7. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

The use of ethnography or the description of the customs of peoples and cultures brings forth a new narrative of events previously forgotten. This new perspective on the master narrative helps describe a culture of a people in a certain time and space.¹¹⁸

Researcher's Bias

The researcher has chosen to present the Wellston and Normandy merger of 2009. While researching this merger the researcher will also critique the association between African Americans and primarily white educational policy makers. The researcher assumes that the oppressive relationship only served to benefit white supremacy and white privilege while subsequently undermining and devaluing the educational opportunities for African American students. This devaluing has resulted in African American students being ushered from one failing school district into another. The researcher also accuses policy makers of ignoring the two other surrounding school districts and their ability to merge with Wellston school district. This convenient ignorance helps maintain white space while also regulating blacks into specific geographical locations.

It must also be noted the researcher has had a direct and tumultuous relationship with many school districts within the Saint Louis. The researcher himself is a product of the Riverview Gardens and Ferguson Florissant School Districts. This relationship was impacted through white supremacy policies that have had a negative impact on the researcher's education

¹¹⁸ Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

and educational opportunities. However, it must also be noted that the research did not include personal biases in the telling of the counter narrative story.

Research Design

The research design used in my research study will use historical analysis and critical race theory. Through rigorous data collection methods, I will expose specific instances of racial discrimination through a strict analysis of policy and practice. Current research had not addressed how the process of merging the two school districts was handled nor has it addressed or gave a valid reason for combining the failing Wellston school district with the equally troubled and financially strapped Normandy school district. Critical Race Theory offers a lens of examination that also helps illustrate a new narrative. Using the method of historical revisionism helps to reinterpret historically significant events and policy. By fusing historical revisionism with critical race theory a new untold narrative will emerge. Critical Race Theory (CRT) uses an approach that is, “grounded in sense of reality that reflects the distinctive experiences of people of color.”¹¹⁹ Research conducted through this study will connect the Department of Education and a history of racial prejudice, inequality and the preservation of White privilege as it pertains

¹¹⁹ Edward Taylor. (2009). “The Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education: An Introduction.” In *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* edited by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, & Gloria Ladson Billings (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 7.

to the mishandling of the Wellston School District and many other decision leading up to and after Brown v. Board.

Data Collection

The process of data collection began with an in-depth collection of literature. The researcher was introduced to the topic of school closings by a professor during a seminar class. This topic piqued an interest in the researcher who attended a Berkeley High school. This school was closed and relocated to a different side of the school district. This also made the researcher remember the Kinloch school district which had previously closed and merged with Berkeley school district and also question the fate of the Normandy school district which is currently under state control and on the brink of bankruptcy. This discussion prompted the researcher to question the closure of the Wellston school district. This led the researcher to take note of inequities witnessed.

This study will use interviews, archival data gathered from newspapers, online articles, periodicals, Departments of Education (DESE), and other primary and secondary sources. I will interpret data gathered from these sources to provide a clear bias against African American and the demise of the Wellston School District. The bulk of the information gathered will be archival information of the qualitative nature. Archival analysis will help determine the value of records. The primary source for much of the archival data will be the *Saint Louis Post Dispatch* (evening daily) and newspaper clippings generated by the *Saint Louis American* newspaper.

Various books and journal articles discussing many of the ideas presented in this research were also used. Through my research I will attempt to expose the master narrative as false and bring to

the forefront a racist agenda that has served to hinder the educational opportunities and limit diversity in public education as it pertains to the Wellston School District and many other school districts located within the North County region of Saint Louis. The research will rely heavily upon the following sources of information:

- Documents- Books, meeting minutes, formal studies newspaper clippings
- Interviews- People who were a part or affected by the merger
- Archival Records- Census records, school records, maps
- Artifacts- memorabilia, visual art, photographs.

Additional sources of data will include empirical data; test scores, demographic trends, census data, and graduation rates. This method of data collection will bring forth a long history of racial injustice toward the Wellston School District and expose a prevailing preservation of white privilege. CRT emphasizes, “Individual racists need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color.”¹²⁰ Denial of accreditation will be examined as a way that white privilege is used to marginalize African Americans.

Participants

After soliciting the help of students, parents, teacher, administrators and board members who have attended Wellston, Normandy, or both using the help of friends and families and not

¹²⁰ Ortiz, Larry, and Jayshree Jani. "Critical race theory: A transformational model for teaching diversity." *Journal of Social Work Education* 46, no. 2 (2010): 175-193.

having much success the researcher turned to social media. Through the use of social media, I was able to obtain a diverse group of participants. The group consisted of 1 former board member, 2 former teachers, and 3 former students. The teachers both taught at Normandy during the process of the merger and one was also a former student. The school board member was an active member of the Normandy school board during the merger and also thereafter. The researcher's only concern about participants was the lack of male participants. The only male participant was the former school board member. Despite multiple attempts on the researcher's behalf to solicit the views and opinions of males effected by the merger, no male participation was obtained. Many males initially committed to participate in the research interview but ultimately only one kept the commitment.

Managing and Recording Data

Each participant was contacted and interviewed individually by the researcher. The research study focused on the Wellston/Normandy merger and the participants' reflection and interpretation of the events that led up to the merger and subsequent experience after the merger was completed.

Each participant selected used the following procedure:

1. Participants were not paid to participate nor compensated. Participation was strictly voluntary, although the interviewer did make every attempt to make the location of the interview as convenient for the participant as possible.
2. Each participant was asked and expected to participate in a 1-hour in-depth interview.

Data Analysis

This research report will use Critical Race Theory (CRT) to reframe the rhetoric associated with popular historical narrative. This popular master narrative tells a story of struggle, angst and underachievement. Conversely more variable contributed to the aforementioned narrative that are lesser known.

The primary sources will be interviews and the Saint Louis Post Dispatch, founded in 1878 by famed author Joseph Pulitzer for whom the Pulitzer Prize for outstanding literature was named.¹²¹ This paper which touts itself as liberal often remains silent on issues that affect the majority of African American such as addressing white privilege and oppression through public policy.

In the context of education, the researcher specifically employed a research methodology through CRT. Current research reports five elements of CRT and methodology in education. The elements are:

1. The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination-race and racism are permanent structure
2. Challenges dominant ideology.
3. A strong commitment to social justice.
4. Legitimizes, values, encourages, and respects the experiences and knowledge of people of color.
5. Analyzes race in both the historical and contemporary context.¹²²

¹²¹ Gade, Peter J., and Earnest L. Perry. "Changing the newsroom culture: A four-year case study of organizational development at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2003): 327-347.

¹²² Yosso, T. Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth *Race Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2005, pp. 69-91

Limitations

This study is limited in aspects of data availability. Crucial and important documents highlighting the demise of Wellston are under lock and key without anyone presently willing to grant access for the general public. The Normandy School District has been less than cooperative in my attempts to retrieve data.

Furthermore, some accounts given were retrieved through primary source data collection methods. The researcher did conduct 6 interviews with individuals directly. Also, the research conducted is solely linked to the Wellston/ Normandy School District and the unusual circumstance surrounding the aforementioned merger and closure of the district. The researcher does acknowledge the existence of certain unalienable themes that many other district and communities may have especially within the Saint Louis region. However, none has suffered a tragic demise like what has happened to the Wellston School District. This alone serves to give Wellston a spotlight to examine injustices through a critical lens

Summary

I have provided a definitive outline for data collection and analysis along with a comprehensive rationale. Also, I have included limitations of the study along with information concerning the role of the researcher. Chapter Four will outline the findings and the analysis of these finding and in Chapter Five, I will offer a conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DATA ANALYSIS

On August 15, 2015 the national spotlight was on Ferguson, a small municipality located inside the North County area of Saint Louis, MO. An unarmed African American teenager named Mike Brown was gunned down by a white police officer. This police officer was working for the Ferguson Police Department. Ferguson, Normandy, and Wellston and many other predominantly African American neighborhoods all have had instances of police brutality and abuses of power. Many throughout the nation focused on the subsequent looting and rioting that followed the shooting and many negative images of African-Americans were blasted across television screens. In the midst of the chaos another set of events played out. The state took control of the Normandy School District and many students began to transfer out of the struggling district. Some school districts welcomed the former Normandy students while others had harsh words of discouragement. Some districts even went as far as to conduct meetings on addressing the safety of their local students in the wake of the impending influx of Normandy students. One of the most notable meetings took place in the Francis Howell School District where according the Saint Louis Post Dispatch more than 2500 people attended the school board

meeting.¹²³ However, before this the state had previously assumed financial control of the unaccredited district when it began to buckle under fiscal pressure the district was receiving under the Missouri School Transfer Law. The transfer law is part of the larger Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The Outstanding School Act allows students who currently attend school in an unaccredited school district to transfer to a nearby school that is accredited. The unaccredited school must also provide transportation for the student(s) to a preselected transfer school. Normandy selected the Francis Howell School District in St. Charles MO. According to information obtained from DESE the Francis Howell School District has almost 16,000 students and have less than 40 percent of its students receiving free or reduced lunch. This is in comparison to Normandy which has 3,000 students and over 90 percent free and reduced lunch rate. Francis Howell is also over 90 percent white compared to Normandy which is almost 100 percent African American. The financial impact of significant student transfers has already triggered a massive layoff of teachers in the Normandy School District and still may have further implications for the future of the district. As previously stated the Francis Howell District staff and parents balked at the ideas of Normandy students transferring into the district and many viewed the students as potential troublemakers and a problem that was not their concern. Some parents in the district even went as far as to request the district install metal detectors for fear of their child be stabbed or assaulted by the incoming former Normandy students.¹²⁴ While race is never specifically mentioned in these debates, racial undertones and oppressive language were galvanized to inhibit the inclusion of Normandy students.

¹²³ "Francis Howell parents vent anger, concerns about potential transfers." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (St. Louis, MO), 2013., *General OneFile*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 3, 2018).

¹²⁴ Ibid

Organized Oppression

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to frame a context for school closure. This will be done by examining the Wellston School District and the contextual conditions that contributed to its demise. Policies and practices after the infamous Brown v. Board decision in Saint Louis through present date (2015) will be examined and disaggregated. This chapter will serve to look beyond the rhetoric of test scores, achievement gap, and financial mismanagement. However, the focus will be placed on the effects of disenfranchisement, school accountability, economic decline, white flight, racism, and oppression. These findings will be examined for common themes and the following research questions: Why did the State close Wellston School District and why was it merged with Normandy School District.

In answering the question of why did the state of Missouri close Wellston school District. I must revisit the past and challenge the current narrative. In order to accomplish this, I must delve into Critical Race Theory (CRT) analysis. CRT was developed in the 1970's.¹²⁵ A leading researcher in the field of CRT, Richard Delgado poignantly stated, "In fact it was the value input into whiteness that CRT became an important intellectual, and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power"....¹²⁶ One of the greatest features of CRT is the use counter-storytelling. Delgado further goes on further to state, "Although the concept of counter-stories is new the

¹²⁵ DeCuir and Dixon, "So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There': Using Critical Race Theory As A Tool Of Analysis Of Race And Racism In Education."

¹²⁶ Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. Critical race theory: An introduction. NYU Press, 2017. Harvard

depth and richness of human experiences that counter the master narrative are priceless. Counter-stories help put faces and experiences on the experiences of oppressed peoples.”¹²⁷

The magnitude of this research is its ability to refute popular belief about Wellston School District. To visit Wellston is a complete contradiction of what it once was. The lack of economic infrastructure and opportunity for its residents was neither happenstance nor an accident. Many forces contributed to the decline of a city and the decimation of a School District. President Barack Obama spoke about the structure of race in his March 18, 2008 speech. Obama urged whites to acknowledge that:

“The path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination--and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past--are real and must be addressed, not just with words, but with deeds, by investing in our schools and our communities; by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system; by providing this generation with ladders of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ Obama, Barack. “A More Perfect Union'.” The New York Times. Campaign Speech, Philadelphia, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/03/18/us/politics/20080318_OBAMA_GRAPHIC.html.

Many view oppression as limited to slavery and Jim Crow and assume that its noose has loosened from around the neck of the African-Americans. However, as an African American man living in an oppressed state I can attest that the noose has not loosened and the lynching of African Americans lives is still presently underway with many anti-Black policies being enacted in education policy.

The findings in this study required the use of in-depth interviews to reveal a narrative previously missing surrounding the Normandy/Wellston merger. Each person interviewed was asked the same question with the researcher probing and prompting to solicit more detailed response and description of events. The researcher initially set out to interview five participants. However, as I began soliciting individuals the response was overwhelming. To maintain the integrity of the study I limited my participants to the first six respondents limiting the number of students, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders to no more than two. Many people still feel very passionate about this issue.

The findings and data analysis in this chapter require the researcher to bring out the story hidden in the experienced events. The researcher used Phenomenological research methods as an analytic approach. Phenomenological research deals directly with people's perception of an event or phenomenon.¹²⁹ This chapter will also provide the reader with research questions and a summary of finding from the five interviews. The researcher will then discuss the common themes obtained from the interviews and research data. The research questions: 1). Why did the

¹²⁹Moustakas, Clark E. 1994. Phenomenological research methods. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.
<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1995022>.

state close the Wellston School District? 2). Why was Wellston merged into the Normandy District and better performing and more financially stable surrounding districts?

Findings 1: Racist Economic Practices have decimated Black Neighborhoods

This research study shows the impact of economic decline in the Wellston region and school district. The fast rate of economic decline in Wellston is staggering on any level. However, when compared to the growth of neighboring cities it's astonishing. One of the most devastating businesses to leave the area or close its doors was Wagner Electric Company. The company over the span of 20 years trimmed down its workforce at the Wellston plant from a peak of 6000 workers to less than 1500 at the time of it closing. Wagner Electric was also the biggest taxpayer with an annual assessment of over 37,000.

The community was not financially able to endure such a loss. Then to add insult to injury Wagner Electric left over four thousand gallons of toxic waste. This toxic waste prevented the area from being reutilized and attracting new businesses. Wellston is not alone in this tragic fate. It is actually such a common occurrence that the phrase “brownfield” was coined. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) describes a brownfield as, “a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.”

Another large company to vacate the area was the ABEX Corporation. In 1982 the ABEX Corporation permanently closed its doors. ABEX Corporation left behind a contaminated

area that would take many years and much tax dollars and federal grants to repair. The disrespect and disregard for black spaces is appalling.

Though racism and racist practices, other whiter municipalities were able to “opportunity hoard” and relegate Wellston to an oppressed and depreciated state. Author and researcher Charles Tilly refers to opportunity hoarding as, “members of a categorically bounded network acquire access to a resource that was valuable, renewable, subject to monopoly, supportive of network activities, and enhanced by the network’s modus operandi, network members regularly hoard their access to the resource, creating beliefs and practices that sustain their control.”

Participant 3 spoke about the merger and the policies that help decimate a community by stating,

I think it was a very political move. I don’t know if I would have moved students from one underperforming district to another underperforming district. I think it was very political. I think at the time the former superintendent had some influence in trying to get charter schools into Normandy school district.

Perception often becomes reality. The staggering number of participants viewing the educational expectations and opportunities at Normandy to be inadequate was alarming. This sentiment was most evident with participant 4 who was a school board member but elected not to send his daughter to the Normandy School District after the merger. Participant 4 stated,

This denial of equal and equitable financial and educational opportunity for Blacks has been happening in the United States since its inception and is nothing new. The merger had little to do with finances and tests scores and much more to do with

whites being in control of educational opportunities of Blacks. All data supports that low income minorities perform poorly on high stakes state standardized test. However, this tool is still used to measure educational achievement and educational attainment while denying the test taker of adequate opportunity to be successful on the test.

This economic disenfranchisement becomes more severe when coupled with a racist housing market. One does not have to look far to see how ownership, particularly home ownership can be an aid in accumulation of wealth and transition groups to economic sustainability. Many studies have shown that the market value or appreciation of homes is directly related to the neighborhood's racial composition.¹³⁰ This value added component has done much damage to African American communities such as Wellston while improving the economic futures of predominantly white communities. Racism is profitable and at this current time very lucrative. This is evident by the disparities in education, asset appreciation, land acquisition, and law enforcement. The ongoing oppression of African Americans is big business.

Participant 4 also had much to say about the issues surrounding the merger, policies, and the current problems the district is experiencing. With many of the buildings and properties in both school districts in disrepair and the devaluing of black communities' money is a crucial component for a school districts to survive. Participant 4 stated,

I think it was a money grab for the Normandy School District... I was on the outside looking in so I don't know all of the details. Millions of dollars and access to building that they would have from Wellston...He (former Normandy superintendent

¹³⁰ Flippen, Chenoa. "Unequal returns to housing investments? A study of real housing appreciation among black, white, and Hispanic households." *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (2004): 1523-1551.

Stanton Lawrence) said that they were forced to do it. I just have a little trouble with believing they were forced to do that. Again I believe it was a money grab that stipulated it. I mean they couldn't force them to do it. I have trouble believing that.

Findings 2: Blacks and Whites both perceive Blacks schools as subpar

The tragedy of Wellston School District was a lopsided battle fought on various fronts. The inception of NCLB and new measures that linked high stakes testing and school funding together caused much strife. According to information obtained from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Wellston School District still lagged behind even after the state takeover. Participate 5 was very vocal and critical about the school districts and stated,

Well its interesting... The valedictorian after the merger was a Wellston student. I don't think there was a negative impact the kids are both from the same socioeconomic status. So it wasn't a detriment in that sense. I don't see it as a negative the two school merging, Wellston was a failing school district and Normandy was already heading for an unaccredited status anyway. It was still expected to fail with or with the merger.

The idea that a school district is expected to fail stood out greatly especially as with education funding and accreditation being linked to testing. This notion again of expected to fail made me immediately look at school accountability. School accountability is a buzzword that is thrown around in a various circle often in connection with teacher accountability. However, the definition of accountability can differ from district to district. One of the prevailing reasons for closing schools in the U.S. is school accountability and lack of progress in the areas of

academics. However, there is no mistake that school accountability and teacher accountability unfairly affect socioeconomically distressed schools more sustainably. Federal policies fail to take into consideration the impact of trauma, oppression, and institutionalized racism.

Participant number 3 a former high school teacher in the Normandy School District who taught for many years before, during, and after the merger spoke candidly about the perception of Normandy and Wellston school districts. She stated her opinion about how parents and stake holders value the schools,

The people that come to those school board meeting are the stakeholder that generally live in Bel-Nor, Bel-Ridge, Pasadena Hills, and Pasadena Park. You have more of them and a lot of people who don't even have children in school being more apart of the political process and going to school board meetings... Not to say there wasn't any but the transient areas didn't like Pine Lawn, North Woods, and Pagedale those parents just didn't fight. I don't think they fought for it.

Section 162.081 of Missouri law imposes that any school district in Missouri is designated unaccredited for a period of two consecutive years automatically transfers power from the local school board to the Missouri Board of Education. This law effectively instituted a Wild West mentality for predominately Black school districts in Missouri. Normandy and Wellston effectively suffered the brunt of the ill thought out law as harsh penalties and strict punishments were delved out.

On June 29, 2005 the state of Missouri took over the Wellston School District. When the state of Missouri took control of the Wellston School District it was with the intent to improve

test scores of students attending the failing district. However, this was never achieved after years of efforts. Many efforts were made by the school board to stop the impending takeover such as a temporary restraining order. However, the inevitable was already happening and the aggressive nature of these policies and disregard for the educational wellbeing of students is still shocking today. Eventually, after much legal maneuvering, and stalling the lawsuit was dropped and the state took control of the school district.

Prior to take over the Wellston School District was accused of cheating on state standardized tests and former superintendent Ronald Stodghill claimed the district stopped paying his salary in June of 2005 and made defamatory statements against him. Stodghill had been the superintendent of the Wellston School District since 1984. This prompted Stodghill to file a lawsuit against the district. His stance was that students did not cheat on the assessment but the scores achieved were the scores earned by students.

DESE records show Wellston is a district that has a 100 percent African American student population. The accusations of cheating arose from students making a tremendous growth on standardized test in the years of 2004 and 2005. According to information gathered from DESE detailed in appendix F student performance on state standardized ELA and Math assessments more than tripled.

These concentrated efforts to target low performing schools for not meeting adequate yearly progress neglects the social caste system that relegates these students to an oppressed position. This inconvenient truth is immensely important, as it plays directly into Derek Bell's theory of Interest Convergence. In his theory he asserts, "The interest of blacks in achieving

racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites...”

The prevalence and abundance of underfunded schools like Wellston, Normandy, and many other predominantly African American schools in the Saint Louis is more than mere coincidence. Many surmised that the formula for school funding was unfair to poor districts like Wellston. Senate Bill 287 passed in 2005 was supposed to usher in a new area of funding for schools. However, the unintended consequences of the bill proved more catastrophic. It also helped the state gain control of local education through funding. A new era in education was underway in Missouri, marked by the use of terms such as, “production function.” The concept of “production function” assumes that with additional inputs you will gain certain outputs. This ideology is based on flawed logic because it assumes all things are equal. However, the experiences, educational opportunities, historical memories, trauma, and history of oppression that students experience are not the same. Additionally, we must also refer to the law of diminishing returns which reveals a point at which benefits gains is substantially less than effort or investment.

Other factors that helped to hasten the demise of a once thriving community were fragmentation and an inability to collectively access, build, and maintain political power. Fragmentation historically helped destroy the Wellston community and district while simultaneously crippling many other predominantly African-American districts in Saint Louis and Saint Louis County. Fragmentation first economically cripples an area then socially castrates the area with terms such as blighted, high crime, and failing schools. While blatant racism and discrimination does exist within education many facets and aspects of racism have taken a new elusive more perverse form of discrimination. Currently the Normandy School District serves

over 20 municipalities. These municipalities include Bellerive, Bel-Nor, Bel-Ridge, Beverly Hills, Charlack, Cool Valley, Glen Echo Park, Greendale, Hanley Hills, Hillsdale, Normandy, Northwoods, Northwoods Court, Pagedale, Pasadena Hills, Pasadena Park, Pine Lawn, Uplands Park, St. John, Velda Village, Velda City, Vinita Terrace, Vinita Park, and Wellston. Students attending are divided by imaginary lines and fictitious boundaries.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website states its mission is, "to guarantee the superior preparation and performance of every child in school and in life." African Americans principals and superintendents have been subjugated to overseers of a corrupt educational system that preys on ill-informed parents, "Uncle Tom" politicians, and power-hungry self-serving school boards. Anti-Black policies that push the agenda of high stakes testing are criminal; these policies create a system in which African-American students struggle. While ignoring the systematic racism that created a system of failure for African American students is criminal. Even more unjust are the policies that use punitive measures to ensure that school districts faced with decades of discrimination fix societal woes overnight.

When I asked the participants if the merger affected their educational opportunities or the opportunities of the students everyone participant stated it did not have any positive or negative effect. However, participant 1 went on to further and stated, "It didn't affect my education or Wellston students' education they had already lost their accreditation."

The assumptions of both Blacks and whites that school quality is directly tethered to a biased rating system, of accredited or unaccredited, seems to be based entirely on misinformation and propaganda amongst oppressors. When pressed to tell me more and be specific about what

accountability is and what does it measure, mean, and its benefit, each participant referenced the M.A.P. test as the tool but all were vague on exactly what correlation it has on school quality. The M.A.P. test is what the state of Missouri uses to as issue accreditation or takes accreditation away from schools. However, what accreditation specifically means and the impact it has on disenfranchised communities of color could not be assessed or conveyed by all participants, which included students, teachers, and school board members. Participant 1 a former Normandy student stated,

I think the only reason they wanna(sic) do the schools like that is so the state can take over...It's a win lose situation...From what I experienced teachers are stricter, they to work with you as much as they can but they curriculum is hirer. I never understood why when I went to Ritenour I was behind. I think the students at Normandy and Wellston didn't perform as high because the expectations were low.

Another take on the same question yielded a somewhat different response but still expressed the sentiment of an underperforming school. Participant 2 a former student who attended school at Normandy until the merger and later returned as a teacher stated this,

Even though Wellston is right there on the border and many students would flip/flop between Wellston and Normandy. There was this kind of unwritten/unspoken sometimes... and I'm using that term very loosely. That Wellston was just a lesser district and in all actuality it was in a lot of ways. Even though it's clear Wellston had some definite academic advantages over Normandy...it was just different.

While not one participant directly stated that predominantly white schools are better, the researcher could conclude this by their assessment of predominantly white schools. The white savior ideology is not a new thing in education or any other area. The rhetoric and promotion of a white savior is evident even with the religious depiction of a white Jesus peddled to Blacks and with movies like *Dangerous Minds*. In the movie's plot audiences are shown how one caring white teacher can have the most powerful and immediate impact on students of color despite what other obstacles they may be facing. This symbolism and others like it is vastly important, as it reinforces the lie that the schools' and school districts' quality of education is directly correlated to the amount of white people working or sending their child to school there.¹³¹

Participant 2 later went on to state this about her experience teaching both Normandy and Wellston students,

It's almost like it was a sense of pride for some students. I need to differentiate myself from normal Normandy kids and kids who came from Wellston. It is true all of my kids who came from Wellston that got dropped in the Normandy district were typically... more well behaved, more advanced, more interested in learning, and learning a more diverse curriculum.

Participant 2's statement of Wellston students being academically superior and better behaved while simultaneously denouncing the district as the lesser of the two districts was very conflicting. When pressed by the researcher to clarify and explain again the participant could not

¹³¹ Brown, Amy. "Waiting for Superwoman: White female teachers and the construction of the "neoliberal savior" in a New York City public school." *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)* 11, no. 2 (2013).

adequately verbalize what was meant by a lesser district if the students are academically superior.

Findings: 3 Segregation is still firmly intact

In 1972, according to Uchitelle and Heaney “no real progress had been made to desegregate schools in the city of Saint Louis.” This remains true to this day. Looking at the landscape of St. Louis, one is immediately exposed to the failure of desegregation and continuing reality of segregation in St. Louis. All the majority African American schools and school districts happen to be situated in North Saint Louis County, Saint Louis City, and East Saint Louis. This is in stark contrast to the majority white schools and school districts surrounding and encapsulating the African American schools and districts. The demographic composition of the Wellston School District changed to completely African American in a little over two decades. “Separate is not equal,” especially when others control the wealth and opportunities in which to obtain it. With the demographic change also came much economic disenfranchisement. Companies such as Abex Corporation, Wagner Electric, and countless other small businesses either relocated or closed their doors. W.E.B. Dubois stated, “The problem in the twentieth century “in 1903, “is the problem of the color line.”¹³² This racial divide has fragmented and segregated Saint Louis and crippled many neighborhoods like Wellston. The blatant racism associated with the merger of Wellston and Normandy school districts is appalling. CRT helps

¹³² Ibid

offer the following background on Interest Convergence and its role and the merger of two failing school districts. “Whites may agree in the abstract that blacks are citizens and are entitled to constitutional protection against racial discrimination, but few are willing to recognize that racial segregation is much more than a series of quaint customs that can be remedied effectively without altering the status of whites. The extent of this unwillingness is illustrated by the controversy over affirmative action programs, particularly those where identifiable whites must step aside for blacks they deem less qualified or less deserving. Whites simply cannot envision the personal responsibility and the potential sacrifice inherent “... that true equality for blacks will require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for whites.”¹³³ Quality and equality are two inherently different things. Most people would agree that the government is in favor of a quality education for African Americans however history has shown us the opposite. Bell reasons this by stating, “...on a positivistic level – how the world is – it is clear that racial equality is not deemed legitimate by large segments of the American people, at least to the extent it threatens to impair societal status of whites.”¹³⁴

Using an analytical approach of historical analysis questions began to arise in regards to combining two underperforming and financially strapped school districts. The only logical reason was blatant racism. The established white hierarchy would not allow for the influx of over five hundred African American students. These two neighboring districts that would have been more financially able to merge with the Wellston School District are Clayton School District and

¹³³ Ibid

¹³⁴ Ibid

University School District. This sentiment of resentment was later expressed by the Francis Howell School District when it tried unsuccessfully to block the incoming Normandy students.

Using data from appendix D, we can see that since we can see that from the years of 1991 until the merger the Wellston district had a one hundred percent African American population. Also the percentage of all enrolled students receiving free or reduced lunch never went below eighty percent. As mentioned early these hyper-segregated urban rings were the product of racism.

In a study by Comfort Okpala (2002) stated that student demographics were the only significant factors to influence student performance. Schools and districts that had more than 65 percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch are considered low wealth schools. These schools and districts with a high percentage of free and reduced lunch students had an adverse effect on student performance.¹³⁵ According to information obtained from DESE that appears below and in appendix D. Wellston maintained levels of over 80 percent free and reduced lunch levels for 10 plus years before the merger. Poverty has stolen the ability to achieve the pursuit of happiness for many African American students. Racism has kept African Americans as second class citizens and has helped uphold white privilege and white supremacy.

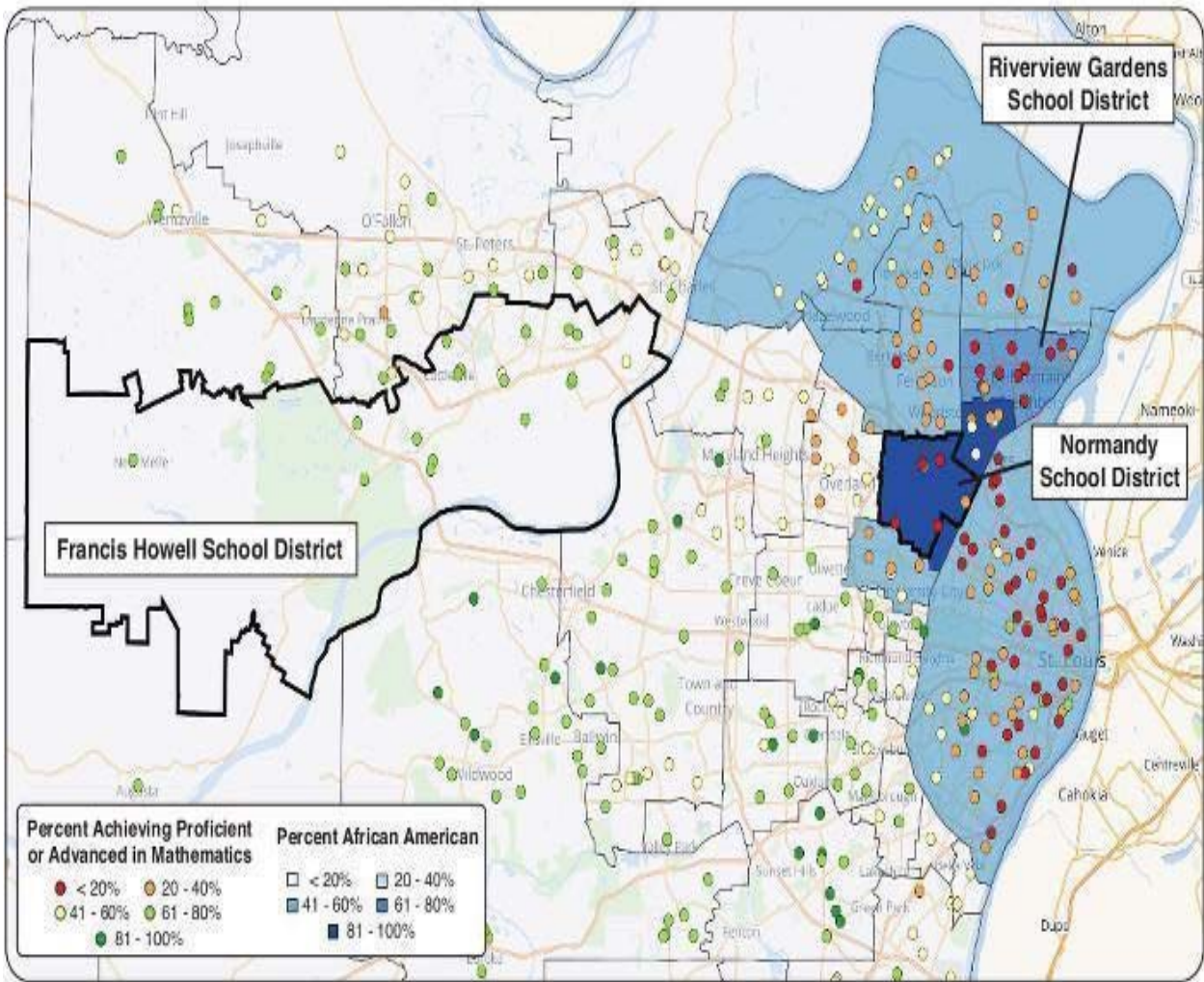
Wellston School District Demographics

¹³⁵ Okpala, Comfort O., Amon O. Okpala, and Frederick E. Smith. "Parental involvement, instructional expenditures, family socioeconomic attributes, and student achievement." *The Journal of Educational Research* 95, no. 2 (2001): 110-115.

Year	K-12	Free and Reduced %	Black %	White %	Other %
1991	834	0	100	0	0
1992	872	0	100	0	0
1993	803	0	100	0	0
1994	762	0	100	0	0
1995	680	0	100	0	0
1996	660	96.8	100	0	0
1997	679	96.2	100	0	0
1998	646	95.7	100	0	0
1999	630	80.4	100	0	0
2000	607	83	100	0	0
2001	692	90.7	100	0	0
2002	705	86.7	100	0	0
2003	747	90.7	100	0	0
2004	524	75.3	100	0	0
2005	561	82.8	100	0	0
2006	577	82.7	100	0	0
2007	574	98.2	100	0	0
2008	577	92.5	100	0	0
2009	551	91.6	100	0	0
2010	466	93.8	100	0	0

Based on this data provided by the National Center for Education Research, a large concentration of African Americans resides in the North and Central County areas. Additionally, we notice very few areas with students achieving proficient scores in reading and math in these areas. However, the further we move from these areas we see an opposite effect: lower concentrations of African American students and higher concentrations of proficient test scores. As previously discussed, school segregation was deemed illegal however many other devious methods were used to insure African Americans stayed trapped. The methods include changing school district boundary lines and de facto segregation.

Academic Achievement in St. Louis, Missouri



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, EL51 Table Generator, 2013-13 <<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/elsa/tableGenerator.aspx>>
 Missouri Department of Education, 2012-13 <<http://mde.mo.gov/quickfacts/Pages/District-and-School-Information.aspx?Page=Folder-%2Fquickfacts%2FSchool%20Function%20Data%20and%20Reports%2FCurrent%20Expenditures%20For%20ADA&FolderCTID=0x012000B3EF86950C3A824680B44E0680ED1F4&View=10E813076-38D6-4D98-9112-5D0C54B515E8>>
 Census - American Factfinder, 2010 <<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsppages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=1>>

While poverty has not taken the place of racism, it has become a tool to tether the African American to unfavorable conditions. According to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education records Wellston has remained 100 percent African American since 1991. Data suggest that Wellston was also 100 percent African American for some time before this but the

lack of available data cannot prove nor disprove this fact. What data can prove is that a segregated African American school district struggle financially and later academically because of a state sanctioned school funding formula and a lack of due diligence to combat racial discrimination in education. Also, according to DESE the school districts of Wellston, Normandy, Jennings and Riverview Gardens all had over 90 percent African American enrollment and over 80 percent free and upward of 60-90 percent of students receiving free and/or reduced lunch. These districts also have another distinction in common, all of the district mentioned previously have been taken over by the state, lost accreditation, closed, or were in a dire financial situation. By not allowing diversity whites and blacks are being robbed of valuable cultural experiences.

By believing the disparaging images about blacks and other minorities that the media bombarded her with, this student's education was deficient—she was harmed by her lack of cultural understanding. Her lack of diverse educational experiences that might have countered these misconceptions resulted in a law student who lacked the necessary perspective and sensitivity to function as an attorney in an increasingly diverse America... Not only are whites injured by the fallacies from the media that portray minorities and the poor in a negative light, whites are also injured by the overwhelmingly positive representation of whites in the media.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Kupenda, A.M. 2008. Simply Put: How Diversity Benefits Whites and How Whites Can Simply Benefit Diversity. 653.

Denying Blacks, a proper education is nothing new. During slavery it was illegal to teach a Black person to read or write. The pervasive generational memories supporting a fallacy of inferiority still seeps through in the interviews of Blacks attending predominantly Black schools. In the words of the participants they feel “unprepared” “not cared about” “lacking rigor” “complacent” and “behind.” This perceived racial inferiority and internalized oppression could also help explain the high occurrences of disciplinary actions at Normandy.

Resisting blacks as authority figures is based on a fallacy of incompetence, a fallacy of non-desirability. Many things could be at the root of the fallacy—fear, lack of familiarity, even hatred. Diversity, though, as it did with this young woman, helps eliminate such fallacies and can help whites to obtain support in their personal and educational issues, as it may be a non-white that is best situated to help them. In order to develop well-rounded citizens, all students to be exposed to diversity and to feel valued.¹³⁷

Participant 3 spoke in great length about perceived attitudes of surrounding districts confronted with the possibility of receiving large amounts of African American students. When questioned about the Wellston/Normandy merger and why not the Wellston/Clayton merger or Wellston/University City merger her response was very revealing. She stated,

Everything tied to education in St. Louis is rooted in race.” She further expounded on this by stating, “just look at the documentary “The Pruitt-Igoe myth” it just highlights all of the intersection of racism in the city of Saint louis.” The Pruitt-Igoe Myth film details the sinister development of a predominately African American housing project

¹³⁷ Kupenda, A.M. 2008. Simply Put: How Diversity Benefits Whites and How Whites Can Simply Benefit Diversity. 656.

and its failure. Participant 2 also stated, “the various counties and municipalities of Saint Louis County, it all just sort of evolved and spread uncontrollably. even with these municipal boundary lines, education has also played a major role in keeping everything divided and keeping communities of color exceedingly oppressed and suppressed in terms of education and.”

Chapter Summary

This chapter reveals many truths about overt and internalized oppression within the African schools. Anderson (1988) presented a profound case for the determination of African Americans to receive a quality education even when presented with insurmountable odds. Anderson in his writing gave detailed examples showing how governmental policies contributed and helped undermine the education opportunities for African Americans. The perspectives of the participants help disclose the unrelenting and oppressive nature of white supremacy and racism.

The first finding, disaggregated from all the participants, shows that African American schools do not hold the same value as school with a majority-white student body population. This deficit thinking when describing African American schools has undoubtedly had an emotional and psychological impact on the participants. Participants described schools that had more white teachers or students as better, without any specific or relevant data to back up their claims.

The second finding is that most participants feel as if white schools are inherently superior to black schools. While not one participant was able to specifically cite why the white

schools are better, many participants said the curriculum or teachers. This internalized oppression as the direct product of media rhetoric as it pertains to accountability, test scores, and the quality of black schools.

The third and final finding revealed in my research is that Blacks are unwanted and are systematically prevented from entering predominately white spaces on large numbers. This acknowledgement was derived from a history of white flight to current trends in St. Louis of inner ring suburbs.

Chapter Five:

Conclusions, Discussions, and suggestions for Future Research

The conclusions revealed in my research led the researcher to ask many other poignant questions. These questions will help unravel and detail the systematic bias and racism associated with public education. Many thought the education received during the Wellston/Normandy merger to be subpar. However, participant 3 also stated that it did not derail his/her own personal educational opportunities. This study was prepared to address the systemic threat of a white supremacy agenda against African American educational opportunities. Wellston and Normandy were used to highlight the insidious lengths public policy makers are willing to go to protect white space and continue a system of oppression through educational opportunity hoarding.

Themes and Concepts for further research are as follows:

- Overt and internalized oppression contributes to the underperformance of African American schools.
- State of Missouri only intervenes and assumes control of predominately African American schools.
- North County serves as a concentration camp for African Americans residing in St. Louis County.
- School accountability is supported by racist measures and tactics.

These questions are crucial to understanding the depth of hatred being spewed towards African American children residing in Saint Louis City, Wellston, and North County.

Each passing year brings forth a new comprehensive movement aimed at eradicating the fictional educational divide. This is a divide only evident and visible because of the racial

privilege and superiority it affords its white citizens. The following topics were developed after much consideration of the state of African-American schools in North County: academic challenges of high stakes testing and accountability, micro-aggressions while in white space, and the oppression still faced by African Americans.

Conclusion 1: Decline and Desperation and Inadequate Education Opportunities

Many predominately African American schools in the Saint Louis area and the country are fighting for survival and local control. Racism and blight have left many of these communities resembling war torn countries. The decline of the neighborhoods and the lack of infrastructure can be attributed to racialized policies that intended to keep the status quo for whites intact while simultaneously ensuring African Americans remained under whites in the proverbial pecking order.

Many participants cited receiving an inferior education at Wellston/Normandy in comparison to whiter school districts. However not one participant could articulate why the education was subpar in comparison. Participant one was only able to relay a message of being behind when he/she left Wellston and attended a different school. This feeling of being behind was very reminiscent of what the self-questioning Du Bois referred to in his writings. According to Du Bois white prejudices provoke “self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals.” The internalization of anti-black sentiment from the outside world thus begins to shape the black American experience.”¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Edles, L.D., AppelRouth, S. 2009. *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*. Pine Forge Press, an Imprint of SAGE Publications. 2nd ed. 354.

Whiteness as property is nothing new. Within education and educational policy making there are defined advantages of whiteness. Toni Morrison, a famous African American author stated, "Race has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological "race" ever was."¹³⁹ If whiteness can be property and hold advantages then we must assume the blackness carried by African Americans also carries a disadvantaged debt. Randall Robinson exposes this debt in his writing by asserting, "No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance and in a hostile environment, against privileged victimizer, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow."¹⁴⁰

Karolyn Tyson wrote extensively about the ills of racial discrimination and segregation. Through this research she concluded that poor educational opportunities, inadequate resources, and low achievement can all be associated with segregation.¹⁴¹ Wellston inadequacies were the product of anti-black policy that helped facilitate the demise of the district.

Conclusion 2: School Accountability and Race

¹³⁹ Morrison, Toni. "Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination." *Modern Philology* 92, no. 2 (1994): 267-271.

¹⁴⁰ Robinson, Randall. *The debt: What America owes to blacks*. Penguin, 2001.

¹⁴¹ Tyson, Karolyn. "Tracking segregation, and the opportunity gap." *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance*(2013): 169-180.

The current rhetoric surrounding accountability and failing schools focuses on predominately African American schools. This illusion of failure is not by chance or happenstance. The last century has proven to be just as oppressive as the century before it. African Americans are no longer in chains of bondage but still are subjugated to the chains of oppression and white supremacy. The physical shackles were released but the mental, emotional, and educational shackles remain firmly intact. Housing discrimination, educational inequalities, and school district boundary lines have helped the oppression and discrimination¹⁴²

According to many researchers, school accountability does not improve test scores.¹⁴³ However what it has done is create a systematic way to devalue African-Americans schools while simultaneously touting white schools as the standard in educational quality. Conceptualizing this disparaging message by any African American student is a tragedy beyond measure. This tragedy has become a constant reality for many. State takeover does not improve test scores. However, it does condition the thinking of the African Americans as intellectually inferior without taking into account the social and psychological effects of years of racism and oppression. This perceived superiority is what fuels rhetoric on the Black/white achievement gap. This rhetoric was notably observed by Carter G. Woodson, who wrote, "The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time

¹⁴² Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick. "When whites flock together: The social psychology of white habitus." *Critical Sociology* 32, no. 2-3 (2006): 229-253.

¹⁴³ Darling-Hammond, Linda. "Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind'." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 10, no. 3 (2007): 245-260.
Harvard

the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples.”¹⁴⁴

Looking at the percentage of African Americans scoring proficient on standardized tests in other accredited and whiter school districts the rates are the same. These schools are failing to provide African American children with a quality education according to DESE’s accreditation system. However, they are exempt from the punitive sanctions associated with accreditation system while school districts with significantly more African American students are deemed ineffective and not meeting standards. However, researcher Richard Rothstein asserts, “ the difficulties associated with lower socioeconomic economic schools have become the standard and remedial education the norm and poverty problems as large concentration of lower socioeconomic students are concentrated in certain schools”¹⁴⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond concluded that economic and resource deficiencies will produce four major disparaging and disproportionate educational outcomes in the United States, they are;

1. High childhood poverty
2. Unbalanced resource allocation and distribution
3. Inability to provide quality education opportunities
4. Low quality of education curriculum.¹⁴⁶

Researcher George Farkas concluded that for student learning to occur, these three things must be satisfied:

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Rothstein, Richard. *Class and schools*. Teachers College, Columbia University, 2004.

¹⁴⁶ Darling-Hammond, Linda. "Inequality and school resources." *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance*(2013): 77.

“The first is that there must be an opportunity for learning, whether from a teacher, a textbook, or other means. The more that is taught, the more that can be learned. The second is student effort. Both time on task and the quality of the concentration brought to the task are important. Finally, there are the skills and experiences brought to the task. If prior learning has not created sufficient skill and knowledge for the student to be ready to cope with the assigned instructional tasks, little achievement of new learning will occur.”¹⁴⁷

Conclusion 3: No Blacks Allowed

Desegregation ended in the United States in 1954. However, a white supremacy mentality that disavows and despises African American peoples is still firmly intact within the United States. Integration has never been about righting the wrongs done to African Americans. This idea is accurately expressed through Dereck Bell Interest Convergence Principle. Bell stated, “that the Brown decision immediately improved America’s credibility in emerging third-world countries ...” Though blacks may have felt a step closer to equality “ ... many elite whites understood that the South could not make the transition from a plantation economy to an industrialized economy without discarding segregation.”¹⁴⁸ “No Blacks allowed” is not directly stated, however it is expressed through the stratification and lack of diversity engulfing the St. Louis area.

¹⁴⁷ Farkas, George. "Racial disparities and discrimination in education: What do we know, how do we know it, and what do we need to know?" *Teachers College Record* 105, no. 6 (2003): 1119-1146.

¹⁴⁸ Lynn, M. and Dixson, A.D. ed. *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*. 17.

Some blacks have been integrated into the white experience: they attend predominantly white institutions, are taught by mainly white faculty, attempt to join school organizations primarily run by their white classmates, and study books written by whites that exclude the fuller stories of the experiences of racial minorities in America. Blacks have learned the “language” of the dominant white culture, have bonded with whites over issues important to the white community, and have learned to remain silent while white teachers and assimilated non-white teachers ignore racial implications in the curriculum and in their classrooms.¹⁴⁹

Participant two, a former student and teacher within the Normandy District, reiterated this point, by stating, “The state takeover is just a guise to hide racism.” “The state is giving the illusion of helping while nothing substantive actually occurs, they keep the same people in charge and the same agenda.”

One of the many stories of the despair and denial was the case of Paul Davis and his son. Paul Davis spoke about the ills and trouble his child was in while attending the Normandy School District. However, when the Normandy District lost its accreditation and because of a 2013 Missouri Supreme Court ruling on student transfer he sent his son to Francis Howell. However, Francis Howell stakeholders and community members had decided that they had enough of the transfer students and elected not allow Normandy Students to attend. This again is a protection of white space and a precautionary measure to ensure the “Negro Evasion” will not take place within St. Charles.

¹⁴⁹ Kupenda, A.M. 2008. Simply Put: How Diversity Benefits Whites and How Whites Can Simply Benefit Diversity. Seattle Journal for Social Justice, Volume 6, Issue 2. 650.

School reform for urban (African American) schools has long been a false priority of politicians and advocates. The political movers and shakers prefer a top down approach that rarely emphasizes community relations and engagement.¹⁵⁰ This sentiment was also expressed by Nancy Hartman former Normandy School Board member 2004-2014 who stated, “ Missouri school accreditation system is corrupt, all the people who work for DESE are corrupt.”

The denial of African Americans into white spaces has not been hidden. Francis Howell School residents openly opposed the influx of Black students and feared for the life and wellbeing of their white children. According to local news station KMOV who reported on a March 15, 2015 town hall meeting one parent Paul Wilson stated, “It had nothing to do with the color of skin” and "it has to do with the environment they were raised in.” As far as the security issue; but no, I don’t feel like race plays any part in it.” The protection of white space, the adamant denial of white privilege, and the unwavering indoctrinating of white superiority was all that could be assessed from such rhetoric.

No blacks allowed, is more than just a statement, it's also a representation of the policy making officials. These governing bodies often exclude African Americans from its ranks and make it difficult for policies to encompass their views and opinions its many African American constituents.

Conclusion and Future Research Questions

¹⁵⁰ Payne, Charles M. So much reform, so little change: The persistence of failure in urban schools. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138, 2008.

While the uncertainty about the future educational opportunities of students from the Wellston/Normandy school district is dismal. We must understand that closing African American schools and school districts is not and should not be considered a viable option for academic achievement, nor should it be a punishment for low test scores. The research has consistently revealed that predominantly African American schools and communities suffer more with punitive consequences and repercussions.¹⁵¹ This tactic of school reform does little to address years of systemic racism and the impact and trauma associated with the oppression through historical memory and PTSD.

Educational policies such as Desegregation, Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have only seem to juxtapose the already fragile position of African American student. With desegregation we gained equal access to schools and lost local schools and local control. Moving forward to ESSA and NCLB we gained more standards and testing but ending up loses resources and funding through bureaucracy and backroom wrangling.

There is a real tragedy in the inability of DESE to adequately assess African American school districts and communities that have undoubtedly been impeded and affected by years of racial, financial and, educational partiality. The need for true accountability standards that understand the racial travesties of the past and its current impact on today's educational system is needed for progress. The current politics of educational equality have longed plagued African American school districts and communities throughout Saint Louis and America.

¹⁵¹ Darling-Hammond, Linda. "Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind'." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 10, no. 3 (2007): 245-260.

The conclusion about the closer/merger of Wellston with Normandy is much more than test scores and fiscal responsibility. It is a history of misappropriation and plantation mentality of governance and policy making when considering the education needs of African Americans. It also serves as a call to African American families to understand the implicit racism and stark reality of education opportunities and resources being made available to their children.

What can be done to remedy years of oppressive policies to make adequate and observable change in educational opportunities for African Americans is debatable. However, this research does serve as notice that change must occur. The current forces of policy implementation and accountability measures will continue to reinforce an image of inequality while simultaneously promoting white superiority rhetoric. This researcher asserts that African Americans must stop being the unwittingly passengers on the journey to education, political, and personal freedom and opportunity.

Appendices

Appendix A

St. Louis County Communities

Related Links: [Municipal Tax Rates](#) | [Fire Districts](#) | [School Districts](#)

Mid County

Bel-Nor	Bel-Ridge	Bellerive	Beverly Hills	Breckenridge Hills
Brentwood	Charlack	Clayton	Frontenac	Glen Echo Park
Glendale	Greendale	Hanley Hills	Hillsdale	Huntleigh
Kirkwood	Ladue	Maplewood	Normandy	Northwoods
Norwood Court	Oakland	Olivette	Overland	Pagedale
Pasadena Hills	Pasadena Park	Pine Lawn	Richmond Heights	Rock Hill
Sycamore Hills	University City	Uplands Park	Velda City	Velda Village Hills
Vinita Park	Vinita Terrace	Warson Woods	Wellston	

North County

Bellefontaine Neighbors	Berkeley	Black Jack	Bridgeton	Calverton Park
Champ	Cool Valley	Country Club Hills	Dellwood	Edmundson
Ferguson	Flordell Hills	Florissant	Hazelwood	Jennings
Kinloch	Moline Acres	Riverview	Saint Ann	Saint John
Woodson Terrace				

South County

Bella Villa	Crestwood	Fenton	Grantwood Village	Green Park
Lakeshire	Mackenzie	Marlborough	Saint George	Shrewsbury
Sunset Hills	Webster Groves	Wilbur Park		

West County

Ballwin	Chesterfield	Clarkson Valley	Country Life Acres	Creve Coeur
Crystal Lake Park	Des Peres	Ellisville	Eureka	Manchester
Maryland Heights	Pacific	Town & Country	Twin Oaks	Valley Park
Westwood	Wildwood	Winchester		

Historical Population of Wellston, MO.

Census	Population	%±
1950	9,396	N/A
1960	7,979	-15.1%
1970	7,050	-11.6%
1980	4,495	-36.2%
1990	3,612	-19.6%
2000	2,460	-31.9%
2010	2,313	-6.0%

Appendix C

**Population Shift of Saint Louis Metropolitan Area, 1950-2010
Population of Caucasians and Blacks in St. Louis County and the City of Saint Louis,
1950-2010**

Year	Total Population	<u>Caucasians</u>		Blacks		Other	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1950	406,349	389,419	95.8%	16,819	4.1%	111	0.00%
1960	703,532	683,652	97.2%	19,007	2.7%	873	0.01%
1970	951,353	903,022	94.9%	45,495	4.8%	2,836	0.00%
1980	973,896	853,630	87.7%	109,143	11.2%	11,123	0.01%
1990	993,529	836,603	84.2%	139,044	14.0%	17,882	0.02%
2000	1,016,315	780,830	76.3%	193,306	19.0%	42,179	0.04%
2010	998,994	702,265	70.3%	202,787	20.3%	93,902	0.09%

St. Louis County

Year	Total Population	<u>Caucasian</u>		<u>Blacks</u>		<u>Other</u>	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1950	856,798	703,030	82.0%	153,766	17.9%	2	0.00%
1960	750,026	534,004	71.2%	214,377	28.6%	1,645	0.00%
1970	622,236	365,984	58.8%	254,191	40.9%	2,061	0.00%
1980	452,801	242,988	53.7%	206,170	45.5%	3,643	0.01%

1990	396,685	202,276	51.0%	187,995	47.4%	6,414	0.02%
2000	348,149	152,666	43.8%	178,266	51.2%	17,257	0.05%
2010	319,294	140,170	43.9%	157,093	49.2%	22,031	0.07%

City of Saint Louis

Source: United States Census Bureau, University of Virginia Library, and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research

Appendix D

Wellston School District Demographics

Year	K-12	Free and Reduced %	Black %	White %	Other %
1991	834	0	100	0	0
1992	872	0	100	0	0
1993	803	0	100	0	0
1994	762	0	100	0	0
1995	680	0	100	0	0
1996	660	96.8	100	0	0
1997	679	96.2	100	0	0
1998	646	95.7	100	0	0
1999	630	80.4	100	0	0
2000	607	83	100	0	0
2001	692	90.7	100	0	0
2002	705	86.7	100	0	0
2003	747	90.7	100	0	0

2004	524	75.3	100	0	0
2005	561	82.8	100	0	0
2006	577	82.7	100	0	0
2007	574	98.2	100	0	0
2008	577	92.5	100	0	0
2009	551	91.6	100	0	0
2010	466	93.8	100	0	0

Appendix E

Normandy School District

Year	k-12	Free and reduced	Black	White
1991	5914	0	93.8	5.8
1992	5759	0	95	4.7
1993	5548	0	95.8	3.8
1994	5295	0	96.3	3.3
1995	5350	0	96.4	3.1
1996	5512	67.7	96.8	2.7
1997	5500	73.7	99.5	0.4
1998	5435	67.3	97.9	1.7
1999	5350	70.5	98	1.6
2000	5294	84	99	0.8

2001	5603	74.3	99	0.9
2002	5494	74.2	99	0.8
2003	5502	79.1	98.2	1.4
2004	5257	80.2	98.5	1.2
2005	5289	83.1	97.9	1.6
2006	5233	81.4	98.9	0.7
2007	5037	76.3	99.2	0.5
2008	4626	82.6	98.8	0.8
2009	4539	85.8	98.4	1.3
2010	4170	87.9	98	1.4
2011	4437	90.3	97.5	1.4
2012	4207	91.8	97.6	1.2
2013	4153	91.8	97	1.4
2014	2936	91.5	97.5	0.9

Appendix F

University City

Year	k-12	Free and reduced	Black	White
1991	4587	0	80.7	17.8
1992	4912	0	83.5	15.6
1993	4743	0	83.7	15.6
1994	4588	0	83.7	15.3
1995	4571	0	83.5	15.4
1996	4483	46.2	83.7	15.1
1997	4473	46.7	83.9	14.8
1998	4444	47.8	84	14.4
1999	4417	49.4	85.4	13.4
2000	4335	49.9	85.5	13.1
2001	4392	49.4	85.8	12.3
2002	4308	51	86.3	12.1
2003	4190	53.9	85.7	12.6
2004	3974	57.4	85.7	12.3

2005	3784	59.1	86.2	11.6
2006	3608	60.8	85.9	11.9
2007	3550	59.7	85.5	12.3
2008	3286	59.1	85.6	11.6
2009	3213	59.4	84.8	12
2010	3188	63.3	84.4	12.2
2011	3049	60	83.4	12.5
2012	3024	62.3	82.2	12.5
2013	3016	66.3	82.5	12.6
2014	3027	67.7	83.5	11.5

Appendix G

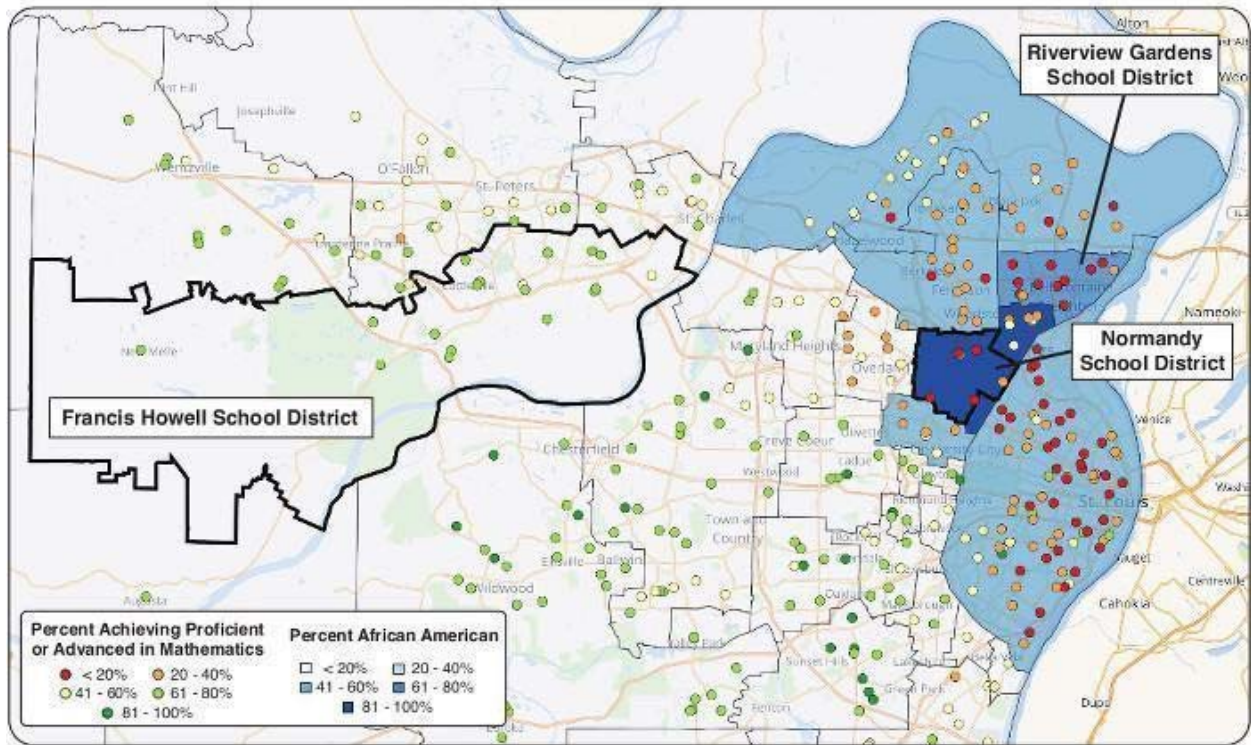
Clayton School District

Year	k-12	Free and reduced	Black	White
1991	2163	0	20.7	73.1
1992	2237	0	22.1	71.3
1993	2360	0	20.7	71.9
1994	2396	0	22.3	71.7
1995	2417	0	19.6	72.9
1996	2409	13	19.9	72.8
1997	2420	12.5	19.8	73.1
1998	2432	13.1	20.7	71.6
1999	2405	14.1	22	70
2000	2460	12.3	21.4	69.9

2001	2442	14.2	21.7	69.1
2002	2442	13.6	22.2	68.4
2003	2478	15.4	22.6	67.6
2004	2547	17.2	22.9	67.2
2005	2558	17.3	22.9	66.8
2006	2460	15.3	22.3	67.4
2007	2538	15.3	21.9	66.9
2008	2479	13.9	22.1	66.3
2009	2487	16.1	22.4	65.9
2010	2478	16.3	22.4	64.4
2011	2509	15.8	21.6	65
2012	2516	15.4	20.3	65.2
2013	2504	15.6	18.7	65.7
2014	2587	15	18.8	64.1

Appendix H

Academic Achievement in St. Louis, Missouri



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, ELSI Table Generator, 2013-13 https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx
 Missouri Department of Education, 2012-13 https://moed.gov/quickfacts/Report/District-and-School-Information.aspx?RootFolder=/Quickfacts/%2FSchool%20Finance%20Data%20and%20Reports%20Current%20Expenditures%20Per%20ADA&FolderCTID=0x012000B3EF6695C3A824680BF44E680ED1F4&View=0E813076-3BD6-4D06-8112-5D0C54B615E8
 Census - American FactFinder, 2010 http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/table?_lang=en&_ss=1&_tid=1001&_cid=3001&_all_geo_types=N&_all_geo_types=N&_all_geo_types=N

Missouri Revised Statutes

Chapter 162

Failure to provide minimum school term, effect of--unaccredited schools, hearing required, board of education options--special administrative board, duration of authority.

162.081. 1. Whenever any school district in this state fails or refuses in any school year to provide for the minimum school term required by section **163.021** or is classified unaccredited, the state board of education shall, upon a district's initial classification or reclassification as unaccredited:

(1) Review the governance of the district to establish the conditions under which the existing school board shall continue to govern; or

(2) Determine the date the district shall lapse and determine an alternative governing structure for the district.

2. If at the time any school district in this state shall be classified as unaccredited, the department of elementary and secondary education shall conduct at least two public hearings at a location in the unaccredited school district regarding the accreditation status of the school district. The hearings shall provide an opportunity to convene community resources that may be useful or necessary in supporting the school district as it attempts to return to accredited status, continues under revised governance, or plans for continuity of educational services and resources upon its attachment to a neighboring district. The department may request the attendance of stakeholders and district officials to review the district's plan to return to accredited status, if any; offer technical assistance; and facilitate and coordinate community resources. Such hearings shall be conducted at least twice annually for every year in which the district remains unaccredited or provisionally accredited.

3. Upon classification of a district as unaccredited, the state board of education may:

(1) Allow continued governance by the existing school district board of education under terms and conditions established by the state board of education; or

(2) Lapse the corporate organization of the unaccredited district and:

(a) Appoint a special administrative board for the operation of all or part of the district. The number of members of the special administrative board shall not be less than five, the majority of whom shall be residents of the district. The members of the special administrative board shall reflect the population characteristics of the district and shall collectively possess strong experience in school governance, management and finance, and leadership. Within fourteen days after the appointment by the state board of education, the special administrative board shall organize by the election of a president, vice president, secretary and a treasurer, with their duties and organization as enumerated in section [162.301](#). The special administrative board shall appoint a superintendent of schools to serve as the chief executive officer of the school district and to have all powers and duties of any other general superintendent of schools in a seven-director school district. Any special administrative board appointed under this section shall be responsible for the operation of the district until such time that the district is classified by the state board of education as provisionally accredited for at least two successive academic years, after which time the state board of education may provide for a transition pursuant to section [162.083](#); or

(b) Determine an alternative governing structure for the district including, at a minimum:

a. A rationale for the decision to use an alternative form of governance and in the absence of the district's achievement of full accreditation, the state board of education shall review and recertify the alternative form of governance every three years;

b. A method for the residents of the district to provide public comment after a stated period of time or upon achievement of specified academic objectives;

c. Expectations for progress on academic achievement, which shall include an anticipated timeline for the district to reach full accreditation; and

d. Annual reports to the general assembly and the governor on the progress towards accreditation of any district that has been declared unaccredited and is placed under an alternative form of governance, including a review of the effectiveness of the alternative governance; or

(c) Attach the territory of the lapsed district to another district or districts for school purposes; or

(d) Establish one or more school districts within the territory of the lapsed district, with a governance structure specified by the state board of education, with the option of permitting a district to remain intact for the purposes of assessing, collecting, and distributing property taxes, to be distributed equitably on a weighted average daily attendance basis, but to be divided for operational purposes, which shall take effect sixty days after the adjournment of the regular session of the general assembly next following the state board's decision unless a statute or concurrent resolution is enacted to nullify the state board's decision prior to such effective date.

4. If a district remains under continued governance by the school board under subdivision (1) of subsection 3 of this section and either has been unaccredited for three consecutive school years and failed to attain accredited status after the third school year or has been unaccredited for two consecutive school years and the state board of education determines its academic progress is not consistent with attaining accredited status after the third school year, then the state board of education shall proceed under subdivision (2) of subsection 3 of this section in the following school year.

5. A special administrative board appointed under this section shall retain the authority granted to a board of education for the operation of the lapsed school district under the laws of the state in effect at the time of the lapse and may enter into contracts with accredited school districts or other education service providers in order to deliver high-quality educational programs to the residents of the district. If a student graduates while attending a school building in the district that is operated under a contract with an accredited school district as specified under this subsection, the student shall receive his or her diploma from the accredited school district. The authority of the special administrative board shall expire at the end of the third full school year following its appointment, unless

extended by the state board of education. If the lapsed district is reassigned, the special administrative board shall provide an accounting of all funds, assets and liabilities of the lapsed district and transfer such funds, assets, and liabilities of the lapsed district as determined by the state board of education. Neither the special administrative board nor its members or employees shall be deemed to be the state or a state agency for any purpose, including section [105.711](#), et seq. The state of Missouri, its agencies and employees shall be absolutely immune from liability for any and all acts or omissions relating to or in any way involving the lapsed district, the special administrative board, its members or employees. Such immunities, and immunity doctrines as exist or may hereafter exist benefitting boards of education, their members and their employees shall be available to the special administrative board, its members and employees.

6. Neither the special administrative board nor any district or other entity assigned territory, assets or funds from a lapsed district shall be considered a successor entity for the purpose of employment contracts, unemployment compensation payment pursuant to section [288.110](#), or any other purpose.

7. If additional teachers are needed by a district as a result of increased enrollment due to the annexation of territory of a lapsed or dissolved district, such district shall grant an employment interview to any permanent teacher of the lapsed or dissolved district upon the request of such permanent teacher.

8. In the event that a school district with an enrollment in excess of five thousand pupils lapses, no school district shall have all or any part of such lapsed school district attached without the approval of the board of the receiving school district.

(L. 1963 p. 200 § 3-8, A.L. 1973 H.B. 158, A.L. 1992 S.B. 581, A.L. 1993 S.B. 380, A.L. 1998 S.B. 781, A.L. 2005 S.B. 287, A.L. 2013 S.B. 125)

(Source: RSMo 1959 § 165.013)

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