Racial Disparities in Black-White Education: A Sociological Conflict Theory Explanation

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A thesis submitted to the Sociology Department
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science
in Sociology

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University of Houston
Spring 2021

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Abstract: Inequalities between African American and white public-school students have continued since desegregation with only slight decrease. Sociologists have attempted to understand how and why inequalities in education between Black and white students are still perpetuated despite desegregation being implemented over 50 years ago. Specifically, conflict theorists have attempted to explain the power construct that has purposefully put these differences in place. The focus of this research will be on disparities in education between Black and white students in America. The various disparities continuing the gap between Black and white education that will be focused on are historical practices and differentials in both funding and teacher credentials. This paper will analyze a set of hypotheses in accordance with these disparities. The hypotheses will have basis in conflict theory with emphasis on John U. Ogbu's "acting white" theory. In correlation with these hypotheses, data and secondary analysis will be evaluated to reject or accept the hypotheses.

Introduction: America is seen as the "land of equal opportunity", when the public should be more concerned about whether America is the "land of equal results" (Sawhill 1999). Conversely, American society's desire for upward social mobility, or the "American Dream", and the beliefs in which this movement is achievable is anything but diverse. One of the prominent institutions American society places its confidence in aiding its collective drive toward the American Dream is education (Myrdal 1944). It is assumed that if someone has an upstanding education behind them, nothing is impossible to accomplish. Parents, when capable, do whatever is feasible to place their children in the finest public schools with the greatest instruments to obtain the best education in order for the segue into society to be as

straightforward as possible. A major sociological inquiry that follows this is, "Why cannot most parents obtain a high-quality education for their children?" Is it due to individual choices and parenting styles, or are there also structural and demographic factors that account for educational inequalities? If there are structural factors, then what are the barriers to high quality educational experiences that groups of children face? Are not all public educational institutions equal? For the United States, equality of educational opportunity is an espoused ideology, one that the country prides itself on leading in the world (Sawhill 1999). If that were so, why do parents feel it is a requirement to endure sacrifices in order for their children to receive the best education? A layman would assume education was equalized after desegregation in the 1960s, an act that integrated schools in order to create a quality education for both African American and white students. Sociologists recognize that this is not accurate, that all public schools are not equal and that the disparities grow even larger between minority and majority groups.

The fact that interactions between Black and white people in American society have always been contentious is not questioned. From segregation of schools to the Black Lives Matter movement, minority-majority relations have had several antagonistic occurrences that has caused inequalities between African Americans and whites (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). Several sociological studies have produced findings that validate the theory that Black people are underpaid, undervalued, and unrepresented in political, social and economic spheres (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999; Farley et. al 1978). It can be argued that the most critical disparity is in education, as it affects every facet of a person's attainment in life (Myrdal 1944). Subsequently, educational stratification has been a significant topic in sociological theory, particularly in conflict theory (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Jensen 2009; Kozol 2005).

The orientation of this paper is informed by conflict theory in sociology. As such, conflict theory takes a certain view as to why disparities have been put in place. Disparities in education has been a substantial subject of research. Conflict theorists postulate that: (1) Valued resources such as a valuable education is rather scarce, such that those individuals and groups need to rely on their power, social prestige, and wealth to obtain those valued resources; (2) Power, prestige, and wealth are not evenly distributed in the population such that some have vastly more of these assets than do others; (3) Those with more resources will utilize them to gain relative advantages for themselves and their children over those with fewer resources; and (4) the social structure, and particularly the value system, legitimates the right of those to use such power, prestige, and property to gain advantages over others (Ritzer 1985).

This paper will analyze how conflict theorists' view the causes of educational disparities and why these are in place through a set of hypotheses, with an emphasis on John U. Ogbu's "acting white" theory. This paper will also analyze data that correlates with both the ideology that educational stratification continues in American society and theories that this is due to both social power and systemic discrimination. Conflict theory suggests that historical practices and the practice of perpetuating educational inequality between African Americans and whites are due to systemic racism and discrimination. The Kerner Report in 1968 reported that ghettoes stay in place due to the white majority purposefully maintaining and condoning them (Daley 2018). Redlining, both residential and educational, were created in order to create segregated areas (Martin 2016). Policy has been introduced to reform education but has not focused on the ongoing problem of segregation (Garcia and Weiss 2014). Though segregation has been illegal since the 1960s, redlining and denial of Black Americans into certain residential areas has perpetuated the segregation people thought was long forgotten. There is a myriad of reasons are

as to why stratification in education exists between African Americans and white people. However, this paper will focus on a selection of particularly salient disparities, such as historical desegregation tactics, discrimination, and unequal educational practices such as inequalities in funding, teacher credentials, and teacher exhaustion. Expressed in these disparities are a set of four guiding research hypotheses, including historical practices (the history of American Black-white relations), public-school funding, teacher morale and exhaustion, and the redefining of the value of academic achievement.

Hypothesis 1: Historical practices have contributed to current educational inequality.

It is imperative to examine historical practices that have purposefully put these inequalities in place to recognize how educational disparities between minorities and majorities, significantly African Americans and whites, have developed and continue to be perpetuated. When discussing minorities and majorities, sheer numbers cannot be examined and is really not considered in order to determine what groups are minorities versus majorities (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). What is studied is who dominates the prominent spheres in society, such as political, social, and economic spheres. White people, particularly white men, are profoundly dominant in all spheres of America and are therefore viewed as the controlling majority in any sociological standpoint (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999).

Louis Wirth (1945) termed a minority as someone who is treated unequally due to the fact that the person is of a different race or culture than the societal "norm". Wagley and Harris (1958) expand on that definition with the two very important additions that state that minority status is not an achieved characteristic but an ascribed characteristic that minorities are born with. Knowing these sociological definitions aids in understanding how minorities are treated in American society. There are various minority groups, but the group that is arguably the most

downtrodden and segregated through both de jure and de facto practices would be African Americans (Massey and Denton 1988). Black Americans are the only group of minorities that are modernly hyper-segregated against, especially in housing and educational institutions (Massey and Denton 1988). This correlates with the fact that conflict theory has focused substantially on racial relations (Ritzer 1985). Considering how minorities are observed in society assists with understanding how this institutional racism has fashioned stratification in African Americans, particularly in the institution of education.

Before *Brown v. Board of Education* (Supreme Court of the United States, 347 U.S. 483 [1954]), segregation between Black and white students were enforced with de jure segregation. Most people would simplify the court decision by essentially saying "it caused desegregation in schools". Though *Brown v. Board of Education* is one of the most famous court cases in American history, most people are unaware of how it framed the blueprint of ridding public schools of segregation rulings instead of just the first basic decision of the first ruling that occurred in 1954. The first decision (Brown I) established an understanding that segregating schools is unconstitutional, but the decision had no elaborate plans detailing how to make desegregation occur (Russo, Harris and Sandidge 1994). The second ruling, also known as *Brown II* (Supreme Court of the United States, 349 U.S. 294 [1955]) was a 1955 decision that added a vague detail of a timeline, stating that desegregation should be with "all deliberate speed," which meant "slowly," but never set a strict date or strategy of dismantling segregation. *Brown III* was a case about 30 years later. Linda Brown Smith was the plaintiff in 1978 and she was represented by the son of the original legal team of *Brown I* along with other lawyers from the ACLU. The case was due to the Topeka School District establishing open enrollment in which whites chose to go to white schools and blacks to black schools (Russo et. al. 1994). The

district court declared the school district to be desegregated, and the case was decided in favor of the school district. In 1989, a three-judge panel from the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court voted 2-1 that Topeka still had vestiges of segregation and ordered desegregation (Brown v Board of Education 892 F. 2d 851 [10th Cir 1989]). The U.S. Supreme Court in 1993 was in favor of Brown and ordered the Tenth Circuit Court to order implementation of desegregation. Attendance boundaries were redrawn, school bonds were funded to create new elementary magnate schools and by 1999 Topeka was declared unified (Brown v Unified School Dist. No. 501, 56 F. Supp 2d 1212 [D. Kansas 1999]). Overall, it took over 15 years after the original Brown decision for the true beginning of desegregation in public schools (Mickelson 2001).

Since the 1950s, multiple court decisions have shaped the formation of the current school system utilized by the United States. *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg* contributed substantially to the busing debate, launching it into a national scope in the 1960s (Mickelson 2001). The North Carolina court decided that busing was a solution to defectively desegregated public schools. In 1965, the system initiated applying a federal court-approved desegregation plan that set predetermined geographic zoning while permitting voluntary student transfers. The plan proved inadequate with the end of 1969 showing that a little less than half of African Americans were still attending schools that were largely Black (Mickelson 2001). In 1968, a fresh plan was drafted to mend the ongoing segregation complications. The new plan relied primarily on school zone gerrymandering to unify the Charlotte public school system but left large numbers of African American students in all-Black or nearly all-Black schools. In his view, Chief Justice Warren Burger affirmed that busing was a suitable "remedial technique" for achieving desegregation (Mickelson 2001).

Columbus Board of Education v. Penick in the 1970s ruled that maintenance of all African American schools promoted intentional discrimination. This created the beginning of a repair to a systemwide problem (Russo et. al. 1994). Essentially, the judge ruled that schools in Ohio were segregated and led to an attempt at busing, not unlike Charlotte. In an attempt to truly integrate schools, white students were bused to predominantly African American areas to school and vice versa. This resulted in one-third of students in public schools riding buses in order to attend school (Patterson 2002).

One of the first case involving educational desegregation that was made to the Supreme Court in the 1990s was *Missouri v. Jenkins*. This thirteen year-long court battle found that the state of Missouri, particularly the Kansas City School District, maintained a segregated educational system (Russo et. al. 1994). This court decision decided where the monetary capital necessary to integrate schools would come from. The federal court preferred a property tax increase, while citizens protested having to pay for desegregation methods by an order from the federal government. The lower federal court eventually ruled that higher taxes would be imposed to implement desegregation (Russo et. al. 1994).

After the Supreme Court decision of desegregating schools went into effect, it was a detrimental goal of the government to keep de facto segregation in place (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). A primary example of government striving to keep segregation in place is southern schools first attempting to overrule desegregation orders by creating better facilities for Black students instead of integrating schools (Coleman 1966; Mack 1968). The process of maintaining separate education through legal practices essentially began with educational redlining, a subset of redlining that solely focuses on keeping education separate between minorities and majorities (Martin 2016). Redlining, and particularly educational redlining, refers to using a mapping

system to discriminatorily regulate what housing and education a household can receive (Martin 2016). Historically used to limit the housing progression of Black people, redlining is now exploiting impoverished neighborhoods by separating low-income students from students of a higher economic standing (Jackson 1985). These practices of redlining have led to larger historical practices that began and perpetuate educational disparities, such as suburbanization, white flight, federal practices, and law changes (Massey and Tannen 2017).

The ending of the Jim Crow era led to a major transformation for both the north and the south. There was a great migration of Blacks from the South to the North as well as white flight from inner-city areas to the suburbs in all regions of the country (Massey and Tannen 2017). Federal practices and law changes directly caused both of these migrations and formed what was called "Chocolate Cities" and "Vanilla Suburbs", with a large concentration of black people in the inner-city and sizable concentrations of white people in the suburbs (Farley et. al. 1978). The movement of white people away from the inner-city began a new system of segregation in the form of residential separation is academically referred to as white flight (Massey and Tannen 2017). A major federal practice that contributed to this newfound residential segregation is redlining (Jackson 1985). Massey and Tannen (2017) evaluated redlining and suburbanization. Areas that were dominantly inhabited with African Americans were systematically denied loan advancements that prevented them from moving to prosperous areas, specifically suburbia, while consistently giving magnanimous loans to whites that were attempting to residentially separate themselves from Black people. With African Americans already economically disadvantaged, the lack of income from white Americans led inner cities to decay and grow increasingly impoverished. The number of Black families suburbanizing is growing, but they are staying in

relatively poor areas of neighborhoods and living in higher concentrations of poverty than their white counterparts (Garcia and Weiss 2014).

American society believes that effective schools are required to aid in molding children into productive adult workers who can support themselves and provide for their own children (Dwokin and Dworkin 1999). However, many white and/or wealthy parents believe that integrating schools will decrease the value of the school, despite various reports showing that is not true (Garcia and Weiss 2014). Both the desire for proficient schools and the belief that schools with a larger population of poor and minority schools are inferior are important reasons that middle-class people of all races flee cities for suburbs and use educational redlining to keep districts separate (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

During past 50 years, residential segregation has decreased minutely, especially between Blacks and whites (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). In the early 2000s, nearly one-third of Black children attended schools with minority rates of 90% or more (Darling-Hammond 2001). Even if a Black family is considered middle or upper-middle class, they still face redlining discrimination through the racialized housing process (Owens 2018). To determine this, sociologists utilize what is called the index of dissimilarity to depict residential segregation between different racial groups. This index highlights the percentage of members of a group that would have to move in order to achieve pure integration of neighborhoods using 0 to describe pure integration and 100 to show pure segregation. In 2000 the index of dissimilarity between African Americans and whites was above 80 for the largest northern cities like New York, Chicago and Detroit, and was between 65 and 70 in southern and western cities like Atlanta, Houston and Los Angeles (Vock, Charles and Maciag 2019). A 2017 analysis of residential segregation of metropolitan shows little difference, with Milwaukee, New York, and Chicago

being in the top three with percentages above 75, and western and southern cities such as Miami,

Houston and San Francisco having rates above 50 (Vock, Charles and Maciag 2019). This data

highlights the substantial residential segregation that is still occurring between African

Americans and whites (Dworkin 2020). These housing disparities directly led to the economic,

and therefore educational, inequalities that are perpetuated today (Dworkin 2020).
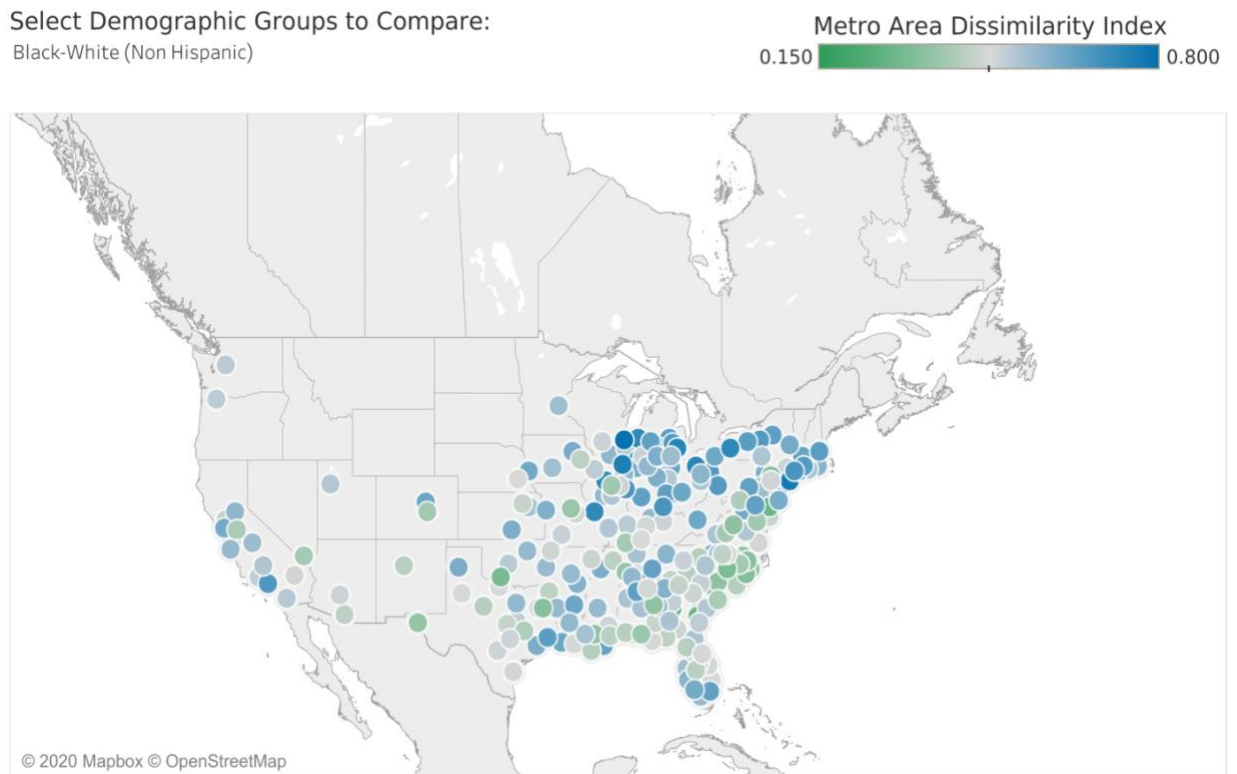
Figure 1. Vock and Maciag 2019. This graph shows the index of dissimilarity in 2017, with the highest indexes depicted in dark blue and the lightest in gray. This graph shows that the greatest amount of concentration appears in the South and the North, with the Northeast having the highest index of dissimilarity.

More than 70 years ago, an American national survey funded by Carnegie Foundation

researched Black and white relations in America. This study observed there were two main

values in white society, the first being that "all men are created equal" and "Blacks are inferior".

This dilemma showed the notion that most individuals did not see a contradiction between the

two values (Myrdal 1944). Twenty years later after Myrdal, Frank Westie (1965) observed that

individual prejudice is normal in U.S. society. More than 40 years after Westie's publication, Picca and Feagin (2007) distinguished between past racism often termed "Jim Crow Racism," characterized by blatant dependence on stereotypes about the subordination of minority groups, both biologically and culturally, in order to justify discriminatory behavior. Now, racism has become more colorblind and easier to ignore. In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson formed the Kerner Commission to study the increasing violence sweeping the nation. The Kerner Commission studied various forms of racism in the country, such as segregated educational systems, unemployment opportunities and housing discrimination that aided in the continuation of Black-white disparities (Daley 2018). The group found that white systemic racism, not Black anger, was the motivation for the widespread civic unrest in American society (Solly 2020). Such racism is contrasted with the more modern "colorblind racism" that highlights the accomplishments of a minority population to disprove inferiority, but in reality, it contributes to the continued disadvantage of minority groups. According to DiAngelo (2018), this is due to white fragility, creating conflict between Blacks and whites that makes it nearly impossible to discuss the nature of Black-white race relations and to have a dialogue. Whites will view affirmative action as whites being discriminated against and "want to take the country back" instead of as a clarification for the wrongdoings of slavery and segregation. This causes an effect of personal weaknesses, no motivation to succeed or too low values placed on education by minority group members and their parents (Dworkin 2020).

A subset of conflict theory is critical race theory. Critical race theory, or CRT, acknowledges that racism is systemic and etched into the fabric of American society. The theory is prevalent in the social sciences and uses critical theory to analyze society and culture through lenses of race and power (Ritzer 2013). Critical race theorists recognize that white privilege and

white supremacy perpetuate the ostracism of people of color through power structures and social institutions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). CRT has become such a focus in academia that its teachings are taught in law schools to expose bias within various American government institutions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). In the modernity of colorblind racism and more people assuming that America is now in post racial times, critical race theory has become even more of a vital theory in the social sciences in determining the causes and effects of racial discrimination and stratification (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Though racism has been enduring since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, it has changed shape throughout modernity. Historic racism has included more than the infamous Southern separation of bathrooms, restaurants and schools. Interracial marriage was illegal, Black children were overlooked for various vaccines and even travel was segregated (Solly 2020). A study assessed during a separate study in 2017 found that conditions had actually worsened in the 50 years since the Kerner Commission's report. Black unemployment and incarceration were higher, the wealth gap had increased, and cities had become increasingly residentially segregated (Daley 2018). Discrimination has continued to be so important and systemic to the American lifestyle that lynching is still not a federal crime. Previously, more than 200 anti-lynching bills had failed to pass through Congress (Solly 2020).

Hegemony is a major staple in conflict theory and must be addressed when discussing the concept of historical and contemporary segregation. Hegemony essentially states that there is a wealth of leadership or dominance that social groups have over others. The act of redlining is an example of hegemony with white families being given discounted and forgiving loans and giving Black families an equal opportunity (Dworkin 2020). White families largely fled to the suburbs, leaving Black families in a perpetual state of poverty that ensured majority power. More

currently, school districts are using redlining techniques to keep minority and low-income children kept separate in public schools (Martin 2016). Now, entire school districts are being labeled as red, or unacceptable, with the schools "coincidentally" being in majority Black neighborhoods (Martin 2016). The intersectionality of class and race is so strong that even Black middle-class families have to deal with being redlined to low-income areas with lacking school districts (Owens 2018; Garcia and Weiss 2014). With redlining, whether through education or housing rules, the privileged have placed extreme power and influence on where someone lives (Martin 2016).

Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision occurring over 50 years ago, schools are still deeply segregated through federal practices such as redlining and suburbanization. Black children are forced to go to a homogeneously impoverished public school due to redlining designating Black areas as "undesirable". After desegregation, a massive migration of whites, aptly known as white flight, occurred, causing mass suburbanization. These acts have caused permanent and continuing inequalities between Black and white children's public education. Historical federal practices have contributed not only to sustaining residential segregation but educational segregation by using redlining to restrict certain (mostly minority) public school districts from apt funding and teachers.

Hypothesis 2: Funding is a function to keep social power in the control of the majority.

One of the explicit ways in which education between minorities and majorities are disproportionate is funding. Due to the money awarded to public schools being largely allocated by property taxes, a system of inequality exists between school districts that have been formed by social classes (Biddle and Berliner 2002). To discuss income disparities in education is

analogous to discussing racial disparities in education. Black families, on average, earn less than white families (Owens 2018). Even those with similar incomes to whites typically live in lower-income neighborhoods (Owens 2018). Having public schools be essentially funded by taxes has created a system that has become unable to support equal opportunity and full personal development (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Disparities in education related to social class are the most magnified, especially when looking at the fact that "college completion rates for the lowest-income groups have not increased in the last 40 years, despite massive expansion of the system of higher education" (Ballentine, Hammack and Stuber 2017: 90). Because the gaps between the rich and the underprivileged have widened considerably, especially after the Great Recession of 2008, educational disparities have only grown worse in the area of schools having equal capital (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Relationships students experience in society such as adults in school and family members have a pronounced impact on performance—if relationships are wanting, tempestuous, or damaging, as they are in minority areas, they will negatively affect the ability for children to achieve (Jensen 2009). In order for children to be productive members of society, socialization needs to occur in a positive environment. Socialization is the lifelong process by which we are taught our society's culture while developing individual social identities (Ballentine et. al 2017). Socialization occurs primarily in school, with family and among peers. Without a proper example of socialization, which often occurs with minority or low-income schools, children often do not have the tools to succeed in society (Ballentine et. al 2017).

There have been studies that determine what effects impoverished home life has on children and whether these effects are what stunts children's growth in the educational field (Jensen 2009; Kozol 2005; Lareau 2000). These studies have concluded that poverty does affect

children's ability to succeed in education in the fact that residential poverty increases the likelihood of difficulty in education (Jensen 2009). Poverty and crime are usually linked to lack of education (Darling-Hammond 2001). These life experiences outside of school can deeply affect school performance (Garcia and Weiss 2014). Instead of focusing on lessons learned in school, impoverished children concentrate on how to survive in a world rife with conflict. Emotional, social, health, and chronic stressors largely contribute to the diminished success in education for minority and low-income children (Jensen 2009).

Educational administrators accuse racial differences in higher ranked schools on the values of Black children and their parents (Kozol 2005). Impoverished and minority parents are typically unable to attend school events, aid their children with homework, or enroll their children in extracurricular activities (Lareau 2000). A study that lasted from the mid 1970s until the mid 1980s showed that 40 to 60 percent of lower-class parents are unable to attend parent teacher conferences (Lareau 2000). More importantly, minority children and children in poverty believe that their parents are uninterested in their educational endeavors (Jensen 2009). Children raised in different social classes have distinctive material realities and these different material realities likely affect their educational success or failure (Ballentine et. al 2017). Children from minority families may be docile and compliant while children from privileged homes may respond enthusiastically to teachers' thinking or creativity activities. The hindrances caused by the lack of home resources continue to influence the school achievement of many minority children (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). The income structure of a district determines students' school peers. Without a diverse income composition in schools, students will only be surrounded by poverty and will be detrimental to social relationships in educational institutions. Proponents of educational segregation argue that low-income students will produce lower learning outcomes,

but evidence has shown that low-income students achieve at a greater and quicker rate in higher income districts (Owens 2018). Family and community are vital factors that contribute to the decline in minority children's educational success, but they do not fully explain the persistent gap between Black and white children's achievements in school.

Research has shown that the test score gap between working-class and middle to upper-class students decreases when district funding is more equal across high- and low-income schools (Owens 2018). Funding for disadvantaged regions are direct links to lesser graduation rates, behavioral problems in classrooms, and poor academic performance (Jensen 2009). Children that attend poorly funded schools are typically indigent with little individualized economic room for advancement due to lack of transportation, access to healthcare and family care (Jensen 2009). Studies that have been conducted within the last decade highlight the evidence that more capital dedicated to each student will increase future educational prosperity (Owens 2018). Due to this, the United States now ranks first among prosperous or "developed" countries in economic inequality between groups (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Dworkin (2020) takes the position that conflict theorists believe education is a way for elites to gain power and control through different societal levels. At the distributive level, educational attainment has the capacity to convert one's education into economic or social opportunities for one's children. At the social psychological level, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by race both in terms of individual responses and those with whom they interact. Socially constructed categories are applied to describe "people or groups affected by both the race of the target group and the race of those interacting with members of the target group" (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019: 227).

Picca & Feagin (2007) make the observation that those with opportunity may not use the stereotypes characteristic of the Jim Crow era when in the presence of minority individuals, but only when audiences are of the same status and mindset. In this process, prejudice and discrimination are rationalized by racism. At the organizational level, all institutions and organizations are restrained by race. Conflict theory ascertains that the content of educational, employment, governmental and public organizations are pervaded by race. This idea connects to the theory of systemic racism. Organizations rely on race-based justifications to rationalize privilege with the result that change is problematic. This thought can be carried on to the utilization of educational systems that perpetuate racism and attempt to enforce no change (Dworkin 2020).

In many states, the funding gap for minority children is much larger than for poor children (Kozol 2005). A 2001 court case in New York supports this hypothesis (Darling-Hammond 2001). The New York State Supreme Court found public school systems in the state to be unconstitutional due to schools with large numbers of children with color receiving substantially less funding than schools with large numbers of white children (Darling-Hammond 2001). A 2015 study showed that "achievement was lower for both Black and white students in schools with the highest Black student density than in schools with the lowest density" (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2015: 12). Darling-Hammond (2001) found that schools with largely minority students have fewer resources than schools with largely majority students. Minority schools are less likely to have current books, technology and educational resources due to them usually being in low-income districts. If there is technology, it is more likely to have outdated equipment and antiquated software (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999).

Inner-city schools, most of which are occupied largely by minorities, usually do not have advanced math or science courses due to a shortage of teachers with skills to teach advanced STEM courses, students not being given the necessary skills to enroll, and because the minimum enrollment criteria for these courses would not be met (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). Funding directly affects minority students that are already economically disadvantaged and only limits what minority students are educationally capable of. In 2011, only 57% of Black students had access to a variety of math and science courses compared to 71% of white students (Bryant 2015). Analyses of data organized for school finance cases in Alabama, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, and Texas have established that on every palpable measure, from qualified teachers to curriculum offerings, schools serving greater numbers of minority students had considerably fewer means than schools serving mostly white students (Hammond 2001). Schools with limited funding are often overcrowded, dirty, and old. They typically have large class sizes, making it difficult for minority students to have a personal relationship with their teachers (Kozol 2005).

Perhaps most importantly, food options are extremely limited in low-income and minority schools. Many poor children rely on school breakfasts and lunches as primary sources of food but attending a school with limited funding usually means breakfasts and lunches that are not healthy and with only a few different options (Kozol 2005). Impoverished African Americans are segregated in schools that have little to no presence of middle-class counterparts, allowing schools to provide only what is mandated by the state and school districts (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). Unfortunately for them, it usually means unsatisfying nutritional options. Most Black impoverished students go to school with other students living in poverty, making it difficult for Black students to see the hope in gaining a profitable education (Garcia and Weiss 2014). Institutional structures and practices such as redlining to create school districts has created

districts with a homogeneous income. According to Owens (2018), income segregation will only end with integration between entire school districts in order for children to be around other children that come from a variety of households with differing incomes. Several programs are specialized for white families (Kozol 2005). Privilege from being a majority race can aid a child in achieving success in life while minority children have to play in the same field without the same access to these programs (Kozol 2005).

It is no coincidence that schools with a higher number of Black students are also schools with a higher number of poor students (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2015). In 1995 there were 26.4 percent of Black families that fell below the poverty line while only 8.5 white families fell below the identical line of poverty (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). Daley (2018) reported that the Milton Eisenhower Foundation evaluated unemployment rates for Black families in 2017, and the results were worse than in 1968, a time of revolution in civil rights. A government census (Semega et. al. 2019) revealed that in 2019, the median income for Black families was $45,438 while white families earned $76,067. Due to these numbers, it is not surprising that Black children deal with concentrated poverty at higher rates than white children (Garcia and Weiss 2014). Despite the amount increasing from 2018, the gap has stayed persistent. Since desegregation, the inequality gap between Black and white Americans has remained significant and foreboding.

Despite many believing that America is in a "post-racism" era, Black and white students are still highly segregated (Owens 2018). There is no denying that there are poor white families, but their numbers are overwhelmingly little compared to the number of poor Black families. The Pew Research Center completed a study in 2017 that reported that the average total wealth of white families superseded the wealth of Black families ten times (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Since the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans have earned less than nearly any other race (Semega et. al. 2019). Garcia and Weiss (2014) report the various damaging effects segregation has on minority children. Reproduction theory in the sociology of education states that schools are seen as serving to reproduce the existing class structure of society by preserving privilege for the children of higher socioeconomic groups and disadvantage for lower socioeconomic groups (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). Even if a Black parent has obtained a degree of higher education and/or an occupation with a livable wage, the fact that they are segregated in poverty greatly impacts a developing child's life, particularly in school.

The educational system is "geared toward middle-class white children" (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999: 62). Moreover, schools have actively worked against Black children's academic success (Ogbu 1987). This inherently causes inequalities in minority children's educations. Federal support for education is decreasing as budget shortfalls at the state and local level are increasing. This forces a reduction of resources that can be utilized to improving education for Black students. Poor Black children are residentially segregated, causing school districts to be impoverished. School and their lack of monetary capital contribute to the educational disadvantages of the racial and ethnic minorities that form its student bodies (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Conflict theorists believe that people with power support funding inequality and attempt to segregate schools to reinforce social classes, the lower typically consisting of minorities. Garcia and Weiss (2014) found that even poor white children are in a classroom that is not homogeneously poor. Despite the fact that effects of race on education usually can be sourced to another factor besides race, the negative aspects of educational inequality stem from being a minority in the United States. This greatly reduces the diversity of school peers for an average

minority in a minority school. Instead of wanting to shorten the gap of wealth inequality in order for all people to prosper, the wealthy want to ensure that for minorities, education can be another means to keep white people privileged and minorities poor (Collins 1971).

Hypothesis 3: Teacher exhaustion and credential differentials in public schools are a source of educational inequality.

Teacher credentials in majority versus minority schools is another significant way stratification is perpetuated in American public-school systems. Education is one of the avenues for social mobility, and teachers are just as vital as disseminators of scholastic information (Kozol 2005). Like educational institutions, teachers are utilized for more than teaching English and science (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996). Teachers are a source of a wealth of information for students to learn the ways of the world and society (Lareau 2000). Educators have the arduous task of aiding children during prime socialization years (Darling-Hammond 2001). Without proper adults guiding children through forming both individual and American identities, children will not be able to succeed in both the educational and occupational realm. No amount of amazing curriculum will overshadow a teacher with poor skills and overwhelming burnout (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996). Educators who are lacking in credentials and passion leave detrimental impressions on the children they teach (Jensen 2009).

There is no doubting the disparities that exist in teacher credentials in majority versus minority schools. Most minority schools include teachers that are not specialized in the field they teach, and most schools are inundated with high teacher turnover rates (Kozol 2005). Schools with large populations of Black students are increasingly lacking in courses that are on par with schools with large populations of white students (Bryant 2015). The National Center for

Education Statistics (2015) reported that low-income minority students in inner-city schools are more likely to be taught science or math by a teacher that is not certified in subjects they teach, as well as have educators that did not major or minor in subjects in college than white students in middle-class suburban schools. Black students in segregated schools are provided with flighty teachers and frequent substitutes (Darling-Hammond 2001). In late 20th century, uncertified teachers in California were 10 times more likely to be employed in schools with a large minority population (Darling-Hammond 2001). Funding inequities, distributions of local power and dysfunctional hiring practices conspire to produce teacher shortages of which children of color bear the brunt.

Teacher burnout is a specific cause of Black children's inequality in education and perpetuates systemic stratification between African Americans and whites. The term burnout, in sociological terms, refers to the alienation people feel in occupations that have high stress with low rewards (Dworkin 2001). Confronted with ubiquitous stressors, many human service professionals like educators become emotionally drained and lose their sense of purpose or of accomplishment. This often causes teachers who originally had a passion for teaching underrepresented groups to search for a more stable position in a better economic environment (Bryant 2015).

Dworkin (2001) discusses the sociological causes and consequences of teacher burnout. In sociology, teacher burnout stems from the controlling structure of the school or the structure of the educational system. Instead of being assisted by educational administrators, it has been labeled a "personal" problem that individual teachers deal with on their own. In reality, teacher burnout will be reduced if state accountability systems force schools to hold up more than a minimum standard (Bryant 2015). National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

(1996) argues that teachers can only teach well if they are provided with a stable environment and administrative support.

To examine teacher burnout is not to disparage the teachers that are afflicted with it. More appropriately, it is seen as a consequence systemic and institutional problems like administrative behavior. Changing the systemic problems of education would undoubtedly decrease teacher burnout (Dworkin 2001). When teachers are dealing with chronic stress and begin burning out, their students have less encouragement for learning. They also have less social and emotional support from one of the most transformative adults in their lives. Such conditions set back students who need every chance to break out of the cycle of low academic achievement and, for many, generational poverty (Dworkin 2001). It is difficult to close the student achievement gap when the teaching quality gap also exists. If large numbers of burned out and uncommitted teachers in inner-city schools do not quit, then educational reform will not have a hope of being successful (Dworkin 1987).

Darling-Hammond (2001) argued that unqualified and underprepared educators remain disproportionately in schools serving greater numbers of low-income or minority students. Teachers with higher salaries are concentrated in areas that consist of majority white schools. Neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of children of color are also those where incoming instructors are least likely to have been trained about up-to-date teaching methods or about how children flourish, absorb, and mature. Additionally, when confronted with shortages, districts often hire substitutes, assign teachers in any subject lacking an instructor, expand class sizes, or terminate elective courses.

Advanced courses that enhance the prospects for later college success are not offered in many inner-city schools due to the fact that these schools do not have teachers certified to teach

them along with a lack of students with the requirements or motivation to take them (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). If teachers at minority schools are unable to teach advanced subjects, these minority students are already behind other schools that do offer advanced programs (Darling-Hammond 2001). Only 57% of Black students attend a high school with a proficient college ready syllabus, and only 4% can pass an advanced placement exam (Bryant 2015). This makes African American children increasingly unprepared for both higher education and difficult life situations (Bryant 2015).

Teacher proficiency, curriculum value and correct child intellectual growth are interconnected because knowledgeable teachers are a precondition for the successful application of a challenging course. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has recognized that the qualifications and preparation of teachers correlates with reading achievement (NAEP 1994). Educators who are well-prepared are better able to use teaching tactics that respond to students' needs, support critical thinking and encouraging diverse learning styles (Hammond 2001). Teachers who are not experienced in dealing with minorities often force them into remedial classes due to lack of knowledge about their culture (Ogbu 1987). It is more feasible for teachers who are qualified to create a curriculum that connects with the students they are teaching than those who are not (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996).

Unequal distributions of qualified teachers can be seen as a direct link to the perpetuation of educational inequality (Darling-Hammond 2001). The existing research suggests that among students who become teachers, those registered in formal preparation curriculums are more likely to be effective than those who do not have such training (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996). Thus, policies that resolve shortages in poor districts by

hiring unprepared teachers serve only to exacerbate the inequalities low-income and minority children experience (Darling-Hammond 2001).

Students of instructors who are certified in the field they teach, who have master's degrees, and who have had specialized coursework in literature-based instruction do better on reading evaluations (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996). Teachers who enter the teaching profession without full training are "less able to plan and redirect instruction to meet students' needs", less skilled in literally teaching, less able to perceive students' potential difficulties, and less likely to see it as their responsibility to do so, often blaming students if their teaching is not successful (Darling-Hammond 2001). It is more difficult for an unqualified teacher to evaluate a student's difficulties beyond the teacher's inherent biases against the students' race and social class (Bryant 2015). In 2014, Black students were four times more likely to attend a school with 80% or more of its teachers being unqualified (Bryant 2015).

For minority children in primary development, having teachers lacking in skills or a knowledge of instructing a diverse group of students can be detrimental (Darling-Hammond 2001). It forces the Black children who do attend college to take remedial classes because of their lacking high school education (Bryant 2015). Because many of the more skilled, experienced teachers relocate to more desirable schools and districts when possible, new teachers and those without training are typically given assignments in the most disadvantaged schools that offer the fewest supports (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future 1996).

The prejudices and stereotypes administrators apply to students affects how they are treated in school. Weir (2016) found that Black students are more likely to be disciplined and subject to demeaning expectations from educators versus their white counterparts. She also found that students who are seriously disciplined in school are more likely to quit school or have

run-ins with the law. Punishment decreases time in the classroom, contributing to the failure of Black students (Bryant 2015). Both white and minority teachers seldomly encourage minority students to be full, active participants in the classroom. When asked to justify the academic success of low-income minority children on some other campuses, teachers refused to take responsibility, instead explaining that those schools either had a better type of low-income children or the schools cheated on the tests (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

When it comes to college preparation, Black representation is sorely lacking. Despite Black girls seeking out college preparation advice more than any other public-school demographic, Black children are still seen as "uncooperative" and "undesiring of a college education" (Bryant 2015). School counselors and teachers advise minority students less often than they do members of the majority on how to apply for and get into college (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999). Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) performed a study that showed school staff counseled students into college preparatory or trade-technical courses on the foundation of students' social class and assumptions of parent ability to finance a college education. Oftentimes, Black students are only advised to take the minimum math and science classes required to graduate (Bryant 2015).

White teachers have been shown to label minority children as less capable, to praise them less often and to assign lower grades. Seth Gershenson, Stephen B. Holt and Nicholas W. Papageorge (2016) reported that White teachers are more likely to see their Black students as intellectually inferior and automatically grade their work according to a different criterion than for white students. White teachers are 12% less likely than Black teachers to evaluate a Black student and believe they will graduate or achieve educational success. A white teacher Dworkin (2001) interviewed said this of Black children:

"We at Bayouview don't want to lower the self-esteem of our children. We don't stress learning to read because in that way they won't keep experiencing daily failure and have low self-esteem. It is better for them just to fail once a year [when taking the TAKS] than to fail every reading test. The children are happier that way and feel better about themselves." (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019).

Even minority educators are often less focused on the minority-group children than to the majority-group children in their classrooms, which is especially disheartening considering one of the expectations of desegregating public-school faculty was that minority teachers would provide minority students with positive role models to be followed (Dworkin and Dworkin 1999).

Teachers are arguably the most important factor in children's educational well-being. Children spend more time with teachers than any other adult during their primary education, and how teachers perceive and treat them deeply affects both their intellectual and mental health. Black children, especially those living in poverty, are faced with external factors along with typical school stress. Teachers with more education and training are able to spot these problems and address them in a professional manner. Educators who are treated appropriately by administrators and who are trained proficiently are one of the only avenues in which Black children's disparities in education will lessen.

Hypothesis 4: Ogbu's "Acting White" Theory Still Applies to Black Children in Public School.

Most sociological theory addresses the complex situation of disparities in public education between Black and white students. Arguably, one of the most prominent theories is conflict theory. Within the umbrella of conflict theory, there is a field of theory that applies to institutional racism; how it was instituted, perpetuated and has continued contemporarily. Conflict theory is highly intertwined with ideologies of social power complexes and race superiority. Because of this, theorists have surmised that desegregation practices were

intentionally discriminatory and meant to enforce the racial hierarchy that had been in place for over a hundred years (Collins 1971). Theories that describe social power dynamics and conflict can be directly applied individual aspects that create inequality in education, including historical practices, funding differentials, and teacher credentials.

Even though minority and majority children have the same outlook toward education in the fact that they consider education one of the primary ways to attain social mobility, minority children were never taught how to successfully navigate the educational system in order to achieve success in the social sphere (Coleman 1966). Because the majority of Americans perceive education is one of the primary sources of upward social mobility, people with power have ensured that only a small circle are able to access a better education in order for only well-educated people to have access to skilled jobs (Dworkin and Quiroz 2019). John U. Ogbu's research is based on this ideology.

Ogbu and Simons (1998) introduce the cultural ecological theory that Ogbu's work is largely founded upon. Culture has various definitions, but the definition Ogbu utilizes is that culture is how certain groups view society and behave in it (Griswold 2008). This theory evaluates both expansive societal/educational factors and micro-level relationships within Black communities. Each minority group has their own collective problems: Black people have a unique set of problems due to historical malpractices that forced African Americans into a caste-like placement in society, including slavery and Jim Crow laws in the South (Dworkin 2020; Ogbu 1987). Ogbu focuses on both instrumental (employment) and relational (social, educational, etc.) in his cultural ecological research (Ogbu and Simons 1998).

According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), Black people became Americans involuntarily, forever affecting the Black-white relationship dynamic. The involuntary status that stains African

Americans has caused hyper segregation and long-lasting inequalities in Black children's educations. Whites' historical treatment of Blacks has impacted the cultural feelings surrounding white institutions, including education. This forces Black children and young adults to feel as if school is not designed for them and that they "do not belong" (Andrews 2016).

Black students are just as likely to succeed as white students when given an adequate curriculum and set of educators that are knowledgeable of cultural differences (Bryant 2015). Despite this ideology, Black students are consistently behind in white students in educational attainment, assessment and evaluation (Mickelson 1990). Black Americans make up only 12% of the population but are largely represented in poor and criminal sectors (Andrews 2016). Take Ogbu's (2002) study of a Midwest school district that was fully integrated, for example. Even though this school's Black population had the highest test scores of any school in the state, their scores still fell behind their white counterparts, particularly in math and science. Ogbu's position based on his research is that change has to fully eliminate cultural barriers. Desegregating, and even fully integrating, schools will not necessarily secure comprehension of diverse cultures or equal educational opportunities and experiences.

Institutional barriers in society and schools are critical determinants of Blacks' low school achievement, but Ogbu (1987) posits that that is not the sole reason for low school performance among Black children in primary public education. It is more about the cultural differences and the major distrust Black people have for white institutions as an effect of the impact of historical treatment of Blacks by whites.

While Black parents realize that school success is important to function in American society, their experiences with discrimination, personal failings or knowledge of failings in school has led to intergenerational distrust of U.S. schooling. There is also the knowledge that

even if educational success is obtained, it does not guarantee economic success for African Americans. Ogbu (1987) ascertains that this creates a certain "cultural inversion" in which people of one culture do not feel that certain acts conducted by another cultural group are appropriate for them. Black people believe at the same rate as whites that to succeed, one needs a good education. However, they personally do not consider themselves to have an equal chance with whites to traditionally succeed. This causes African Americans to "reject" and attack the criteria in which academic achievement is measured. Black people are skeptical of teachers teaching their kids equally to the white children being taught.

While the white child is likely to be surrounded by peers who aspire to go to college, the Black child is more likely to be surrounded by peers who fear going to college (Garcia and Weiss 2014). If children attempt to succeed in education, they are told they are "acting white" because it is a cultural consensus that educational success leading to economic success does not apply to Black people. Ethnographic studies performed by Ogbu (1987, 2002) reveal that Black children more often divert their attention to peer groups and noncurricular activities as they become more aware of the limited opportunities offered for Blacks in mainstream employment. Other studies show that Black workers have been victims of discrimination at their place of employment as well as constantly dealing with a lack of representation in the educational field (Bryant 2015; Darling-Hammond 2001).

The distrust and skepticism of white institutions by African Americans is disseminated throughout their culture, causing Black children to internalize these feelings and reject the idea of following the traditional avenues to achieve the "American Dream". Ogbu's "acting white" theory was formed in the later years of the 20th and early years of the 21st century, but it is still incredibly relevant to current school districts. Despite slight improvement, African American

children still have lower test scores, grades and graduation rates than whites (Mickelson 2016).

The inequalities already established, such as residential segregation, funding and teacher

inequalities, are exacerbated by the cultural differences between Blacks and whites (Ogbu 2002).

Conclusion:

A purposeful consequence connected to the history of Black-white relations is the deep

and permanent effects on the nature of schooling. Desegregation methods have attributed to the

disparities in funding and teacher proficiency in majority versus minority public schools.

Educational inequalities lead to inadequacies in Black occupation and economic prosperity.

Because disparities in Black-white education are institutionally systemic, they are

interconnected.

Racist implementations in institutions have caused a systemic problem in Black

education. Conflict theorists posit that these consequences are not unforeseen but completely

intentional. People with social power intend to keep it and permanently leave certain groups,

especially Black people, with none. Positive life chances all vary by race or ethnicity and

controlled by the race or ethnic based levels of power, prestige and property in American society

(Dworkin 2020). Since racism is not linked to an individual but is a systemic problem, elements

of racism, privilege and disadvantage are in every aspect of life in most societies (Dworkin

2020).

Conflict theorists believe that inequality in education is no accident or undesired

consequence. Institutional discrimination persists because it promotes the benefits of whites, and

white people only encourage 'reform' when it ensures benefits (Turner 2013). Dworkin and

Quiroz (2019) posit that funding is a way for people with power, wealth and prestige to ensure

that their children's prosperity is ensured. Privilege stays limited and is eventually passed down

generationally despite any lack of ability of the current elite (Dworkin 2020). Various studies performed by anthropologists and sociologists have shown that even excelling Black students fall behind their white counterparts. John U. Ogbu acknowledges this difference and attributes it to cultural ignorance. This had led to a refusal of acknowledgment of cultural variances. With the ushering in of colorblind racism, people have largely forgotten about the institutions that force Black people to be of a lower class than white people. A "white fragility" state of mind has encompassed white Americans, creating tensions between racial groups that makes it impossible to discuss the roots of racial tension. These origins include slavery, both de jure and de facto segregation as well as desegregation tactics. African Americans were forced to come to America through slavery, the only racial group in America to have done so, and that violent past has systematically affected Black institutions, including education.

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