Southeast High's New Building and Reputation:

A Socio-Historical Study of an Urban High School

By

Lauren Elizabeth Coleman-Tempel
MSE, University of Kansas, 2012
B.A., Wichita State University, 2010

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

_____

Chair: John L. Rury, PhD

_____

Suzanne Rice, PhD
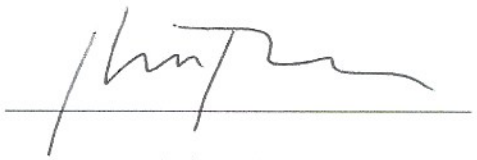
_____

Argun Saatcioglu, PhD

_____

Emily Rauscher, PhD

_____

John Poggio, PhD

Date Defended: April 8, 2020

The dissertation committee for Lauren Elizabeth Coleman-Tempel
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Southeast High's New Building and Reputation:

A Socio-Historical Study of an Urban High School

Chair: John L. Rury, PhD

Date Approved: May 5, 2020

Abstract

Rightown Southeast High is a large high school in a mid-sized midwestern city. After decades of racial and socioeconomic shifts, the school's reputation has also declined dramatically. This study sought to better understand how this story fits into the national historical narrative and how these historical and social factors contributed to the decline in reputation of Rightown Southeast High since its opening in 1957. Archival data analysis, oral history interviews, and student focus groups point to policy changes during the 1980s and 1990s as distinguishing factors that lead to a decline in levels of academic achievement and social status within the school. Negative media coverage of Southeast High during the 2010s also played a large role in informing the community's perception of the school; interview and district data conflict with this media coverage, suggesting that the popular storyline surrounding Southeast High does not align with the realities within its four walls.

Acknowledgments

From my first semester, I had professors who pushed and inspired me – through varying methods, I gained a valuable education. To my advisor, Dr. Rury, I cannot thank you enough for your presence and attentiveness. You believed in my capabilities before I did, always "turning me loose", even when I was not yet ready. Your academic expertise has set me up for a rewarding career, and I am quite lucky for the mentorship that I gained through this program.

My CEOP colleagues and family have cheered me on from day one. Inspiring conversations, shoulders to cry on and role models helped me stay on track and on pace, while also maintaining focus on my career. I pray that the skills I gained through this process can in turn aid our center's mission and the students that we serve.

My childhood dreams did not include a PhD, but it did include encouragement to work hard and follow my own path, which has resulted the beautiful life I live. By example, my father taught me to never let my fear decide my fate. Fortunately, his positive attitude and unprecedented work ethic were passed along to his children, setting us up for success in whatever path we choose. He never missed an opportunity to text me a pump-up-song, or a deeply inspiring poem. Thank you for your fearlessness. We fooled em' another day, Dad.

My mother has always had a way of lifting me up and grounding me at the same time. Even when things go awry, I know that she is a phone call away, ready to brainstorm the solution. My confidence was developed through the stability she cultivated in our home. She believes in me with her entire being, therefore the possibility of failure has never been a deterrent to taking on new challenges. Thank you for your unwavering faith in me, Mom.

My sister Sarah has been an incredible example of how to face adversity and come out on the other side. I have been chasing Sarah my whole life, and am lucky to have such a model. My brother Creighton has been by my side during times that I have stretched and grown the most. Through challenge and support, he has been instrumental in my growth as an academic. Only Creighton "gets" what it is like to trudge through PhD coursework as a Coleman, which was a unique combination of imposter syndrome and absolute stubborn grit. I needed my brother through this process, and he was there every step of the way. In part, this is his degree too.

While working through the most important project of my academic career, I shared my sleep, body, and heart with my daughter, Murphy Ida Gay. Murphy grounded me when I needed reminded that no matter what obligations I have, family deserves the biggest part of me. She loves me for existing, not for meeting deadlines, or accomplishing a goal. Her laughter brings me back to the present and reminds me that is where I belong. Because of this, I worked harder and more efficiently than ever before so I could get back to playing with her on the living room floor. The pride I feel in completing this degree pales in comparison to the pride I have found in being your mother; I love you, Murphy.

Finally, I owe so much of this achievement to my partner, Micah. In all I have become, you have been by my side – a soft landing when I need reassured through moments of weakness, and a firm champion when I needed told to "Buck up and go write!" I am convinced that no woman completing a PhD has had a more supportive environment. I was sustained by his thoughtful letters, which always came when I needed them most. Micah believes in the best version of myself, giving me no option but to live up to that belief. We can do anything, MT – here's to a life of work worth doing. I love you.

Table of Contents

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Phrases like "the urban crisis" and "failing inner city schools" conjure images of dilapidated school, overcrowded with students of color. This is still overwhelmingly the case in many city centers across the United States. Racial and socioeconomic segregation is an American reality that has challenged our schools and communities for the entirety of the country's history. This reality has grave consequences for not only the academic achievement of low-income and students of color, but also the democratic foundations of our public systems. Sociology has lent concepts of social and cultural capital to the study of this phenomenon and has illuminated many helpful theories used to understand how middle-income families have benefited from this very segregation. Research is clear that the structures within and boundaries separating urban districts from their surrounding suburban counterparts are a direct result of policy decisions made by district leaders, local governments and community leaders.

Historical studies have pointed to a myriad of sources for the pervasive educational inequities faced by the country. A common explanation cited in studies of large city contexts is that when White families moved out to the suburbs during the second half of the twentieth century, they took their political influence, tax base and of cultural and social capital with them. Two decades after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, additional court rulings such as *Milliken v. Bradley,* which stimeyed efforts of cross-district busing, contriubited to sidespread geographical educational inequiality. The suburbs were sheltered from urban school district policy efforts to integrate their schools. Although this reality played a large part in the decline of enrollment and academic achievement of the majority of large American urban school districts, it is not the case in all. In Rightown, KS, a mid-sized midwestern city, public school enrollment has never taken a dip, leaving the questions of "why" and "how"?

Study Background

Although there exist very concrete perceptions of what constitutes an urban core school, Rightown Public School district has recently pushed the envelope on the spatial characteristics of urban schools. Rightown is a sprawling city where blue-collar industry is the economic backbone. Population within the city limits is currently approaching 400,000, with an additional 255,000 residents living in surrounding suburbs. Rightown, faced with the threat of declining student enrollment in the 1980s and 1990s harnessed curricular innovation in order to keep its students within the district. A new magnet high school and an International Baccalaureate program opened, thus shifting the concentration of middle-class, high achieving students out of the traditionally high status high schools, into these programs. This movement, coupled with the migration of middle-class white families out to the city suburbs had political repercussions for district leaders and low-income families alike. In moving students to suburban schools, significant resources in the form of property tax and intangible cultural capital moved with the middle-class White families, leaving Rightown Public Schools in an uphill battle for the resources needed to serve an increasingly low-income student base.

The racial and socioeconomic composition of the district for the 2017-2018 school year demonstrate a student population rich in diversity. The district staffs 93 schools in total. Of the 50, 641 students enrolled in the district, 35% are Hispanic, followed by 33% Caucasian and 19% African-American. There are 119 different languages spoken in students 'homes, and 73% of students enrolled come from poverty households. A student body as diverse as this faces significant societal obstacles to academic success and requires substantial resources to ensure graduation and retention. None of these statistics are surprising when looking at an urban core

school district; rather, the story told here is of the placement of the Southeast High School and its changing reputation.

The reputation of Southeast High has changed dramatically in the decades leading up to the decision to build a new building. During the 1960s and 1970s, just prior to significant desegregation policy changes within the district, Southeast High School was home to the children of the city's White elite. Along with continued battles over integration came the move of the financial tax base once afforded to the district to smaller private schools on the east side of Rightown, as well as the expanding adjacent suburban school district. This resulted in dramatic changes in the student body composition as well as the overall levels of academic achievement within the building. Student racial and socioeconomic composition for the 2017-2018 school year characterized racially diverse, and low-income student body. The highest proportion of students enrolled at Southeast High school were African-American (30%), followed by Hispanic (26%) and White (22%) and 74% qualified as economically disadvantaged. The Southeast High School building had existed as a neighborhood school, surrounded by aging homes, retail, convenience stores and restaurants.

Plans for a new school began in 2010 when Rightown Public Schools purchased 125 acres outside of city development. This area was farmland, which currently boasts new subdivisions lining the north and west neighboring plots. In 2013, movement to unveil plans to build a brand new Southeast High School building began surfacing in the news. The project was large and going to be expensive. After a controversial vote, the school board approved the $68 million project in June of 2013. The most peculiar piece of this proposal was the location; an isolated, rural plot which would eventually be the new home to the racially and socioeconomically diverse Southeast student body. This move has resulted in foreseen as well as

unforeseen consequences for students and staff of Southeast High, mainly dramatic changes in the reputation of the school, which do not correspond with district achievement and behavioral data.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to better understand the historical and social factors that contributed to the decline in reputation of Rightown Southeast High. This project also sought to understand community, district and school staff reception and perceptions of Southeast High's new location. This study adds to the scholarship on the history of school segregation and communities 'perceptions of its effects as its focal point is a high school in an under-studied mid-size midwestern city. Community members, media and school staff hold a diverse set of beliefs about the origin of the school's declining status, falling rates of attendance and increases in disruptive student behavior and this study describes these beliefs and how they have contributed to the larger reputation of the school. Larger Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis boast developed historical studies that contributed sociological questions about school segregation and its effects on our most disadvantaged students. Those studies were used as a model for this study as the story of a mid-sized blue-collar city which is told through city and district archival, primary oral-history interview and geospatial data to illuminate social and historical factors influencing our urban schools.

Methods

Historical inquiry requires multiple sources of information, collected through various methods, in order to draw the most comprehensive conclusions about the time-frame and social cirumstances being studied. This study drew from a wealth of archival data, as well as census and geomapping software. These data helped to create a well-rounded picture of large scale

social dynamics within the city and school district. Oral history interviews were complimented by these data in order to confirm or disconfirm positions held by interviewees. This mixed-method approach to understanding the history of Rightown Southeast High allowed for more clear and accurate conclusions to be drawn.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions:

1) To what extent does the history of Rightown Public Schools and more specifically Southeast High mirror broad national public education trends?

2) What are the key factors that have contributed to the declining reputation of Southeast High?

Research Participants and Site

Case study research encompasses a bounded instance within a real-life contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). Within this study, the site or system of interest was Southeast High School in Rightown, KS. This was a single-case case study; due to this, multiple data sources were included. Being historical in nature, this study identified relevant data spanning the period of post-WWII (early 1940s) to current day. Oral history interviews were conducted with 26 district and city level policy-makers, community members and students. Within each of those specific groups, a purposeful maximal sampling was employed to ensure representation of multiple perspectives, as well as ordinary, accessible or unusual cases (Creswell, 2012). Table 1. outlines the identities held by each interview participant in relation to Southeast High. Students who had attended the old Southeast building and the new building were intentionally selected to participate in focus groups in order to obtain comparative perspectives related to topics such as school spirit, overall morale, and perceptions of school reputation. Due to IRB recommendations,

students who participated in these focus groups were all over 18 years of age, leaving out juniors

and a large group of seniors who were underage.

Table 1.

Interview Participants Identifiers

Race	Gender	Student/Alumni	District Staff	Parent
White	Male	1980s	X	East High
Hispanic	Female			Private
Black	Male	1990s	X	Southeast High
Black	Male			Heights High
White	Female			East High
Black	Female		X	
Hispanic	Male		X	
White	Female		X	
White	Male		X	Southeast High
White	Female		X	
White	Male	2000s		
Black	Female		X	
White	Female		X	Southeast High
White	Female			Private
Back	Male	1980s	X	Southeast High
White	Female	1970s	X	
White	Female	1980s		Suburban School
White	Male	2000s	X	
White	Female	2000s	X	
White	Female	1970s	X	
White	Female	1980s	X	
White	Male	1960s	X	Southeast High
White	Female		X	

White	Male			
White	Male	1990s	X	
White	Male	1960s		

Data Collection

Data were collected by multiple methods including interviews, identification of census data, archival district and city records, and newspaper articles and opinion pieces. Through this collection of information, a detailed descriptive picture of the city, district and school was created. Census data were used through Social Explorer to map an accurate social and demographic understanding of the census tracks within and adjacent to Southeast High School's catchment area. The Rightown Public Schools Museum and Archives served as an excellent site to locate district reports such as integration correspondence, school board meeting minutes, and racial and social composition tracking details. Yearbooks, student newspapers, and political flyers were also added to the database to further enrich understanding of time periods past. Editorials and articles from *The Rightown Eagle* served as valuable information on public perceptions of high-profile district events and decisions. Finally, district academic, behavioral and attendance data were used for triangulation and thematic confirmation.

Oral history interviews were conducted from June 2018 to April 2020 with community members who held multiple perspectives and roles in relation to Southeast High. These interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes, were recorded, and followed an interview protocol. Although the overarching interview was guided by this protocol, by design, many interviews veered away from prescribed questions depending on the experiences of the participant. At the end of each interview, recommendations for further interview participants were gathered and from there a snowball sampling method was conducted.

Trustworthiness of Data

The process of qualitative historical inquiry requires a flexible, iterative approach to data collection and analysis. To ensure trustworthiness of data, historical sources were vetted through the Rightown Public Schools museum curator, and were compared to historical trends throughout the US during this time. Any findings that did not align with general historical trends will be confirmed through a three-step process, where alternative outlets were found for confirmation (interview, alternative print sources, etc.) then compared to find common themes.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed and coded by decade and finally underwent thematic analysis. The online, qualitative platform *Dedoose* was used to code, analyze theme matrices, and select excerpts. Audio files, transcriptions and field notes were stored on a password secured computer. All data were then compiled into a "case study database" to ensure easy retrieval of information organized and sequenced by date. Thematic analysis applied not only to groups of interview participants 'data, but was also be conducted with archival records and newspaper entries. This analysis was used primarily to develop a rich context of the case, allowing for a deep description of city, district and school factors. Within the case study database, I created multiple data matrices that helped me identify and support patterns that emerged (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Validity

The processes involved in ensuring validity in a historical case study are two-fold. First, a *rich dataset* allowed for discrepant evidence and negative cases to emerge. Danger lies in the analysis of a single source of historical information, which generally only offers one perspective

on an event. And secondly, *triangulation* is practice in which data is collected from a diverse range of individuals, settings and perspectives, using a variety of methods. Once a theme emerges, a differing piece of data will generally be used to confirm high-level themes or conclusions (Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

Personal Interest in the Topic

Rightown, KS is my hometown. After leaving to pursue a graduate degree, I was confronted with the reality that not much scholarly historical research has come out of this city, especially in regard to the educational landscape. Through telling stories and listening to the concerns and triumphs of families, students and stakeholders, I realized that Rightown Public Schools has some similar, but many contradicting stories to national education trends. It is also my hope that my work can help education policy-makers understand the large historical picture of what the district, and more specifically Southeast High has endured. The sociological theory that I was exposed to throughout my coursework sparked curiosity in how exactly these theories play out in a mid-sized blue-collar city such as Rightown. It is not a huge metropolis; it is not a small town. Many historical markers such as *Brown v. Board* and The Great Recession hit Rightown exceptionally hard, and made for a fascinating case study.

The story of Southeast High is of particular interest to me as I have been in and out of the school over the last four years as an educational program evaluator for a federally funded GEAR UP program. These programs serve high need schools through a cohort model and with the ultimate goal being persistence and graduation through high school with post-secondary enrollment immediately following. With my background as a Rightown Public Schools graduate coupled with my new lens as an evaluator, I was struck by the physical surroundings and was left with many questions about the new school move. I heard anecdotes about skyrocketing

enrollment as students who had left the district have now returned to reap the benefits of the new facility causing overcrowded classrooms and enrollment difficulties for school staff. Family events and parental involvement have become much more difficult to arrange as the building no longer sits within the neighborhood where the majority of the student body lives. With all of this said—I was and remain curious.

Ethical Issues

Being a native of Rightown, and a graduate of the Rightown Public School system, a few ethical issues arose. First, it was impossible to remove my experiences in the district from my interpretations of the data. This was not inherently negative, but it required vigilance to illuminate my potential bias within the context of the study and to put forth every effort to understand the ramifications of the assumptions that I hold. My famility and I have relationships in Rightown, which meant that I had easier access to certain groups and data than researchers who have no connection to the city. Through this process, I engaged in debriefing sessions with fellow researchers about my findings, interactions and conclusions and take steps to ask myself "what did I choose not to see" and "why were these details important over others I have encountered?".

Additionally, discussing topics of racial segregation, academic achievement and academic access required extra care in order to stay true to the words and meanings given in interviews. IRB approval was granted for all interview, focus group and archival data retrieval. Prior to conducting interviews with students, the interview protocol was reviewed by district administration to ensure ethical interview procedures. An informed consent was be part of the interview process and all archival data that is not already of public record was obtained through proper channels.

Overview of Structure

The structure of this project takes an inverse focus method, meaning that the time periods discussed in the chapters move from broad in scope to very focused. Chapter two encompasses a wide range of literature pertinent to the topic of urban school systems. This review begins with a historical overview of studies of racial inequities in the American education system. Understanding regional commonalities and differences among desegregation efforts helps to frame those discussed in chapter three of this study. Within this historical overview, modern manifestations of systemic bias are also discussed to give context to other possible explanations for racial and socioeconomic inequities in urban schools. Following the historical review, chapter two outlines sociological perspectives that contribute to geospatial educational inequities; the discussion of why where a student lives often dictates the quality of their educational experience. To do this, sociological theories such as Opportunity Hoarding and Bureaucratic Representation are applied to racial and socioeconomic educational inequities to better understand how social factors can push and pull an urban school and its students in ways that do not benefit everyone.

Chapter three begins the reporting on data collected through oral history and archival procedures. This chapter spans the most expansive time period in the study (1950-2000) beginning with a discussion of the origin of Southeast High and the social factors that lead to the creation of another large high school in the Rightown community during the 1950s. Students filled the halls and classrooms for the first time in 1957, and this chapter outlines community and student experiences with the opening of a new building in a highly segregated part of the city. The high status of the school is described by multiple first-hand accounts. Following broad historical profile, this chapter outlines the greater Rightown battle for racial equity and integration spearheaded by Black leaders, most notably, the NAACP chapter president who

brought a formal complaint to the Federal Health, Education and Welfare department, contributing to a dramatically changed racial landscape for Rightown Public Schools in 1970. This policy change, similar to national patterns, contributed to White flight within the city, but not to the extent seen in larger cities nationally. The chapter finishes with the decades following the new comprehensive desegregation plan, where the district continued to seek ways to battle White flight. This chapter contributes deep understanding of what it was like to attend and to work in the school during the time frame that the school's racial composition shifted and adds necessary context to knowledge of where the school is today. The 1980s and 1990s saw the new magnet school and International Baccalaureate program contribute to a student enrollment problem that continues into today.

Chapter four narrows the focus further, encompassing the years 2000-2015, where the school finally began grappling with its current reputation. The neighborhood surrounding the school building began to decline in decades prior to the turn of the century, but interview data focused on this period focused on the profile of the neighborhood as the manifestation of what the high school itself had become. This chapter discusses district and teacher perceptions of the problem of declining status and its efforts to mediate issues of "brain drain". A major bond issue is discussed, which resulted in a district policy decision that was extremely contentious; the building of a new Southeast High School in the outskirts of Rightown. This decision was the was made in the contexto of extreme budget cuts and an era of declining district resources, but regardless of this fact, it placed Southeast High in the center of the media eye.

Chapter five culminates in extensive interview and media analysis of the current reputation of Southeast High and factors that have contributed to the school's changing status. Within this chapter, it becomes clear that the realities within the school do not align with the

popular opinion held by Rightown community members, informed primarily by newspaper articles shared extensively over social media outlets. The newspaper articles that sparked the most concern about student achievement and behavior following the move of the school location were informed by a small minority of Southeast teachers, and do not represent the opinion of the majority of teachers within the school. The media attention is a symptom of the overarching problem of a community grappling with the racial and socioeconomic changes within Southeast High. Student focus group data discussed in chapter five further corroborate the divisive effects of the negative media attention on students' perceptions of what it means to attend Southeast High. Finally, district and state achievement, attendance and behavioral data are outlined to provide additional confirmation that the realities within Southeast High School in comparison to other similar schools in the district do not warrant the tone of media scrutiny faced by the school during its building transition.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Grappling with and developing a deeper understanding of social problems requires a multi-disciplinary analysis, including historical and sociological examination. The purpose of this study is the better understand the origins of Rightown Southeast High School's once elevated status and what social and historical factors contributed to its declining status among Rightown Public Schools. The problem is complex, therefore the literature reviewed to develop a grounding in relevant topics is also wide in range. This literature review considers national historical trends surrounding urban education and racial inequities in education as a basis for comparison. Within this topic, it is important to consider the historical factors that undergird the contemporary US education system such as racist segregation policy, increases in state and federal accountability measures, and the achievement plateau. These broad topics are used as a foundational backdrop to seek potential deviations within the story of Rightown Public Schools, and more specifically, Rightown Southeast High School.

Following a historical review of factors contributing to our educational inequities, relevant sociological perspectives are used to garner a deeper understanding of how communities and individuals have contributed, benefited or lost out due to shifts in racial and sociological composition, city and district policy changes, and ultimately declining status of the school. Sociological theories pertinent to geospatial educational inequality analyzed in this review include the concept of Opportunity Hoarding, inequities within school academic tracking, and parental intervention. These concepts shed light on conditions faced by communities of color and student with low socioeconomic status and potentially lower stocks of conventional social and cultural capital. These sociological concepts are useful when working to understand how the

racial and socioeconomic shifts in the community surrounding Southeast High contributed to the decline in the school and community profile.

History of Racial Inequities in The United States School Systems

The shape and commitments of a society are molded by intentional policy decisions and research agendas that create ideologies and chain effects that reverberate throughout history and ultimately result in a society's current status. This could not be truer for the education system in the United States. Education for the many was the central goal set forth by the founders of our modern system (Tyack and Hansot, 1982). But there were often unspoken racist sentiments that excluded large groups from this promise even when entering an era of universal suffrage. While the United States has seen many seasons of educational expansion, none have had a stronger mark on student achievement than post-war era on the achievement of African American students.

In the 1930s, still bound by Jim Crow law, the South saw stark differences in educational opportunity afforded to White students in comparison to Blacks. With mounting external pressure from reports illuminating these discrepancies in teacher pay, facilities, and sheer length of study, many areas in the South mounted aggressive equalization campaigns to battle external pressures to integrate (Rury and Hill, 2012). The purposes of equalization movements were to remedy the differences between the segregated schools. In theory, by creating the perception that segregated schools were in fact equal, these threats of integration would cease. One of the largest barriers to this task was the geographic placement of many Black schools. In isolated rural areas, the majority of Black schools served low numbers in one-room, dilapidated school houses (Smith, 1940). In 1935, most Black high schools only offered 1-2 years of curriculum and the majority of students attending were female (Horn and Modell, 1990). As will be discussed in the

next section, there were many factors that contributed to the increasing interest in equalizing the segregated schools of the south.

Increased Access and Equalization Campaigns

As the country crawled out of the deepest depression it had experienced, a renewed commitment to democratic ideals resounded in the two decades that followed. President Harry Truman spoke of this renewed commitment in his highly critical publication "To Secure these Rights" (Patterson, 2001). This marked a shifting sentiment, denouncing Jim Crow law and a transformed promise to increase civil rights, especially in the south. This change coincided with rapid population movements throughout the country. During this era of educational expansion, still, the likelihood of Black teens working was 50% higher than Whites, specifically in the south. This proportion was highest on farms and even while working in higher numbers, Black students' educational attainment was increasing (Rury and Hill, 2012). These employment dynamics had a strong influence over educational attainment in the south. While schools did exist in the rural south, the majority of high schools were in towns or cities.

Those schools that existed in rural communities were dilapidated and continued to garner attention from those concerned with academic achievement of all students. It became increasingly clear with more coverage that the Black educational opportunities were sadly lagging behind those afforded to Whites and that the possibility of equal access was illusive. A few incidents marked a change in momentum for Black children and their access to education, most notably the Lumberton incident (Fairclough, 2001). During 1946 in Lumberton, North Carolina, a group of Black students and parents staged a boycott with the encouragement of the NAACP. The purpose of this boycott was to shed light on the crumbling physical structure of their schoolhouse and unsanitary conditions within. This boycott prompted an investigation by

the state's health commissioner, which resulted in a strong condemnation of the state of Black schools. The ultimate result was immediate increases in funding from local school boards. This was positive on the surface, but moving funds allocated to Black education directly into Black schools and for Black children was challenging. Another influential report in 1942 estimated that 37 cents of each dollar allocated to Black education was actually spent on Black education (Rury and Hill, 2012). The implications of these events had yet another strong influence on Black attainment by encouraging Whites to continue to mount aggressive equalizing campaigns. This surface commitment to increasing the resources to Black schools allowed outspoken proponents of segregation to highlight the work being done to ensure equal educational access across all racial groups-which again, functioned to stave off the threat of integration. Meanwhile, population loss, declining farm economy and challenges to racist ideology sparked a new era in how Americans viewed racial segregation-especially in our schools.

In 1940, about 20% of African American youths lived in northern states and the majority of those lived in cities (Rury and Hill, 2012). These cities were not havens for integrated peace; rather they suffered from many of the same ill-conceived ideas of Black racial inferiority. Schools were, for the most part, segregated and Whites maintained their privileges through formal and informal racist policies. The labor force was shifting dramatically across the country during the years that followed World War II. The mechanization of the cotton production left many Black families in need of work leading to a mass migration north. Although the north was not officially segregated like the south, it did not lack racial conflict and difference in achievement. Strikes of a different nature began occurring, indicating a rise in racial tension as Blacks moved north and began attending integrated schools. In 1945, a group of 800 White students walked out of a Gary, Indiana high school in protest to the presence of Black students.

While the event was covered by media and multiple demands were made by White, working class families, the outcome marked, yet again, changing sentiments about race and interracial contact between youths (Fairclough, 2001).

During this time, NAACP leaders were mounting strategic attacks on segregation in the south. This work preceded *Brown v. Board of Education* and often goes unnoticed as the foundation upon which that groundbreaking decision was made. The goal of these leaders was to challenge inequities seen in resources and funding of schools in the south, rather than segregation itself. By doing this, NAACP leaders relied on their understanding that maintaining two separate but equal facilities in each and every community was absurd and would eventually become prohibitive (Tyack and Hansot, 1990). Economic arguments were quite persuasive in the postwar south as Whites felt the economic repercussions of the shift to an industrial economy and the regional population loss that followed. This work included an important decision in the 1938 court case *Gaines v. Canada* which shifted attention to discrepancies in resources and opportunity rather than strictly segregation itself (Frazier, 1940). The NAACP and other Black leaders such as Martin A. Martin continued to press and challenge our conceptions of equality and the democratic implications of segregation, laying the groundwork for other important court cases to follow.

Black educational access and attainment continued to increase throughout the 1940s and 1950s as a result of the steadfast efforts of Black educators. Black students saw great improvements while in the improving schools of the south as well as in the Black schools of the north (Rury and Hill, 2012). This was relatively a good time for Black education with many schools becoming increasingly academic in nature and teachers becoming more highly skilled and credentialed. During this time, the achievement gap between Black and White students

narrowed significantly. From 1940-1960, Black college enrollment grew from 20,000 to 60,000 (Rury and Hill, 2012).

Brown Era and Desegregation Battles

The 1950s and 1960s represented a time of rapid change in the United States. The suburbanization of cities and the increasing access to education and household convenience represented the building blocks for the American Dream. This dream, however, was exclusionary in nature. While middle class Whites continued to enjoy increasing access to luxury and convenience, those African Americans who had recently moved north for work, were often working in service settings rather than enjoying the comforts promised (Rury and Hill, 2012). The north and south were both struggling with changes in public perception of legal segregation, and these struggles came to a head with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Most of the northern states 'school segregation was a result of residential segregation, not mandated segregation; it was no less detrimental to the educational attainment of Black students. This decision ignited a movement, which would illuminate the depths of American's racist sentiments and fears of full racial integration.

Famous confrontations, such as that seen at Little Rock's Central High in 1957 signaled the beginning of an era that would eventually be touted as an example of great American progress. The south continued to hold very anti-integration ideologies, so much so that law-enforcement became a common intermediary in conflicts that arose (Henningfeld, 2014). During this entire transition period (which lasted decades), Black students bore the majority of the negative consequences. Most students who were moved in order to obtain integration were Black students-into White schools. They were met with hate and aggression. With these conflicts being highly publicized, many sentiments in the north shifted and anti-integration movements became

19

more silent in nature. As "white flight" increased, a vicious cycle began that would result in the "urban crisis" that has gripped America ever since. In leaving city centers, White families sought independence from highly bureaucratic school systems, and freedom from newly instated mandated busing policies (Orfield, 1978). Highly qualified teachers began moving to the politically influential suburbs that were able to secure higher salaries and resources. Another unintended consequence of the *Brown v. Board* decision was that another group of highly qualified teachers-mainly Black teachers- lost their jobs due to consolidation and integration movements (Clotfelter, 2004).

As the "urban crisis" began to grip the nation, another major historical occurrence changed the way in which all students were educated. The Soviet Union's launch of a space satellite named Sputnik sparked a national panic in regard to academic achievement. Were we falling behind in math and science? Have our schools faltered from a rigorous curriculum? These questions were then addressed with federal legislation in the National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 (Kaestle, 2001; Urban, 2010). This legislation expanded financial aid given to schools, which marked the beginning of expansion of federal monies being tied to public school compliance. Following NDEA, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) increased Title 1 schools' reliance on Federal funds. Once reliant on these funds, inner city public schools become the most dangerously dependent of all educational institutions once tax money leaves with the onset of "white flight". Many public policy and legal decisions during this time had direct negative effects on Black communities in urban areas. Schools become overcrowded with the influx of African American workers and families continuing to migrate north. Many African American families who attempted to move out of city centers were unable to due to racist "red-lining" mortgage policies as well as outright hostility from suburban Whites. Goldsmith and

Blakely (2010) note that by 1960, fewer than 5% of suburbanites were African American. This has great implications for how the "urban crisis" was framed and subsequently studied in decades to come.

There are two critical reports in the 1960s that had great influence on how people of color were studied and spoken about in following decades. The first of these documents was a memo leaked, followed by an article written in Harvard Education Review by Daniel Patrick Moynihan called *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,* written in 1965 (Patterson, 2010). This, also referred to as The Moynihan Report, made clear that widely held sentiments about the inferiority of inner city culture, more commonly understood as Black culture, was inevitable due to the historical deprivation faced by this community. This reinforced negative explanations of Black academic lag as "cultural deprivation" and would be a cornerstone of how Americans made sense of the "urban crisis" for years to come. Although The Moynihan Report would come under fire and ultimately be found to be misleading and insensitive, it still had a pronounced impact on racial studies (Martinez and Rury, 2012). The second of the critical reports was a correlational study by Psychologist Arthur Jensen who pointed to genetic factors being the culprit in low academic achievement of Black students (Kamin, 1974). Although this article folded under intense scrutiny for poor conclusions, it was still dangerous as it reinforced beliefs of genetic inferiority.

Black achievement continued to increase throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but stark segregation was still the rule and white flight continued to pull resources from metropolitan centers out to suburban enclaves. By 1975, Black students in the north and west were more likely to attend segregated schools than Black students in the south (Clotfelter, 2004, Rury and Hill, 2012). During this period, segregation and minority academic achievement continued to grow in

importance to sociologists and education policy researchers. One study in particular demonstrated a controversial outcome, but helped to frame how gaps in educational attainment were spoken about from then on. Sociologist James Coleman conducted a major national survey of academic achievement in 1966, which found that family factors outweigh those of school resources (Phillips and Coleman, 1966). This finding helped to advance theory and conversation encompassing the concepts of social and cultural capital, which are still today, foundational in understanding academic achievement.

During a period of rapid change in the inner city, followed by intense study of education and urban youth, counter-suits fighting integration efforts became commonplace. Sit-ins, protests and boycotts were regularly seen in communities addressing overcrowding and dilapidated buildings, while many Whites were busy challenging the legality of busing and integration policies as a whole (Rury and Hill, 2012). The mid-1970s saw intense legal battles, which in many cases were victories followed by huge losses for integrationists. A prime example of this policy whiplash is the *Keyes* decision in 1973 in Denver followed by the *Milliken* decision in Detroit the following year. The *Keyes* decision federally mandated desegregation plans in urban districts, allowing for greater legal support of finally pushing integration forward in metropolitan areas (Rury, 2016). This legal victory was met with the ruling of *Milliken v. Bradley*, which ruled that cross-district busing was no longer allowed (Taylor, 1974). This decision functioned to secure the advantages of those who had fled city schools to avoid integration rendering suburban districts immune from integration efforts. This decision marked a critical juncture in America's battle to integrate schools; no longer would large urban districts be able to compete with suburban advantage.

Declining Resources and Increased Accountability

As the 1970s came to a close, a new political ideology was on the rise. The 1980s ushered in a new presidential administration that touted conservative economics as an answer to America's social ills. Under the Reagan administration, state budgets increasingly had to make up for funding previously afforded by the federal government. This encompassed many welfare programs, Medicaid, and most importantly, funds designated for education. Amidst the budget cuts and decreasing federal support for schools, an even greater challenge emerged a federally commissioned report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.* This report was a response to increasing public opinion that the federal government should have a hand in the success of American schools and that American schools play a pivotal role in our nations economic health (Wong, Guthrie, and Harris, 2004). This report was far from comprehensive, and placed significant blame on urban schools and teachers for not only allowing, but encouraging "mediocrity". The vague report offered only a few concrete reform suggestions, but rather placed great emphasis on the erosion of our education systems and the threat this had on national security. There were clear targets within this report-mainly urban districts and teacher unions (Kaestle and Lodewick, 2007; Shipps, 2006). Historians point to this report as the beginning of the era of high stakes testing and accountability measures in the United States (Vinovskis, 2008).

Although Black college graduation rates continued to increase throughout the 1980s, overall, Black academic attainment stalled at the onset of the 1990s (Rury, 2016). The rise of high stakes testing and accountability measures have coincided with a new national obsession with comprehensive school reform. This sentiment culminated in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 famously named No Child Left

Behind (NCLB). Accountability remained the cornerstone of this legislation, which held resource deprived school districts to the same standards as those with high levels of monetary resources, and not to mention insulated sources of social and cultural capital. An element of NCLB that has had a devastating impact on urban schools is the stripping of accreditation, which happens to schools that do not perform up to the standards set. This has had a crippling effect on large urban districts that were already fighting an uphill battle with poorly staffed buildings and high rates of poverty. Although many of the measures put in place by this sweeping federally mandated reform were punitive in nature and created an impossible set of circumstances for inner city schools, there is one positive element that has garnered attention from educational policy researchers.

Modern Manifestations of Systemic Bias

Darby and Rury point to three overarching dilemmas that have taken the place of overt racist policies in minority serving schools (Darby and Rury, 2018). Students might attend racially integrated schools, but still be susceptible to discrimination through tracking policies, discrepancies in discipline and suspension actions and overrepresentation in special education. All of these issues illuminate our continuing struggles to close the racial achievement gap and represent "old poison in new bottles" (Darby and Rury, 2018). These are complex matters that are not solved with singular policy changes, as they are structural in nature and have a subjective human component to them. This idea complicates notions that "full integration" itself is the solution to our racial gap in achievement (Anderson, 2010). Whether it be increased days out of school through higher rates of suspension, to lower expectations in "regular ed" classes, it is clear that students of color are disproportionately exposed to the dangerous subconscious biases within well-meaning educators.

Tracking is nothing new to American education, and African American students have always been exposed to differential placement in remedial or lower curricular tracks (Ravitch, 1983). As a result of our tradition of intelligence and standardized testing, students of color are often doomed to placement in rigid curricular tracks that lack high expectations and the promise of being college-ready. After the civil rights movement in the 1960s, a growing number of Black families were able to move out of poverty and into the middle class. These students 'fate was closely tied to their parents 'education level, thus resulting in a closing of the achievement gap during the 1970s and 1980s (Berends, Lucas and Penaloza, 2008; Logan, Minca and Adar, 2012). This was not the case for the majority of African American students, who through exposure to poverty and low levels of formal parental education, were already academically behind upon entrance into the K-12 system. Instead of schools working to mediate these discrepancies before students enter, most immediately place students of color in lower tracks, which inevitably result in lower achievement and fewer opportunities for academic growth. Many placements result from internal biases on the part of school officials, placing subjective emphasis on historic achievement factors of certain groups. These disparities are highly problematic, as they reinforce already strong senses of difference between students of color and White students, implying that these placements are purely meritocratic in nature and thus deserved (Tyson, 2011). This issue has been well documented over the last two decades, with many studies clearly articulating underrepresentation of African American and Latino students in college preparatory and Advanced Placement courses. One study in particular noted much lower rates of Black and Latino students enrolled in calculus than Whites with Black students representing just 8% of enrollment in calculus courses nationally and representing 16% of the student body (Latino students were 12% and 21% respectively) (Darby and Rury, 2018).

The second of the three main concerns resulting in *de facto* segregation in the modern school system is much more subjective in nature than tracking. Racial disparities in discipline and punishment are generally at the discretion of teachers and administrators. We have a longstanding history with unfair punitive measures being overwhelmingly directed at Black students in instances of shared blame, many dating back to integration battles in high schools during the 1960s and 1970s. Numerous violent encounters, often started by Whites, resulted in harsh punishment for Black students who were involved (Rury and Hill, 2012). It cannot be debated that there exist much higher rates of suspension and expulsion among students of color, particularly Black males, than White students (Darby and Rury, 2018). In an assessment of suspension and expulsion proportions nationally, the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights documented that about 16% of elementary and secondary Black student received out-of-school suspensions compared to just 5% of White students (Darby and Rury, 2018). This is especially concerning once the negative association between school suspension and academic achievement is taken into account. Losses of instructional time, as well as decreased feelings of acceptance and belonging to the school itself make recovering from suspension a difficult task for even the most academically prepared student (Anyon, Jensen, Altschul, Farrar, McQueen, Greer and Simmons, 2014; Smith, Estudillo, Kang, 2011; Losen, 2015). Considerable evidence points to differential treatment of students by race that are involved in the exact same behavioral infractions (Wu, 1980). Again, teams of researchers over the past two decades have been able to demonstrate through statistical analysis that Black and Latino students are punished more harshly and for different reasons that White students (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson, 2002). These illustrations have similar implications of reinforcement of negative stereotypes as overrepresentation of students of color in lower curricular tracks. These negative perceptions

function to reinforce strict disciplinary actions among teachers and administrators, thus more deeply ingraining patterns that result in lower academic achievement for students of color.

Lastly, but maybe most disturbingly, the overrepresentation of minority students in certain special education categories has afflicted our schools for decades. Just as discipline and tracking are subject to human bias and error, designation into a special education category is often left up to discretion of educators. Though a number of schools have reached "full integration", they still struggle with significant overrepresentation of Black students in special education categories such as "intellectual disabilities" and "emotional disturbances" where White and Hispanic students are more likely to be placed in categories such as learning disabilities or speech or language impairments which are more likely to allow students to remain in general education courses (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, Mattison, Maczuga, Li, and Cook, 2015). A disturbing report in 2008 pointed to the figure of 73% of students labeled with an "emotional disturbance" disability were suspended or expelled in that year (Skiba, 2002). These special education designations are much more subjective in nature and can also be linked to poverty and deprivation in youth (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, and Chinn, 2002). Numbers of students in this circumstance are not nearly as high as those impacted by tracking and discipline concerns, but this does not make racial disproportionality in SPED any less of a concern. Students who are placed in special education often are completely segregated and cut off from other students in the building and have access to a much less rigorous curriculum. The realities of many of our special education programs have lifelong repercussions such as low placement in stable work (Albrecht, Skiba, Losen, Chung, and Middelberg, 2012; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Gallini, Simmons, and Feggins-Azziz, 2006).

The Achievement Plateau-The Future of the Urban Achievement Crisis

An analysis of the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores indicated that 54% of African American 8th graders performed above their basic grade reading level. This contrasts sharply with the 87% figure of White 8th graders on the same measure (Mickelson, 2003; Stiefel, Schwartz and Chellman, 2007). The achievement plateau, as the issue is now widely labeled, has gained much research attention in the 1990s with Edsall and Edsall (1992) and Massey and Denton (1993) accounting glaring residential racial segregation resulting in resources being moved into the suburbs. It is evident that the charter school movement, magnet programs and incentive options to encourage integration are not enough (Darby and Saatcioglu, 2015). This consideration is much more complex than a simple calculation of funding formulas as many would suggest; in order for the urban crisis in education to be mediated, students must somehow be placed in a position to share immediate physical, monetary and most importantly, cultural capital (Konstantopoulos and Borman, 2011). "Between 1978 and 2008, the gap between the average mathematics and reading test scores of children from high- and low-income families grew by a third," and "the rate of affluent children who complete college increased by 21 percentage points, while the graduation rate of children from low-income families increased by only 4" (Duncan and Murnane, 2011). Just as the problem is multifaceted and complex in nature, so must be the solutions.

Although integration is not the silver bullet as suggested by a line of scholars, it is a large part of the equation (Alba, Sloan, Sperling, 2011; Anderson, 2010; Kinder and Dale-Riddle, 2012; Reardon, 2011). Just as humans dictated with court decisions such as *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) that integration was not a priority, with the same determination, we could push to prioritize integration over the segregation that has become so natural to wealthy families. This

policy endeavor could take many forms, not just the reversal of a court order. Without a societal commitment to the problem, this is not an easy task. There exists little incentive for families reaping the benefits of this system to take real steps when it involves their own children's competitive advantage over others. With implicit bias being present within all institutions, we must then make conscious effort to seek out a deeper understanding of how our systems have been built to perpetuate racial disparities. Meaningful change happens as a result of local and national commitment to eradicate the poverty and income inequality propagated by a line of policies directed to protect the rights of those fleeing city centers, rather than extending a hand to those who reside within these communities. As is well understood by researchers interested in educational inequality, the schools can hardly be the target of blame when so much of what we know of contributing factors of academic achievement so often lie outside of the school (Rothstein, 2004). With disproportionality in incarceration rates, high numbers of Black youth born into single-mother homes, and political decision power increasingly being tied to the suburbs, it is clear that solutions must involve a monetary commitment to social service programs to supplement the community factors resulting from decades of racist policies.

Sociological Perspectives on Geospatial Educational Inequality

Where one is born matters in the context of American education. Differential spatial processes result in varying educational, health, economic and social outcomes (Harding, 2003; Sampson, 2008; Sharkey, 2013; Sharkey, and Elwert, 2011; Lewis and Diamond, 2015). This geospatial dispersion follows racial and socioeconomic lines, indicating that students of color and low-income students have stifled chances at climbing the social ladder. Whether through processes of protecting symbolic status between groups, or by processes of educational opportunity hoarding, it is clear that a common practice of parents of affluent white students it to

maintain advantage in schools and groups that they call home (Tilly, 1998). Recently, researchers such as Hanselman and Fiel (2016) seek to understand these differences through the characterization of racial disparities in achievement across organizational (district) and geographic (urban or suburban) scales. These differential lifetime outcomes do not magically become equal once students of color enter a high-achieving suburban school (Lewis and Diamond, 2015; Lewis-McCoy, 2014). How race matters in looking at the uptake of institutional and social resources afforded in a district is the central research interest of many scholars.

Theory of Educational Opportunity Hoarding

Opportunity hoarding occurs when "members of a categorically bounded network acquire access to a resource that is valuable, renewable, and subject to a monopoly, supportive of network activities and enhanced by the networks modus operandi" (Tilly, 1998). This concept applies to educational discrepancies seen between low-income school districts and more affluent suburban districts. Networks are formed through opportunity hoarding and function to benefit the children of affluent white parents in these districts. Educational resources such as policy influence, access to test preparation, and exclusion of socioeconomically and racially diverse students are some of the "valuable and renewable" educational resources subject to hoarding. As Lyken-Segosebe suggests, these practices create beliefs that propagate and sustain their control of the flow of resources in these districts (Lyken-Segosebe and Hinz, 2015). Educational advantages have been directly linked to economic advantages later in life (Coleman, 1988; Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum, 2003). A strong existing body of evidence points to the conclusion that those who are least able to prepare for and obtain a college degree actually benefit the most from educational opportunity (Brand and Xie, 2010). Sociologists have worked toward a theory of

group interaction since Weber's conception of "closure" brought about the conversation of how membership to an elite group has distinct and transferable benefits.

In the case of education, white elites have maintained control over quality education, securing this right for those who are inside this group. The achievement and college degree attainment gaps continue to exist in the same capacity as they have since the 1970's which demonstrates that this closure is functioning quite well in securing an advantage for affluent whites (Clotfelter, 2004; Logan, Oakley, and Stowell, 2008; Reardon and Owens, 2014; Rury, 2012). Charles Tilly builds upon Weber's conception of social "closure" to argue the durability of categorical inequality (Tilly, 1998). This durability exists through the use of mechanisms used by white, middle-class parents to create a distinct advantage for their students over not only those from low-income backgrounds and black students, but also over those in their own social grouping. Tilly's categorical inequality can be applied to low-income parent groups, as well as racially underrepresented groups in suburban districts. Many societal processes can be used as exclusionary mechanisms, such as residential sorting, local school assignment policies, and school choice (Hanselman and Fiel, 2016). We have seen declines in the gaps in educational attainment in the United States between black and white students and poor and wealthy students over the last 70 years, but they have leveled off, and in some cases began to once again diverge (Rury, 2012).

The application of this theory to racial and socioeconomic educational disparities has been tested using multiple geographic areas as well as time frames (Massey, 2007; Lewis and Diamond, 2015; Rury and Saatcioglu, 2011). Studies have produced mixed results in regard to advantaged parents 'pursuit of heightened educational opportunities for their children by monopolizing school resources. Hanselman and Fiel (2016) point to an increased attention to

educational resources while making residential choices, differences in school financing, staffing, and achievement as supporting the above theory of educational opportunity hoarding (Condron and Roscigno, 2003; Clotfelter, Ladd and Vigdor, 2005; Lareau & Goyette, 2014). This support of the theory can only be upheld with the secondary negative effects also being fulfilled such as unexplained disadvantages being faced by high poverty, minority schools (Condron, 2009).

School segregation is not inherently a product of opportunity hoarding nor does it inevitably result in opportunity hoarding. There are methods of exclusion as referenced by Hanselman and Fiel (2016) that do not directly align with the theory of opportunity hoarding. Of these alternative explanations, sorting along lines of status with the goal of distancing oneself from a less advantaged group is better explained by boundary maintenance (Billingham and Hunt, 2016; Holme, 2002). These efforts of high status families to associate themselves with higher status groups becomes disturbing when it is closely associated with negative racial attitudes. Another explanation of deleterious effects of segregation on student academic achievement is that of access to information about school quality. Parents often obtain information about a school's performance from anecdotal reputational information, rather than empirical information about that school's capacity to promote learning (Holme, 2002). If parents have only information about student achievement, which is strongly influenced by socioeconomic status and parental educational factors, then given open school choice, students may become concentrated in homogenous school settings (Rich and Jennings, 2015). Finally, Hanselman and Fiel (2016) mention that opportunity hoarding can be thwarted by internal work done by educators themselves. Be it additional resources provided to underperforming schools, or an emphasis on educational equity, some racial and socioeconomic disparities may be

counteracted within the building itself (Billings, Deming and Rockoff, 2014; Gamoran and An, 2016).

Suburban school districts are wrought with structural advantages stemming from their decentralized governance. Power once centralized in large urban school districts has now shifted into smaller, independent school districts with a strong, nearly impenetrable boundary keeping them from mandated desegregation policy, as seen through the *Milliken v. Bradley* decision in 1974. Moving into a form of "Suburban Localism", these communities, beginning in the late 1960's have been able to secure the advantages of their tax dollars for their small enclave without considerations of redistribution, which is a cornerstone of large urban districts (Rury, 2020). This trend has not only continued into the current decade, but has been strengthened with the increased clustering of academic and financial advantage in suburban areas (Harding, 2003; Sampson, 2008; Sharkey, 2013).

Although much research has pointed to suburban advantages in learning and school resources, the story is more complex when isolating achievement growth. Through analyzing a growth-based measure of school quality, Hanselman and Fiel (2016) found that not only do Black and Hispanic students attend lower-achieving schools, but they also attend schools with lower rates of achievement growth. This study demonstrates a direct effect that lies outside of pre-existing social factors and pushes the opportunity hoarding hypothesis forward. This also implies that the accumulated learning opportunities that are distinct to geographically high achieving areas have a strong effect on between-race educational inequality and that "between-race disparities in school-based learning experiences pale in comparison to racial disparities in learning opportunities outside of school" (Hanselman and Fiel, 2016). This statement points to what we have known for decades; economic, social and educational opportunity continues to be

clustered perpetuating and strengthening the concentration of disadvantage (Downey and Condron, 2016).

Parental Intervention Effects on Educational Inequality

In the years directly following WWII, a new era arose where the child progressively became the center of parent's universe (Urban, 2014). This trend has been the catalyst for research surrounding social, educational and economic repercussions of this style of childrearing, with works by Annette Lareau, R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy, and Sigal Alon theorizing about intentional childrearing. Sociologist Annette Lareau's case study of middle class, working class and poor families created a framework that can be applied to differential treatment of the educational institutions depending on density of levels of socioeconomic affluence in an area. Her concepts of concerted cultivation and natural growth allow us to better understand parental interactions with educational institutions and what those interactions mean for obtaining a competitive edge for children (Lareau, 2002). As Lareau descibed, middle class families practice a childrearing style called concerted cultivation, in which the family intentionally creates educational and social opportunities for their child, in order to best prepare them for institutional interactions later in life (Lareau, 2002). In using Lareau's conception of institutional interaction, we can see that middle-class families are aware of the benefits of customization of their child's educational path. Just as these families are aware of the benefits to be had, so are lower-income families unaware of the ways in which they should be lobbying for a tailored experience for their children (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). Through constant contact with school administration, middle class parents understand their rights to face time with administrators and often advocate for higher placement in curricular tracking. This practice secures a place for their children in upper level courses, even when the student may fall below the testing cut off (Lyken-Segosebe and

Hinz, 2015). Familial intervention in the form of entitlement can also be seen through parental involvement and advocacy in district policy matters such as redistricting and racial integration efforts (Lewis-McCoy, 2014).

There are a few researchers that have looked at the school involvement of affluent parents in suburban schools, but it their contributions are disjointed. Educational sociological researchers such as Lewis-McCoy and Lareau have looked at this process through differing lenses, one centering differential involvement around racial issues and the other focusing more on SES influences in levels of involvement in school politics (Lareau and Muñoz, 2012; Lewis-McCoy, 2014). By grounding the research in Pierre Bourdieu's notions of human capital, much of the research shows the vast benefits given to parents who are part of closed networks that have access to valuable information channels in regard to school policy (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). The work done by Annette Lareau demonstrates the strong connection between influence in school policy and a family's SES status (Lareau and Muñoz, 2012). In a case study of the collective effects of a Parent Teacher Organization in an affluent suburb, Lareau and Munoz demonstrate that the energy and resources provided by administration are focused towards efforts that directly benefit the children of more vocal affluent parents. This is a common occurrence in schools with very involved PTOs; there is a struggle between administrator's wishes to look out for the entire student body and their families and those of the PTO who in most cases have a difficult time understanding their role and how to accommodate families unlike their own (Lareau and Muñoz, 2012). This time and energy spent on so-called "squeaky wheel" parents detracts from the attention given to students from lower income backgrounds. The uneven access to the free time that it takes to be an active member of a PTO is one of the largest factors facing low-income, often single parents in both low-income and affluent districts.

Again, notions of what it means to be a "good, involved parent" in a suburban district vary depending on who is being asked. Both Lareau and Lewis-McCoy have in depth interview evidence that those who are not able to be highly involved in PTO activities, or in classroom concerns are not choosing so out of neglect, but out of a lack of understanding of institutional norms of the school and those of the community (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). Lewis McCoy found, as well as Lewis and Diamond, that due to misconceptions held by the majority of involved teachers and parents, that black families do not feel welcome or up to date in matters of school policy and change (Lewis and Diamond, 2015; Lewis-McCoy, 2014). Resources are allocated according to the loudest, most outspoken parents, not always according to where the need lies. Historically, policies have been made by and for the affluent white majority, therefore creating a system that is not natural to navigate for low SES families and families of color. Parents that have access to media outlets, newspaper columns, and the time it takes to organize are those who fully access opportunity for their agenda within district disputes.

Parents also play a large role in the messages surrounding school quality and levels of opportunity within a building. Demographic composition of a school is often applied as a proxy for school quality, thus maintaining and reinforcing status boundaries that might already exist through residential segregation (Lareau and Goyette, 2014). This manner of selecting schools creates socioeconomically homogenous schools that secure advantage through concentrating forms of social and cultural capital. In a new study by Lareau, Weininger and Cox (2018), this concentration of wealth and income also has the capacity to shape the quality of staff, instructional materials and school facilities. Apart from the many forms of tangible, monetary resources that are focused in affluent areas, this study speaks more to the "noneconomic resources" used in order to influence policy and even school boundaries.

This involvement does not always produce positive effects on the broad school population. Many studies point to the over-reaching nature of parental involvement in cases such as surveillance of teachers and administration, which constrains individual autonomy of these staff members (Hassrick and Schneider, 2009; Lareau and Munoz, 2012). These attempts at policy customization are often at odds with the overall mission to guarantee each student a fair and equal access to educational resources. Fielding the suggestions, complaints and often unsubstantiated critiques of the school from highly involved parents, administration in elite schools work with less and less time to dedicate to district and school initiatives that are not focused on the "squeaky wheel" families (Lareau, et al, 2018). Perceptions about this level of involvement vary, but in a case study by Lewis-McCoy (2014), the message is clear; poor parents, and parents of color just care less. This is an extremely complex series of activations and concentration of forms of capital in different schools and districts, but a helpful diagram including these pieces can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Adapted from Annette Lareau's Model of Parental Engagement as presented by Lewis-McCoy (2014)*
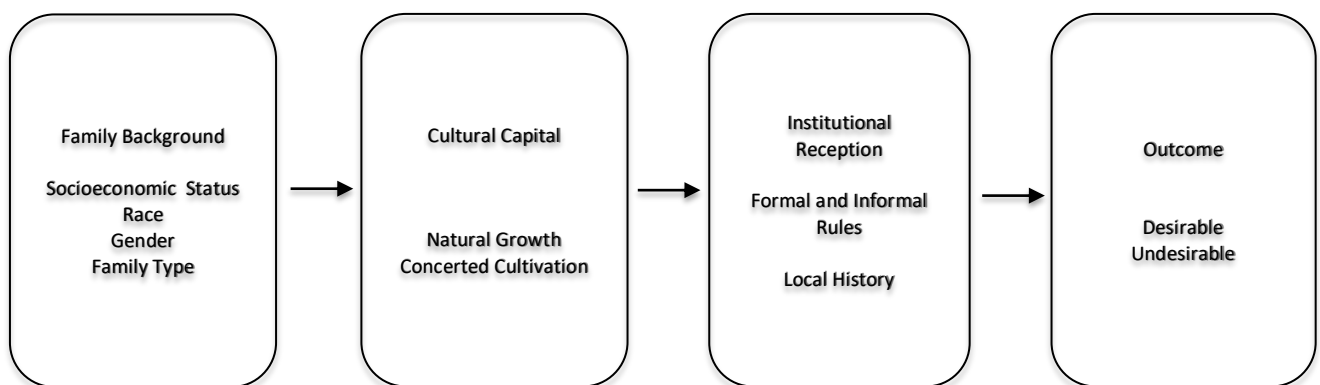
Tracking as a Mechanism Contributing to Within School Segregation

Tracking is one of the most common, unquestioned practices in US education systems. This practice functions to sort students into common classes, theoretically on the basis of ability (Oakes, 1994). It has been shown time and time again by educational sociologists that these practices vary greatly by school, but all have one thing in common: tracking practices disenfranchise students from lower-income backgrounds as well as black and brown students (Lewis and Diamond, 2015). As Amanda Lewis and John Diamond found in their study of an affluent, self-proclaimed diverse school district, tracking functions to create separate tracks for students, overwhelmingly based on race, with white students filling honors and AP classrooms, and students of color being overrepresented in lower tracks. This is not an isolated case of racism, but is a systemic problem that faces many affluent districts. In a more intensive study by Sean Kelly and Heather Price (2011), a similar overrepresentation of low-income students in lower tracked classes was found. These researchers worked to find an explanation for this stifling discrepancy in representation of socioeconomically diverse students in upper level tracks in high schools, with evidence pointing to a status competition explanation (Kelly and Price, 2011). This means that even in homogeneous student bodies, the excessive interest and intervention on the part of affluent parents is present, so when there a less even capital distribution among parents in a diverse school, the benefits of a tracking system are reaped by higher SES white students at the expense of the underrepresented (Lucas and Berends, 2002).

Parental involvement is one of the most important pieces of tracking as a mechanism of within school segregation. Those families with higher educational credentials, according to multiple studies, have a more deep understanding of the educational institution, and therefore better understand how to advocate for their students to be placed in higher tracked classes

(Coleman, 1988; Kelly and Price, 2011; Kohn, 1998; Lareau, 2002; Lyken-Segosebe and Hinz, 2015). This process can begin as early as elementary school, where very involved affluent parents share information with one another regarding the "best and worst" teachers in the school, then lobby for placement in the classrooms of those deemed the best teachers, thus securing an advantage even before the tracking system begins (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). This process carries on to take a different form in high school, where strict dividers are set in regard to test scores and teacher referrals (Gamoran, 1992). Again, Lareau's conception of emerging entitlement seen in her study "Invisible Inequality" is evident in the process through which parents with the most cultural capital navigate the education system seeking the highest placement for their child in a tracked system (Lareau, 2002).

Lewis and Diamond discuss racial implication as a result of differing expectation of white and black students in the affluent district that they observed. Black parents in his study suggest that due to lower expectations being expressed to black and latino/a students, they faced conflict when it came time to advocate for their children to be placed in higher tracked courses (Lewis and Diamond, 2015). Through lower expectations placed on black students by teachers in the classroom, these researchers were able to point to a behavioral theory called "expectations states theory" where the process of discrimination seen in these cases is a result of general beliefs held by a majority in the district and result in discriminatory behavior (Lewis and Diamond, 2015). This process, coupled with direct opposition faced by black parents while advocating for upward movement in their children's tracks, create a hostile environment where white, affluent students directly benefit from the same processes that inhibit black and low-SES students. Where those white parents in Lewis and Diamond's study were able to walk into the school and request

39

special accommodations for their students with generally positive results, quite the opposite was true for black parents "fighting" for their own.

Another significant element to tracking policies functioning as a mechanism of within school segregation is the cumulative and concrete nature of tracks. Many tracks differ from district to district, but often have a similar component: requisite requirements (Kelly and Price, 2011). Through this requirement, students must be co-enrolled in a number of different courses to be eligible for a higher track placement. Many students who have limited extra curricular activities, or outside tutoring will excel in one or two courses but will struggle in a subject like math or science.

For educational researchers, the study of tracking has been commonplace for many decades. Unequal access to advanced curriculum, differentiated social status, and negative stereotypes have beset those who are on the wrong side of the tracking equation. Evidence from research conducted on ability grouping beginning in the 1980s has demonstrated concern about who is placed in which tracks and by what means this differentiation occurs (Gamoran, 1986; Oakes, 1987; Oakes, 1990). This practice of tracking, or ability grouping places students with higher perceived capability into classes with other students with higher perceived capability in order to streamline curriculum and time spend differentiating lessons. Students with lower levels of perceived capability, likewise, are grouped into classes with other students of similar perceived capabilities. This structure, viewed strictly from a lens of bureaucratic efficiency makes sense; it is only when the evidence of these placements falling on racial and socioeconomic lines are understood that we can truly see the problematic nature of the practice.

With the increase in need for efficient practices to stabilize growing public education institutions, the first half of the twentieth century saw the development of this sorting system.

This practice became routine as our American public education systems continued to diversify. Into today, our tracking system relies on standardized tests to sort children as early as elementary schools, and from there, dictates their future access to quality instruction, social status and rigorous curriculum. Sorting practices have changed incrementally over the years, with modern tracking systems being more flexible in nature (Lucas, 1999). Where earlier tracking systems relied on placement into overarching programs, today the majority of large public schools allow an open enrollment structure. In sorting students in a more ambiguous way, students rely heavily on parent, teacher and peer messages to make choices about how to enroll. This structure of sorting children early has repercussions for not only their later academic choices, but for the social order within each community.

In sorting children early, the achievement gap that results has more time to develop and expand. Even after accounting for baseline demographic differences, multiple studies have shown that this gap increases over time (Anyon, 2005; 2009; Gamoran and Berends, 1987; Murphy and Hallinger, 1989; Rosenbaum, 1980). The messages sent to children regarding their academic status within the school solidify their educational expectations early. Educational expectations are seen as an increasingly important element to a student's academic trajectory (Goyette, 2008). Ability grouping allows space for these expectations to be solidified, for both the betterment and the detriment of students, depending on the groups in which they are placed. According to Karlson (2015), the extent to which a student's expectations depend on track placement is a result of whether their placement is consistent across subjects (e.g. same low-track placement for both math and English classes) and whether they have across time been placed in the same track. These messages strongly influence student's beliefs about whether or not school is "for them" as well as the future decisions they make in regard to drop-out decisions and post-

secondary education. Messages come from multiple outlets, including parents, teachers, peers, and the media, but all clearly influence how students perceive themselves (Bozick, Alexander, Entwisle, Dauber & Kerr, 2010; Breen and Lindsay, 1999; Grodsky and Jones, 2007; Morgan, Kingston, and Sproule, 2005; Rosenbaum, 2001; Schneider and Stevenson, 1999). Track placement influences not only with who a student learns, but also how much they learn (Gamoran, 1986). Peer groups are formed through educational and social experiences in a school. These groups help to form the identities of students, and these identities are tightly linked to the academic tracks in which students are placed. According to Oakes (1985), this becomes a global identity where students in high track classes become "high-achieving *people*". This designation works equally in socially labeling students in low tracks as "low-achieving *people*". This finding was replicated in a recent study of school tracking and youth self-perceptions (Legette, 2018). In this study, replicating others, multiple qualitative data point to the same phenomenon of high esteem being granted to students in higher tracks and stigmatization being designated for those in lower tracks (Tyson, 2011; Osborne and Jones, 2011).

These identities are formed through the stratification of students by perceived ability. These conceptions of ability carry forward and impact expectations, which also have a strong impact on how students perform in class. Setting low expectations for oneself, Karlson (2015) found that low-tracked students actually embark on a self-fulfilling prophecy, resulting in outcomes that are actually independent of that student's actual abilities. This same concept applies to students who are tracked higher than their actual abilities, due to the expectations in a high-tracked classroom. With low-income and racially minoritized groups disproportionately being placed into low-tracks, our preexisting social inequalities are being perpetuated through our schools (Oakes, 1990). The interaction between students 'perceptions of their place in the

social order and their institutionally defined expectations results in stratified outcomes long these lines. With this understanding, it is clear that there are unjust mechanisms at play that push and pull students through a system that serves to replicate the existing social order.

Teachers play a great role in how student's expectations and perceptions of their academic abilities are formed. The stigma that is carried by students in lower-track classes can unfortunately be reinforced by teachers. In a study by Oakes (2005), it was found that teachers expect less from non-honors students and even hold negative perceptions of their abilities. This negativity extends so far that some teachers in the study went so far as to tell their non-honors classes that they are the worst class in the entire school (Oakes, 2005). These examples have strong negative effects on students and their academic self-esteem. Whereas this may contribute to lower academic performance, the same study outlines the exact opposite effect from teachers on students in honors courses. Students placed in upper-tracks receive praise and challenge from their teachers (Oakes, 2005). This bolsters student's academic self-esteem and when coupled with the negative messages sent to students in lower-tracks, it is clear the extreme detrimental effect that can be made by teachers (Osborne and Jones, 2011). In an effort to encourage higher-track students, some teachers in Oakes (2005) study went so far as to compare the honors students with the non-honors students, further reinforcing the differential status awarded to each group.

Causal Mechanisms of Tracking

A growing number of scholars have used bureaucratic representation to better understand how those served by large school districts are often misidentified into tracks or given special education designation that does not match their intellectual abilities (Meier, Stewart, and England, 1989; Meier, Wrinkle, and Polinard, 1999; Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, and Nicholson-

Crotty, 2011; Nicholson-Crotty, Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Redding, 2016). Simply stated, bureaucratic representation is when actors within an institution, regardless of underlying reasons or purposes, act in the interests of those who share characteristics. This could be demographic, regional, or even language. Scholars applying this concept to schools are beginning to echo a consistent message; a diverse school staff is imperative to best serve a diversifying student body. This can happen in multiple ways, but the end result is clear; in a diversifying public schooling system, when teachers do not share the same characteristics as those students that they serve, outcomes are not as positive (Lim, 2006; Theobald and Haider-Markel, 2009; Nicholson-Crotty, et al., 2016). Grissom, Kern, and Rodriguez (2015) suggest that it is not only students who are affected as clients in schools, but it is also parents. How school staff interact with and make decisions regarding students of similar and different backgrounds as their own have implications for students 'discipline, gifted assignment, special education and overall student achievement.

One issue with applying this organizational theory to a public school setting is that the existing studies have relied heavily on aggregate relationships in schools (Nicholson-Crotty, et al., 2016). This does not allow us to identify the function at play when a demographic match is accomplished between students and school staff. This problem has begun to be addressed in a study by Nicholson-Crotty and colleagues (2016) looking at individual level data to better understand how bureaucratic representation functions in the decision-making process of gifted identification. The implications of this study are clear; black students are assigned to gifted services at higher rates when their classroom teacher is black. This finding moves our understanding a step further in that it also suggests that this is the cause of the increased rates, not just the presence of black teachers in the school at large. The authors attribute this to more positive appraisals from the students 'teachers of the same race. Apart from strictly applying

more positive valuation to minority students, minority staff members employed at minority serving schools reach more positive outcomes through a number of avenues. Consistency in background may allow a teacher to provide more culturally responsive teaching methods and assessments, thus promoting equity in their own classroom. This possible outcome is not confined to their classroom.

Lim (2006) suggests that minority school staff members might also push their nonminority colleagues to work towards a more culturally responsive school climate, including advocating for more culturally responsive assessment, but also classroom management strategies and professional development. It is also suggested that this demographic match within the classroom might facilitate better communication between students and teachers (Hindera, 1993; Lim, 2006). Played out, this looks like students more easily communicating their misunderstandings to a teacher, or even a parent feeling more comfortable communicating dissatisfaction with that teacher. Another way this demographic match combats disproportionality is through the highly subjective process of gifted education designation. Meier and Nicholson-Crotty (2006) study finds that minority parents are more likely contact a teacher from similar background to both provide extra resources to a struggling student, but also to request gifted testing. This finding is important given the highly subjective nature of the gifted designation process (Blanchett, 2006).

A final explanatory mechanism for how this demographic match might play out in a school setting has to do with student behavior. Lim (2006) proposed a concept termed "coproduction inducement" which occurs when a minority student works harder for a teacher from their own background. This could happen for multiple reasons, one being that the student sees this teacher or staff member as a role model, and thus strives to impress them. This concept

does not only apply to academic behaviors, it can also apply to a decrease in discipline incidents. A dual-action mechanism can result where students behave more appropriately for a teacher whom they want to impress, but also there have been studies suggesting that the actual harshness of punishment is decreased in a more racially representative system (Roch, Pitts, and Navarro, 2010).

Gaps in the Literature to be Addressed

Site-specific historical analysis will allow this project to more accurately describe how the trends stated above vary depending on social context throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The historical work surrounding mid-sized cities is sparse and historical trend analysis cannot be accurately applied to every city due to regional political and social differences. The scope of this project is narrow and focused, allowing for pointed comparison between national trends and those seen throughout the latter part of the twentieth century in Rightown, KS. Charles Tilly's Opportunity Hoarding has yet to be applied to within district magnet-like programs such as were seen in Rightown during the 1980s and 1990s. This project will fill this gap in the literature and apply this concept to better understand how this phenomenon contributed to the school's declining status. Interview data covering the physical space surrounding the school will provide a deeper contextualization to how racial and educational composition of a space can dictate community perceptions. These analyses, coupled with discussions surrounding unequal tracking choices made by teachers throughout the decades will contribute to our understanding of historical bias and how this has shaped where Rightown Southeast High is today. This project sparked curiosity in local education policy making frameworks and actors. These topics are beyond the scope of the project in this form, but a brief review of pertinent literature can be found in Appendix F.

Chapter 3: Rightown Southeast High School: The Early Evolution

The decades surrounding the opening of Rightown Southeast High in 1957 were marked by dramatic population increases and social activism in the Rightown community. Although much of the national attention given to the civil rights activism in the community surrounded a famous drug store sit in, the city was on the verge of major social reorder (Eick, 2001). American public schools have historically been sites for policy battles concerning racial equity and inclusion, and Rightown Public Schools was no exception throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Elementary schools in the Black community in Northeast Rightown were overcrowded, and families who tried to advocate for more equitable resources were met with a slew of bureaucratic obstacles to their requests for transfer or additional resources. Political activist groups such as the local Rightown chapter of the NAACP, and The Urban League worked towards the goal of a more equitable school system for all of Rightown's children.

Introduction

Southeast High was a highly sought-after school at its opening. The school was known for high academic rigor, a boisterous school spirit and athletic accomplishments. The families that gained access to the new facility took advantage of the educational opportunities that came with the physical and social capital of community and the school continued to grow in status across the city. Racial segregation was a reality of the social order of the 1950s and 1960s in Rightown, and this reality became increasingly challenged through multiple school boycotts and organized petitions to the district. Advocates for a racially integrated school system continued to work towards policy change by supporting and advising parents throughout the 1960s. Rightown Public Schools were faced with many unhappy parent contingencies, and were in a defensive position that often maintained the status quo of de facto segregation. One of the most public and

consequential conflicts over access to new facilities and district resources happened when a group of Black parents petitioned to allow their children to enroll in the new Roosevelt Junior High, which consequentially fed into the high-status Southeast High. After being denied this request, these groups of organized parents and community members continued to fight for equal access to educational opportunity, ultimately gaining the support of the federal Health, Education, and Welfare Department (HEW).

While faced with scrutiny and increased pressure to justify growing budgets, Rightown Public Schools continued to implement incremental policy changes in hopes of quelling further challenges to the existing order. These incremental changes were not enough to satisfy federal a mandate from HEW, which in 1969, ultimately resulted in a district-wide busing policy that brought racial integration to the system. This dramatic policy change placed Rightown in the national spotlight as an example of successful district-wide school integration, whether or not this "success" was felt by all. As a school, Southeast faced fewer outright protest and violent clashes during the years directly following the implementation of this policy than did many of the other high schools in the area.

The 1970s and 1980s were relatively quiet in Rightown as the public school system adjusted to the new order of operations with a racially balanced enrollment across all city schools. This was a time when students learned to navigate a new social reality, sometimes better than school staff. Leading up to the demographic shifts that resulted from the new school integration plan, teachers at Southeast had grown accustomed to a homogenous student body. The necessity to change teaching habits to better serve a racially and socioeconomically diverse group of students forced some teachers to become resentful and hesitant to comply with new district initiatives. Changes in district leadership in the late 1980s were coupled with concerns

about student behavior and academic rigor. Both of these concerns ushered in an era of open public discourse and media coverage of the ills that troubled Rightown Public Schools; this public media attention drove further conversation about the quality of the schooling being offered to residents of Rightown.

The Golden Years - 1957-1979

Situated in an often under researched part of the country, Rightown, KS in the 1950s was on a course of rapid development that would set the pace for the city's expansion for decades to come. Touted as an economic haven, this mid-sized midwestern city attracted young families and small businesses with the promise of upward mobility. The metro population grew from 168, 279 in 1950 to 254, 698 in 1955. As a city, Rightown invested almost $60 million during this decade in infrastructure and development projects, employing thousands and insuring stability for the anticipated population growth ("Decisions for Development", 1982). Rightown as a city became preoccupied, and understandably so, with preparing for the continued population growth. Figure 2 demonstrates efforts to project population characteristics from 1945-1980. After the purchase of the old municipal airport in 1951, the federal government made it possible for Rightown to continue growing at a rapid pace by spending over $37 million in development and construction of a new air force base in the far southeast quadrant of the city. The east side of Rightown expanded with continued growth of the aircraft manufacturing industry as a result of the demands placed by government contracts due to the escalating military engagement in Korea. Population growth, economic growth, and continued investment in city development pointed to a bright future for families in Rightown.

With growth came a need for strong investment in bonds to support the expansion of Rightown Public Schools (RPS) facilities. To keep up with 2,000-5,000 per year student increase

during this decade, over 30 new elementary schools, 8 junior high schools, and 3 new senior high schools were added (VanMeter, 1977). In addition to the structural growth of the district, another 10 peripheral districts were annexed by RPS. The expansion did not come without resistance, and the board of education was continually working to justify its purposes for the allocation of bond moneys as a result of 1950 and 1954 bond issues. In comparing the current facilities to districts in larger cities, it became apparent that if Rightown Public School district was going to offer a high-quality education to all its families, investment had to occur at all levels, including investment in administrative buildings and offices. Concerns about the costs associated with a growing district appeared in newspaper headlines. Comparing operating costs from 1902 to 1952, a *Rightown Enquirer* article stated that the annual budget of $42,104 (approximately $1,200,000 in 2019 USD) was dwarfed by the $19,888,082 (approximately $189,000,000 in 2019 USD) 18-month budget of 1951-1952 school year (Wimberly, 1952). These figures were under the headline "Costs Rocket" with little attention being paid to the per pupil expenditures that account for such an increase in budget, not to mention the overall expansion of the city as a whole. The district was in a battle to justify the steady increase in operating costs of the district. In a 1955 article defending the allocation of $500,000 ($4,700,000 in 2019 USD) funds for the administrative building, superintendent Dr. John Grubbs stated that "The board room is not set up to give proper hearing to what's going on-we've been embarrassed." (VanMeter, 1977).

As a result of the contentious 1954 bond issue calling for $6,499,000 ($60,800,000 in 2019 USD), continued media attention was focused on the rapid growth of the student population of RPS, with particular attention being directed at the district's ability to continue offering excellence in the classroom.

Figure 2. *Projected Population Growth: 1945-1980*
Source: Kansas State Board of Agriculture (Population); Sedgwick County Health Department
(Birth Rates & Number of Births); Larry Smith Economic Base Study (Population Projections)
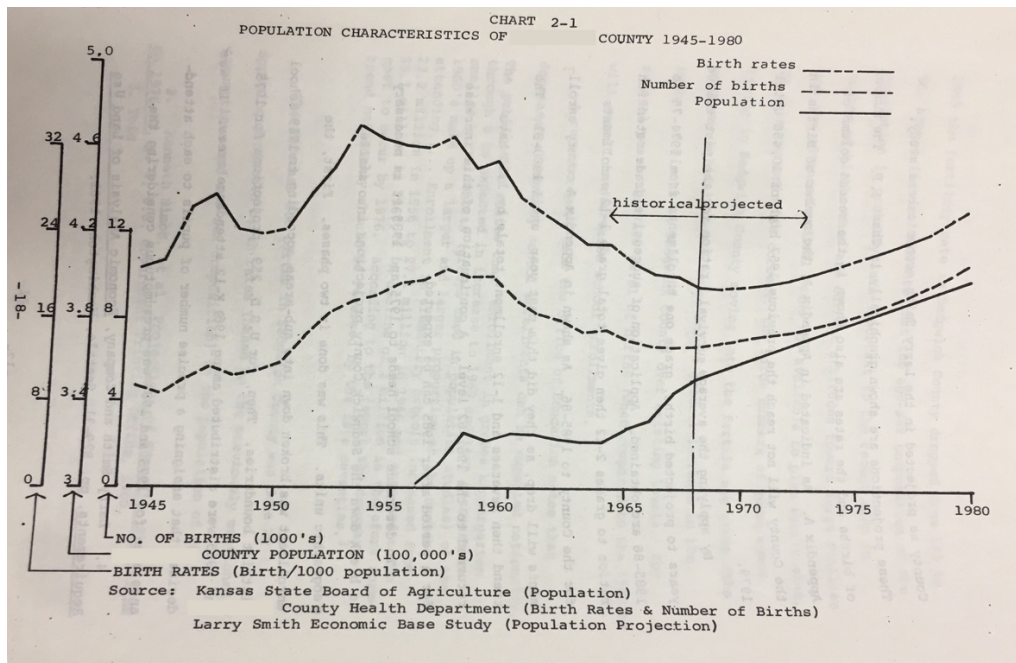
On the heels of the opening of the new Southeast High, a headline reading *Nearly 70,000*

Rightown Students Will Attend School Here This Fall, the Rightown Tower newspaper outlines

the districts plans to continue adding qualified instructors "There are sufficient instructors

employed to assure Rightown youth and adults that classrooms opened in September will offer

the ultimate in modern approach to an adventure in learning" ("Nearly 70,000", 1957). The new

senior high school, which opened in 1957, served students from 10-12 grades and enrolled 1,578

students in its first year. The school employed 67 teachers, and 3 administrators, which

amounted to a student teacher ratio of 24:1 (Davis, 1978). Situated in a modest, but stable family

neighborhood, Southeast High boundaries served the largest area in the school system. The

opening of Southeast was intended to decrease the burden placed on the oldest high school,

Rightown East High.

The perceptions surrounding Southeast's initial prestige derived from the boundary drawing and original demographic composition of the school. As one East High student remembers, the opening of Southeast dramatically changed the composition of East High, sparking feelings of resentment and misunderstanding,

> When they open Southeast, of course they had to redraw boundaries. And at that time, the students that they took from East high for the most part were very upper income students, because we only had North and East and Southeast [high schools]. I remember a lot of my friends were here and then all of a sudden, they were over here as golden buffaloes. It was quite an interesting experience from the student's perspective. We just knew that this big fancy new high school was built and all of our friends were there now.

Rightown East High was the only naturally integrated school racially in the district at the time of Southeast's opening. As continued to be the case, socioeconomic disparities in Rightown fall along racial lines; as such, the movement of students along boundaries drawn also changed the racial composition of East High dramatically. Right from the opening, community rhetoric began branding the new high school as "The Country Club School". Again, commenting on the status and demographics of the school, an East High student said, "It was called the country club high school. It was called that because of the wealthy people who went there. Wealthy people and country clubs go together. Whether they do or not, it's the perception. There was some resentment; it was kind of a public-private school." Some differences were impossible to overlook, such as Southeast having all state-of-the-art facilities, but the freshness did not aid in hampering these perceptions, "They [Southeast families] had a brand-new school. East was old and it was the original high school in [Rightown]. I think it was like, "well why did they get all this brand-new glitzy stuff and were over here in the dingy East high school?"

The 1960s continued to see a boom in population across the metro area, including the areas surrounding the new air force base at the southeast edge of town. This base was a major

52

employer for African Americans, but due to specific loan provisions of the G.I. Bill, African Americans were struggling to buy and rent homes in the area. As was the case across the nation at this time, African Americans servicemen and servicewomen were facing discrimination in the housing market. Real estate developers openly discriminated against black families, pushing them away from this area of the city (Eick, 2008).

Conversations surrounding the segregation of Rightown students began to surface in the school board agenda as early as 1947, with a petition opposing such segregation of students and teachers from the President of the local Rightown NAACP chapter, Mark Shepherd (Board of Education, 1947). Mr. Shepherd commented in the school board meeting about the negative repercussions of both the segregation of students and of teachers in the Rightown Public Schools. This petition started a long and arduous process for black students and families across the city. As a remedy, the school board hired two people to drive volunteer black students outside of their neighborhood attendance area to attend other Rightown schools across the city. The board also created a committee to study race relations throughout the city, chaired by Quaker activist, Maria Turnbell. This imitative resulted in a series of observations in the fall of that same year, with many stirring uneasy sentiments across the community:

- Negro Pupils in Rightown attend separate schools through grade 8, taught by Negro teachers who teach only in these schools.

- The city parks are segregated and only one park admits Negro people.

- All children may swim free in the pools of neighborhood parks except Negros; the Municipal Pool is also closed to blacks.

- Hotels, restaurants and movie theatres do not serve Negroes unless the movie theatres have balconies or the restaurant is black-owned.

- There are separate YMCAs and YWCAs and none of the twenty public or private social service agencies surveyed have black people on their boards.

- Hospitals have separate wings or sections reserved for Negroes or, at a minimum, follow a policy of not allowing them to share rooms with whites.

- State law recognizes restrictive covenants that prevent the sale or rental of houses to African Americans (Michener, 1947).

From this point on, there remained a core group of Rightown citizens committed to eliminating segregation in communities and schools. As it stood throughout the 1950s, and most of the 1960s, black students and faculty were confined to schools in the northeast quadrant of the city, where enrollments reached nearly 100% African American. Families living in these areas lacked choice regarding housing opportunities, and as a result, lacked choice in decisions regarding schools. When asked about schooling choices during the 1960s, Maxine Johnson, an African American employee of the district stated, "That was the district [assignment area] we were in. That was during the time of busing, and that's how my kids all went to east high school, but during the time when we moved here in the sixties it was still segregated because my kids, they had to go to the neighborhood [elementary] schools."

Continuing into the 1950s, this core group of citizens worked tirelessly, securing a school board decision in 1952 that established that black families, now moving into previously all white neighborhoods had the right to send their children to either their neighborhood schools, or an all-Black school in the northeast part of the city (Board of Education, 1951). Due to the vague mandates of the *Brown* decision on federal mandates in 1955, coupled with the local control allowed in the process, issues of de facto segregation continued to afflict the school system. Although the structures in place did not encourage change, members of the NAACP continued

petitioning the school board into the 1960s, making headway in 1963 regarding the placement of black teachers across the district. Of the 156 black teachers employed in Rightown Public Schools, for the first time, the board reported that there were now black teachers assigned to South High, Southeast High, and multiple majority white junior highs (Board of Education, 1963). This is an important point to recognize when looking at the environment of Southeast High; the first six years of Southeast High's existence involved no teachers of color.

Roosevelt Junior High

In the mid-1960s, the onslaught of petitions and continued pressure from this coalition reached a boiling point surrounding boundary decisions of a new junior high in an affluent part of the east side of Rightown. Roosevelt Junior High became central to the equity debate within the black community, with some parents wanting access to resources and less crowded classrooms in their neighborhood schools, and others wanting access to an integrated school for their children. This junior high was an elite school that fed into the new Southeast High. Regardless of the purposes for the requests, it became evident that parents were not backing down. In 1966, 80% of parents in one of the majority black junior highs petitioned for their children to be able to transfer to nearby junior highs, including Roosevelt Junior High (Eick, 2008). With the debate reaching a momentary conclusion in 1966, it was decided that the school did not have room for black transfer students, the district Superintendent was quoted on the issue, "When a school goes beyond thirty percent [black], people begin to move" (Eick, 2008). This heated debate appeared to close with White families retaining the majority and full access in this area, at the expense of the wishes of the Black community.

Prior to the official boundary vote, the coalition of black parents, led by NAACP president Ronald Cook, took an even stronger stance, boycotting their current junior high schools

and making the statement to the local newspapers, "This is the time to stop segregation in the junior high school system…Setting the boundaries for Roosevelt affords the opportunity to integrate the junior high system" (Board of Education, 1966). The school board meeting to decide boundaries drew a full house, with both White and Black families crowded together, some sitting on the floor. Arguing that de facto segregation is not the same as policy mandated segregation, the superintendent determined that families from the all Black junior high school were allowed to send their children elsewhere, if they were able to pay for the transportation costs. One board member suggested that only those students holding A and B grades be allowed to transfer, heightening the levels of anger and distrust already felt by the African American community (Eick, 2008). With the Superintendent's proposal winning, this was far from a win for those fighting the de facto educational segregation during the 1960s, but that did not stop the African American community from banding together to make a positive situation out of the decision. Multiple community groups and families came together to create a fund to finance transportation for blacks unable to pay, calling the effort "Operation Transport" (VanMeter, 1977). With the continued efforts of the NAACP and its allies, change was on the horizon, including an increase in federal oversight and investigations into segregation beginning in the latter part of the decade.

The Road to a Final Desegregation Plan

In 1966, elementary schools became the focal point for the district's resistance to any form of integration plan. Black elementary schools continued to be overcrowded, and this arrangement was justified by the school board with the policy allowing Black parents to transport their own children to other schools in the district. This hardly satisfied the Black community, especially given the district's efforts to retain the policies through the placement of additional

56

portables at the most overcrowded of the seven Black elementary schools. Although the

superintendent recommended that about 500 students be transferred to other schools with the

support of district transportation, he was countered with continued pushes from the board of

education for placement of portables at approximately seven times the cost of transportation

(Board of Education, 1960; 1962). The active President of the local chapter of the NAACP,

Ronald Cook became a vocal leader on the issue stating, "You leave white classrooms open and

stack Negroes on top of each other. If you tell people in that area that you are putting that many

additional portables on those sites, you are inciting trouble." (Beacon, 1968). There remained

significant distrust between the Black communities in northeast Rightown and the school district

as the community watched the district's decision-making process play out. The proposed plan to

place portables was put on hold due to the strong opposition by Black leaders. In a strongly

criticized effort to understand the desires of the Black community, the current superintendent

canvassed homes in the Black residential area. This effort was seen as "too little, too late" by

Black leaders, and did not result in any resolution of the controversy at hand.

With a complaint filed by Ronald Cook with the federal department of Health, Education,

and Welfare (HEW), charging the district with maintaining dual education systems, citing that

almost 90% of black teachers were assigned to all black schools, a strong movement was

initiated supporting those fighting for racial equity. Approximately 6 months after the board's

vote on Roosevelt Junior High, the school board agreed to appoint a task force to investigate the

problems, which it deemed the "Low Economic Area Problems" (LEAP) committee. It was

comprised of multiple African Americans, church leaders, school board members, community

business owners, and school staff. It took another 7 months to complete the charge, but this

committee was tasked with and ultimately completed a comprehensive report of the issues

plaguing the northeast Black residential area of the city. The report titled "School and Society in One City" ended with recommendations that were quite controversial, but sparked discussions throughout the city and subsequently fueled its burgeoning civil rights movement. Recommendations included the elimination of ability grouping, desegregation of all schools through any means necessary, and the institution of tax supported summer reading programs for all students lagging in those skills (LEAP Report, 1969).

In 1968, as a result of the effort to quell an investigation started by HEW, the school board presented an additional plan to address high concentration of Black students in elementary and junior highs in the northeast neighborhoods. This plan proposed the closure of the only all Black junior high, assigning those students across the city to ensure an end to high concentration of Black students at any secondary school ("Plan of Compliance", 1968; Kansas Teacher, 1969). Within this plan, as an extension of the integration of Black students throughout the city's junior highs, Black students would also be bused to maintain racial balance throughout the city's high schools. The plan also called for a halt on the portables and new construction initiatives in the Black elementary schools. It was negotiated by the board with significant opposition, but was finally adopted on January 6, 1969 to begin the following school year. Although a cross-busing plan was repeatedly suggested by HEW and by those compiling the LEAP report as the only viable solution to the inequities in the segregated system, desegregation at the secondary level was as far as the board was willing to go. Many believed this would not be the final iteration of an integration plan, but it would stand for the time being.

This push for educational equity culminated after years of investigation into both housing and educational discrimination, with a federal mandate from HEW in 1969. This resulted in investigations and ultimately a demand from HEW to take appropriate measures to desegregate

the all Black schools in the area. The city continued to be torn on the issue of busing; sentiments on the matter were also fueled by comments made by President Nixon opposing busing as a solution to the nation's racial inequities. This period also marked an increase in local school districts' reliance on federal funds, and Rightown was no exception. Much of its Special Education funding was provided by the federal government, and was in jeopardy if it did not to comply with the mandate sent in 1969. After much debate, the school board's decision was stated in a letter to the Director of the Office of Civil Rights. The board's president stated, "Our Board has considered further the matter of elementary school integration and has concluded it will not make a present commitment to abandon the neighborhood school concept and completely "desegregate" the seven elementary schools by the fall of 1970 as you have requested (Morris, 1969). The plan proposed held that only Black students would be bused in the secondary schools, continuing to place the disproportionate burden on the Black community.

Continuing the incremental suggestions for a solution to the issue, the board proposed yet another plan to satisfy HEW for the 1970-1971 school year. It would close two elementary schools in the Black residential Assigned Attendance Area (AAA), and bus those students to predominately White schools. The remaining five elementary schools in the AAA area would continue to serve students from K-3, and transport students in grades 4-6 to other White schools. This plan approved by the board in a 10-1 vote again was met with outrage by Black community members. Rightown's Urban League president stated in response, "We will protest the savage, racist action of the Board of Education by a boycott. We are not only fighting the Board of Education, but the whole white power structure." (Stringer, 1970). On January 14, 1970, just 234 of 3,720 secondary Black students, and 56 of the 172 Black teachers across the district attended school. Only five days after this effective boycott, HEW made its decision, stating that it planned

to recommend enforcement proceedings against the district. The compliance gymnastics continued throughout the spring semester of 1970. The board suggested that White volunteers be bused to ease the burden on the Black community. This initiative failed miserably, with fewer than 1% of White families volunteering; which was no surprise to those advocating a cross-busing policy (Kennedy, 1970).

Finally, administrative hearings began in 1970 in Kansas City, MO to determine whether Rightown was in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and questioning whether or not the district used federal money to operate programs which were discriminatory. If so, HEW had the power to freeze all federal funds offered to the district until compliance was met. The case garnered significant national attention, as the outcome could influence desegregation guidelines after Supreme Court rulings on de facto segregation. As expected by the Integrationists in the Rightown community, the ruling stated that Rightown was in violation of Title VII and would immediately lose funding from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the National Science Foundation, Community Action Program, the Child Nutrition Act, the Manpower Development and Training Act, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The board was faced with a decision to "throw off the last vestiges of the old order" or to "tell the government to go to hell and keep its money," ultimately deciding to follow the suggestions presented by the LEAP committee and move forward with a final desegregation plan, highlighting the following features:

- The closure of three all Black elementary schools
- Busing Black students into the White elementary schools with the lowest enrollment numbers (approximately 4,000 Black students bused)

- Busing approximately 1,000 white elementary students into formerly all Black elementary schools

- Holding a commitment to an 86%-14% White to Black ratio in all Rightown Public Schools by all transportation means necessary

The final plan hardly satisfied the general public, but the school board was prepared for dissent. The summer of 1971, after all announcements had been made, became known for heated protests, marches and anti-busing ads. Blacks protested the inequality of the desegregation plan while Whites protested the "destruction" of their neighborhood schools. On par with national trends, many White families left the district, opting for growing suburban communities, while others took to law suits against the district to air their discontent with the changes. Three lawsuits calling for the cessation of busing were filed, but all lost (Kennedy, 1970). This decision held national significance, with a 1973 study highlighting Rightown as one of ten large districts (the only one in the Midwest) to successfully complete a desegregation plan and be "right on the mark", along with Providence, Rhode Island; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Niagara Falls, New York; Pontiac, Michigan; and Pasadena, San Francisco, Riverside, Santa Monica, and Berkeley, California (note 32, pg 368). This successful completion of a desegregation plan was understood to be the first step on the road to total integration, but not the end of the era of discrimination and unequal educational opportunity.

Implications of the Final Desegregation Plan

The district finally adopted a cross-busing policy in 1970 that would satisfy HEW, marking the beginning of decades of change at Southeast High. That school remained one of the most affluent demographically in the metro area, with local private schools seen as rivals, above any other Rightown public schools. Southeast remained very large. Nancy Yoder, a district

employee who graduated in 1969 spoke of its students in the years before busing, "When I worked there [1990s], Southeast was very diverse, but when I was a student, we had about seven African American students out of the student body of 2,500. My graduating class, I think we had about 660 students." A district official commented, "I think it started transitioning back in the early 1970s when we had forced integration and Southeast which at that time, I am guessing Southeast at that time was still predominantly White and with forced integration, all of a sudden nonwhite students were appearing at Southeast. That happened in all of our high schools and elementary schools. I think that's when the change probably began at Southeast." As stated in the Rightown Public Schools Compliance Progress Report in June of 1969, the African American enrollment at Southeast High almost tripled from 1968-70. The anticipated enrollment increased from 52 African American students to 144 African American students (Stringer, 1970). With the total population of African American students in the district amounting to 14% in 1969, Southeast's enrollment percentage of 5.8 did not represent racial balance.

The population of students and families served by Southeast High during the 1960s and 1970s were academically motivated and parental involvement in school functions and fund raising was high. Academic rigor and extracurricular involvement were trademarks of the school. "I do know that there was great pride in the Southeast student body and the community, it was kind of "the school" in Rightown. It won championships galore in athletics. It had high academic success with national merits and high ACTs and kids going on scholarships to Ivy League and West Coast, Stanford, Pepperdine. There was a great amount of pride in that." Again, the message that Southeast was the place to be was reinforced by the networks of parents who rallied together to keep Southeast well-funded and supported,

> Whether it's the AAA [assigned attendance area] or right across from the school
> and the trailer houses that were there. Booster club might be 40-50 people for a

football team. Just the football team. They'd be lucky to get 40 people total to come to booster club meeting right now. Parents were involved. Moms weren't working as many do now. Dads were supportive; kids had parent support.

Noting the high status of these parental networks, longtime African American security officer Maxine Johnson described the booster gatherings, "Because when I started out these were the who's who, you know, the Hadids [socially and economically influential Rightown family], all the big money and their booster club meetings were like at some big hotel, it really was. It was just like high dollar!"

When asked about how Southeast responded to busing in the early 1970s, a Southeast graduate compared it to South High, which featured a working-class demographic,

> They were different schools in the cultures that they had. Southeast had some diversity, and certainly that could lead to some issues, but I don't remember anything that was significant. South had some issues that were very well based in bigotry and racism, that culture of South has the hardest working community of blue-collar workers that you can imagine. Southeast was more of a white-collar community. Excelled in the country club sports tennis, golf, swimming. Those are sports Southeast was always good at, goodness gracious. If you weren't an elite golfer you weren't making the team. Now they can't get enough kids to fill a team. Same with tennis, you played year-round. If you made the team, you're really good. That's long gone. And South maybe didn't have some of that. It was a country club mentality for Southeast enough that it permeated and had an impact on some of things that happened in the building.

This suggests that Southeast set itself apart from other Rightown schools. From this student's perspective, its students did not struggle with the overt racialized issues that many other schools did. These experiences were not congruent with the broader media representation, which depicted Rightown as largely divided over the final compliance plan. This quote speaks to an insulated atmosphere at Southeast High during one of the district's most turbulent decades (Furnas, 1970; Kennedy, 1970; Stringer, 1970).

In a counter-narrative offered by Maxine Johnson, it is evident that the atmosphere of Southeast High at the beginning of busing was in fact different than many other schools, but alternatively demonstrated a lack of full acceptance of the new community of students moving in, rather than overt racial violence. Maxine responded that, "When they first started the integration, it wasn't good, to me it wasn't. The kids had to get up and get on the bus. I've always said, here in [Rightown], it's only the African American kids that integrated. They were the ones who rode the bus. I was the bus supervisor at Southeast, so I knew. Our kids were the ones bearing the burden of integration". When asked how the White families and students received the first wave of integration, she responded that "They did because this is what the law said [to] do. I always say the kids [Black kids] didn't feel like it was their school. Over the years, that was the case, this is not *our* school, you know, this is *their* school. It was not good."

Little Harvard Transitions – 1980-1999

When analyzing community perception of the status of Southeast High during the 1970s and 1980s, a general theme emerges: Little Harvard, an elitist school, a "country club mentality", the alpha dogs, Snob Hill, and *The* high school. Community pride and involvement was the hallmark of this Rightown public school, so much so that this perception and pride permeated the classroom and extracurricular activities. At a time of demographic and social change, many remember Southeast weathering them with grace,

> I feel like our whole class was just one big group of friends. Even though you had classifications of people, you would have what we'd call the socials and the Jesus freaks, and the druggies, and whatever. We all hung out together and we were all friends and I think that has to do with just the classrooms we were in. The parties that would happen, everybody would go. So yeah, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it a lot.

Attending in the early 1980s, this Southeast graduate remembered a time when academic rigor continued to be high, and school pride was demonstrated through commitment to sports teams

and other activities. The district worked hard to convey the message that the integration plan had resulted in a successful model for other urban school districts to consider. With percentages of African American students steadily increasing at Southeast, 2% in 1969 up to 16% in 1972, it became clear that school composition had changed (Berry, Grace, & Wesley, 1991). The district's message was expressed clearly in a 1980 newspaper district supplement headline, "School integration success in Rightown" ("School Integration Success", 1980).

Through consistently outlining the desegregation plan to the community, Rightown Public Schools maintained that shifts in the way the city educated its children were worth the work. The article referenced above boasted that "Although the obvious goal of Rightown's desegregation program has been to try to assure equal educational opportunity for minority students, the program has provided benefits for both minority and majority students. Students now acquire a broader range of social contacts through their school experience and new friendships across racial lines are not uncommon" ("School Integration Success, 1980). According to many individuals interviewed, this opportunity for cross-racial friendships happened more often in structured school circumstances such as sports and clubs than organically in classrooms and hallways. The same Southeast graduate who reported that everyone hung out together also noted another facet of daily life at Southeast, "Another memory I have, there was a section of the old school where, and I don't want to sound racist, but this was back then where all the black people stood. That was like their area where they all congregated and I would have to walk by there to go to choir." Although these memories recollected a series of cordial interactions, and she even points to many of her Black classmates as friends, this statement does not paint a picture of the social integration touted by the school district's claims of full social integration.

After being bused into Southeast, graduating in 1986, completing a college degree, and

returning as principal some years later, Henry Bridge recalled his experience as a high achieving

Black student during the mid-1980s,

> I personally, being African American, I was kind of view differently amongst my peers because I was, I was smart if you will. I was getting tested gifted in the third grade, so I went to alternative schools until I went to Southeast. And I feel like personally I've benefited at Southeast at a time where, I would say some African Americans struggled because we were just viewed differently.

Henry, who was a very social athlete, had many White friends. He referenced understanding that

his experiences were a bit skewed in comparison to many other students bused in due to his

social connections through sports and academics. The understanding that he was viewed

differently was most pronounced outside of school when Henry stepped into the social

environment of one of his wealthy White classmates. This experience stood out in his memory as

a turning point when he was no longer viewed as "cute and cuddly Henry", but now a young

Black man,

> I remember going over to the Fender's house, for example, and Nick and I were good friends. They had a pool, you know what I mean? Wow. They didn't have to go to a public pool. And I remember going to the door and his dad looks through the door. He looks at me, looks me up and down. He goes, Nick, it must be for you. Nick comes to the door or whatever, but he wouldn't even let me in the house.

> I remember when the transition occurred, when it was cool for us to run around and hang out. I don't want to say I ever lost my Blackness or my identity, but it was, I distinctly remember when our relationship status changed. I'm dating outside of my race. You know what I mean? When it just wasn't cool, even though we all went to school together. You're cute little cuddly Henry, and then at some point in there I was African American or Black Henry, but it was about eighth grade, eighth or ninth grade.

With Southeast High having two culturally different feeder junior high schools, many

noted that these schools were proxies for social status. This was also layered with the new busing

patterns which included an increased number of students entering Southeast from the AAA.

These status designations have remained, even into 30-year class reunions,

> Several of us went to Norris Junior High as a group and then we all moved over to
> Southeast and then we combined with the Roosevelt kids. I know you're talking
> about Southeast, but Roosevelt was a feeder. Roosevelt was probably 80 percent
> White and very affluent as a junior high. Norris was the more, the poorer of the
> two and Norris and Roosevelt fed into Southeast. So, if you were a Roosevelt kid,
> *yeah*, you know what I mean? You were the part of that, I'm going to say elitist,
> you know what I mean? If you were a Norris kid, we were reviewed differently
> and we've talked about that still. Even at our 10-year, 20-year, 30-year reunion of
> how we've had some of these discussions.

These origins matter, especially considering the contentious proposed integration plan at

Roosevelt that was ultimately voted down. Ten years later, the status of this Junior High

continued to saturate the experiences of students at Southeast High.

In a neighboring state, supporters of neighborhood schools saw a large win over city-

wide busing in the early 1990s. The local *Rightown Enquirer* published an article in January of

1991 that outlined a 5-3 U.S. Supreme Court case that determined that the local school board of a

comparable city's public school district had successfully eliminated "vestiges of past

discrimination to the extent practicable" allowing this district to eliminate busing programs in

favor of local control of public schools (Epstein, 1991). This case set a national precedent that

worried many supporters of the school desegregation plan adopted by Rightown Public Schools

in 1970. The article communicated to the community that since the Rightown school

desegregation plan was technically not ordered by a court, it was not directly affected by the

ruling. The school district did not see an elimination of this plan for decades to come.

District Leadership and Policy Changes

During this period, Rightown Public School district adjusted to many changes under the new leadership of Dr. Roger Dougherty. Dr. Dougherty stepped into this position in 1987 and was excited to implement some drastic changes across the district. Many of these changes were met with resistance from teachers; much of the resistance came from teachers at Southeast. The teaching staff at Southeast was "top notch" and quite politically savvy and according to Dennis Aust, a Southeast alumni and 20 year English teacher,

> As a researcher, he came in saying, "okay, we're going to have criterion based tests so we won't have to measure ourselves by the standardized tests of everybody else." So they tried to do that, but you know how hard it is to write tests and how the standardized tests are precise and they need test reviews. It was just a slop validation process, just slop.

> Then that also meant that he wanted the curriculum toned down. You said we're not going to have as many honors classes or we're going to try to get minorities in the honors classes, which is a good idea. And which teachers should have really embraced that a little bit, but oh, it was just like, "well, what are we going to do? Then they're just going to fail? We would all look bad?" And that was a kind of hectic the first couple of years.

These policy changes continued to be met with resistance from teachers as the demographics of Rightown Public Schools shifted.

> For instance, one of the heads of the social studies department, a great lecturer and, my first son and nephew were in his class. They enjoyed it, but they said, and this is like 1989, but as they look around, they would see people just putting their heads down. And so he'd be lecturing the class of 25 and there'll be five people with their heads up. When he gets evaluated, same thing. So he's pissed because his evaluations go down. But he wouldn't change. And he became one of the really defiant ones.

Another policy change in the late 1980s was associated with heightened concerns surrounding student behavior and marked the beginning of an era of increased media scrutiny surrounding

public schooling in Rightown. The 1988-1989 school year was the first year that a large

redistricting plan, also associated with the move of 6th graders into junior highs and 9th graders

into high schools was implemented across district. Teachers, students, and school staff had

grown accustomed to high school beginning in 10th grade, but with this new plan, students from

the neighboring campus of Norris Junior High and the new high-status Junior High, Roosevelt,

would transition into Southeast their 9th grade year. Southeast was still very much a focal point

for the students coming out of Norris Junior High as an important stepping stone in their

educational journey, as noted by a 1991 Southeast graduate,

> At that time [Southeast] was a middle to upper class school and they did some
> redistricting and more students from lower income areas started to move in during
> that time because at the 1988 they went from having what they called middle
> school and it went from seventh, eighth and ninth to six, seven, eight. So when I
> went when I was a ninth grader in junior high school in 1988 I moved to
> Southeast, but the next year eighth graders moved on and got to go to high school.
> So that was the transition year from freshman joining high school here and it was
> very, very different because in junior high school when you went to high school,
> you felt like you were grown to the junior high school students.

> So that was a big change because you had to add more administrators and
> teachers. Um, sports had to change because we had, um, varsity, junior varsity
> and sophomore, but now you had varsity, JV, sophomore and freshmen. And so,
> that was a change. You need to add more. Whether academic or it was for extra
> curricular activities, it all changed because you had to add on. So that was a huge
> change.

Along with the added necessity of personnel, resources, and extracurricular activities, student

behavior began to challenge the school system. This adjustment period became very public

through a series of newspaper articles that summarized spikes in instances of student behavioral

problems resulting in suspensions.

Figure 3 on page 72 portrays the dramatic increase in student behavioral incidents from

1988-1989 school year to the following year. The article continued to discuss the nature of these

incidents and pointed to surprise felt by school officials as a result of this increase. The Youth

Services Director for the district mentioned that the district as a whole was "stumped", and an

equal distribution of incidents across all secondary schools, eliminated the possibility of a school

specific crack down on behavior (Sevetson, 1990). Although the largest jump occurred in the 6th

grade population, these numbers were cause for concern across all schools. The local newspapers

were inundated with articles that referenced district officials' efforts to address student behavior.

A local newspaper article cited a "basic breakdown in respect for authority at all levels, local

principal of South High set her sights to finding solutions to help the increasing number of

"troubled students" cope with outside circumstances resulting in negative behaviors at school".

Countering this narrative, the superintendent is quoted reassuring the public that "schools are

safe". Many quotes in the article demonstrate an air of distrust in leadership coming directly

from building employees. The chair of the social studies department at Southeast was quoted

stating that schools "have not developed an appropriate response to some of the changes in

society" (Sevetson, 1990). These statistics and further school staff validation of the problem

continued to be of concern to the public and contributed to an increase in public apprehension of

the ability of RPS to ensure a safe and effective public education for all. The following is an

excerpt of an interview that commented on attitudes of Southeast staff during this time of

transition, specifically the changes in status,

> The ninth graders didn't get treated very well. They kind of acted a little childish
> there. The teachers didn't like it at all. A lot of them really had forgotten why they
> wanted to be teachers in the first place. I think it was like, "don't mess with us we
> have a great thing going here! We were the Harvard of Wichita for a long time
> and now, now we're just lower income housing like everybody else", but that was
> the demographic of the neighborhood. There were fewer and fewer of the affluent
> people come in sending their children to Southeast, whereas there might be four
> or five honors Sophomore classes, now there were only two. And there were of
> course, still sharp kids, but it was homogenized before and now they were just
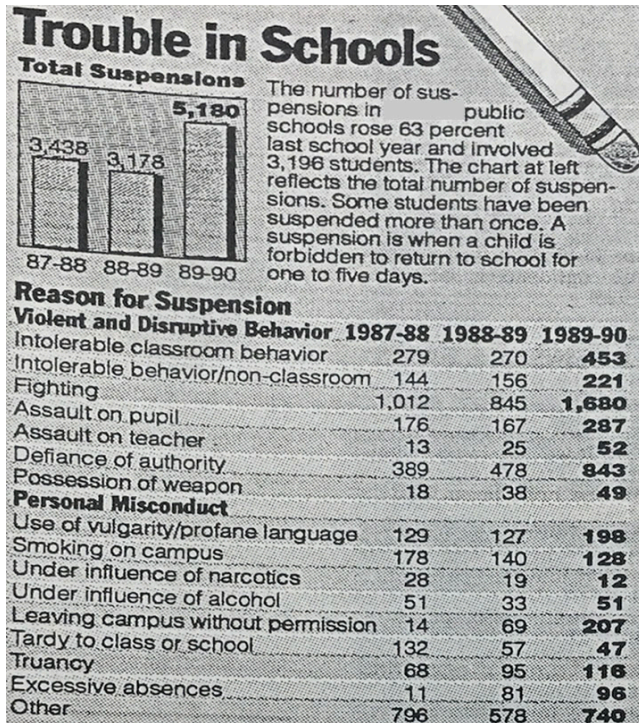> like everybody else.

It is important to also note the implementation of new program supported by the district at this time. East High was the closest neighboring high school to Southeast, and many affluent neighborhoods fell equidistant to both schools. East High started an international baccalaureate (IB) program in the year 1990. This program allowed students from anywhere in the district to transfer to attend East High. The IB program gained recognition and steam throughout the 1990s, and resulted in the majority of the within district transfers out of Southeast.

The jump in the number of suspensions was also accompanied with an overall feeling of uneasiness regarding school safety moving into the 1990s. Community comments in media outlets that referenced the increase of gang presence in schools were used to speculate about the increases in violence seen during the 1989-1990 school year (Sevetson, 1990). These fears were not entirely unfounded, but the issue of gangs in Rightown schools was much more convoluted than many could understand. Although there was indeed an increase in gang presence throughout the Rightown Public School district, much of the rhetoric in the media was misled. Students who were documented as having a gang affiliation were labeled by the school as "gang members" throughout their time as a student. Simple conflicts pertaining to normal high school problems such as gossip, relationship issues or family squabbles would be reported as a "gang fight" due to the label placed on the student. One Southeast alumni recalls the police being called to investigate a "gang fight", which was actually just a fight between two girls over a boy and posed no threat to the rest of the student body. These calls had the capacity to be documented by media due to their public nature and blown out of proportion, increasing the fear surrounding Southeast and other Rightown schools. Families who did not live near the school or have any

first-hand experience with gang violence were left relying solely on media reports of the problem.

The last decade of the twentieth century ushered in a new understanding of societal issues facing schools. "We're at the mercy of a lot of things happening in the community that come into

Figure 3. *Increase in Suspensions*

Trouble in Schools

Total Suspensions

The number of suspensions in _____ public schools rose 63 percent last school year and involved 3,196 students. The chart at left reflects the total number of suspensions. Some students have been suspended more than once. A suspension is when a child is forbidden to return to school for one to five days.

Reason for Suspension	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Violent and Disruptive Behavior			
Intolerable classroom behavior	279	270	453
Intolerable behavior/non-classroom	144	156	221
Fighting	1,012	845	1,680
Assault on pupil	176	167	287
Assault on teacher	13	25	52
Defiance of authority	389	478	843
Possession of weapon	18	38	49
Personal Misconduct			
Use of vulgarity/profane language	129	127	198
Smoking on campus	178	140	128
Under influence of narcotics	28	19	12
Under influence of alcohol	51	33	51
Leaving campus without permission	14	69	207
Tardy to class or school	132	57	47
Truancy	68	95	116
Excessive absences	11	81	96
Other	796	578	740

your school" stated the Southeast Principal when asked to comment about community fears of gang issues infiltrating the school (Sevetson, 1990). Teachers and staff interviewed noted a significant shift that happened during this decade regarding student safety and community perception of the school. When asked to use one word to describe Southeast High School in the 1990s, this alumni and longstanding teacher simply used the word, "gangs". She continued to describe hall duty during some of her earlier years teaching at Southeast,

> We had more diversity come in. We had more gangs. I can remember this particular year I was on hall duty and right around the corner, a group of boys were chanting some things about the Crips and the Bloods, so it was a little bit more scary. Then they wore things that represented their gangs. Then we kind of

caught on to some of that and then they had wash rags that would affiliate them with a certain gang. They kind of versed us on some of that, but I don't think all of us knew exactly what to do yet to understand the culture.

Many teachers had either taught at Southeast for a number of years, graduated from Southeast, and possibly still lived in the neighborhood that saw these dramatic shifts during the late 1980s and 1990s. The increase in violence and poverty was often attributed to a breakdown in parental supervision and discipline at home as it compared to the preceding decades,

> If I got in trouble at school, I was in more trouble at home. Now the kids get in trouble at school, and the parents are pissed at you as the administrator, or the teacher. But what happens to the kid? Hold your kids accountable, please! That doesn't happen like it used to happen. Part of the issue is parenting.

These ideas in turn influenced many parents' decisions regarding the placement of their children at Southeast, or at an alternative option through the district. Rightown Public Schools offered many alternative choices that still kept students within the RPS system, including Northeast Magnet and East High's IB program. One parent interviewed, being confident in his sons' abilities to choose good peer groups and watch out for one another chose to send them to Southeast, knowing that there remained the potential for violence. Alternatively, he and his wife chose to send their youngest daughter to Northeast Magnet due in part to there not being anyone to "look after her" if she went to Southeast.

Sentiments like the one seen above were increasingly common and demonstrative of shifts in public opinion regarding the safety of schools in Rightown. Changes in community perception were accompanied by societal changes happening in the areas directly surrounding Southeast High. Maps 1 and 2 demonstrate a dramatic change in the levels of cultural capital within a 10 year period. Map 2 shows the percentages of adults 25 and older who hold a college degree (the school is marked by the black marker), which functions as a proxy of socioeconomic

status and elevated levels of cultural capital (Coleman, 1988). In 1980, adults 25 and older who

held a college degree in the census tracts directly surrounding Southeast were 13% and 33%.

Map 1. *College Completion in Adults 25 Years and Older - 1980*
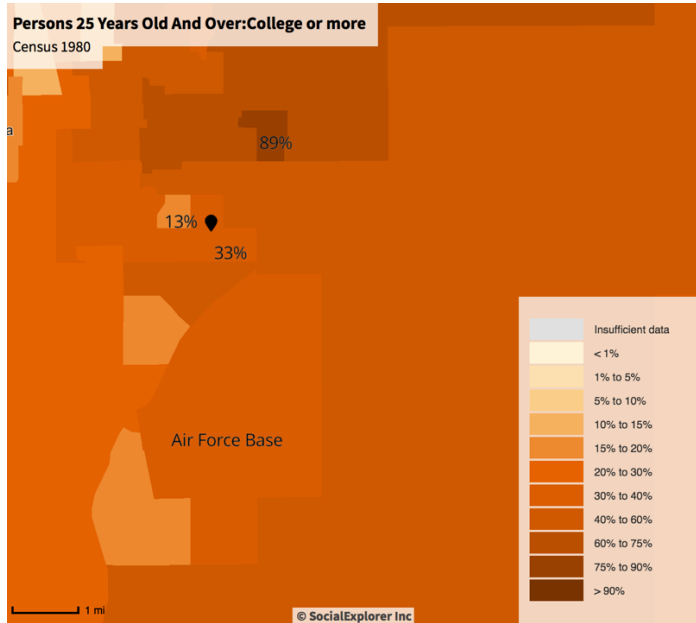
Map 2. *College Completion in Adults 25 Years and Older – 1990*
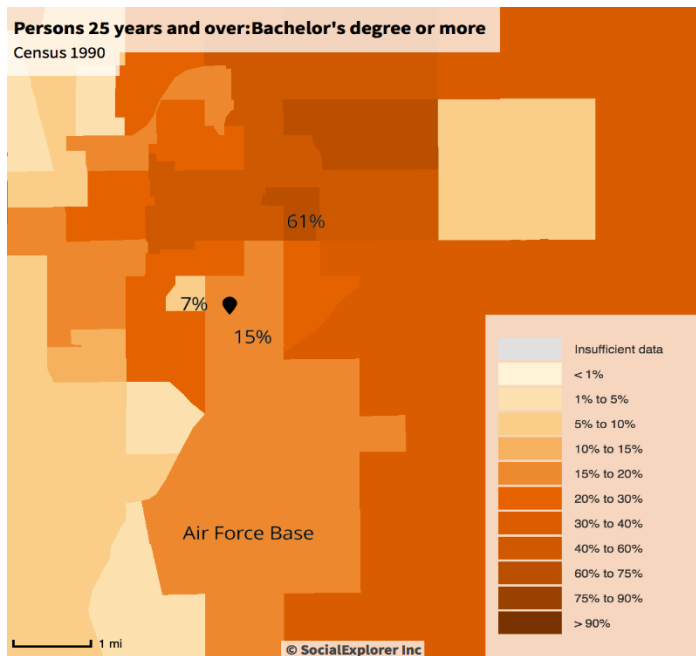
These percentages dropped by nearly 50% each by the following census date of 1990 to 7% and 15%. These trends accompanied the increasingly negative rhetoric that surrounded the school as seen above. As this story continued to progress into the 21st century, the process of these demographic shifts continued to fuel conversations about what types of families and students called Southeast home and what it meant to be a good school.

Conclusion

The mid-twentieth century in Rightown, KS, just as in the majority of mid-to large-sized US cities was marked by rapid social and demographic shifts. In Rightown, the majority of these shifts happened in the southeast quadrant of the city, pushing city planners and the school board to consider a large bond and a new high school. This area of Rightown grew in large part to a $37 million ($330 million in current US dollars) investment by the US government in the construction of an air force base. Growth in student enrollment during the 1950s signaled an increased need for investment in public schools, and as a result, Southeast High School opened in 1957 with an enrollment of 1,578 10th-12th grade students. This area of town was home to a majority white, middle-to-upper class populous and the school's profile reflected this status reality during the first few decades.

The racial composition of the school reflected the housing patterns, which were segregated due to restrictive covenants and racist real estate practices. During the latter part of the 1960s, the Black community in Rightown fought tirelessly toward the goal of more equitable education for their children. In 1966, over 80% of Black parents at one of the city's middle schools petitioned for access to the newest middle school, which was a feeder to Southeast High. This petition sought to ease the overcrowded classrooms in the neighborhood schools in the Black community in the northern sector of the city. Continuing the battle for educational equity

in Rightown, the NAACP filed a complaint with the federal Health, Education and Welfare office citing the same problem seen a few years prior; segregated and overcrowded schools. In 1969, the district chose not to comply with the HEW request to bus students from the White community and the Black community. This choice brought intrusive scrutiny from HEW and finally administrative hearings at the federal level, which resulted in the district adopting a comprehensive desegregation plan. This plan affected the composition of all Rightown schools, and the composition and status of Southeast as "The Country Club School" began to shift.

The community surrounding Southeast High saw shifts in racial and socioeconomic composition during the 1980s and 1990s. The declining levels of educational capital in the neighborhood surrounding the school are most notable and telling when analyzing the declining status of the school. This social experience coupled with two important district policy changes influenced how the Rightown community saw Southeast High. The first of these policy changes moved 9th graders from middle school into the high schools across the city and caused tension among teachers and staff in Southeast. The second policy of adding an International Bacceloreate program to East High School shaped the academic landscape in Rightown Public Schools for years to come. The opening of multiple private options in the Southeast catchment area, increased flight to the adjacent suburb, and these policy changes contributed to the decline of status of The Country Club School.

Chapter 4: Rightown Southeast High School: 2000-2015

Rightown Southeast High was the epitome of a neighborhood school during the first part of the 21st century. Before-school routines looked much like they had for decades; students could be seen walking from their homes in the surrounding neighborhood and multi-family housing areas just east. Students would stand outside the school right up until the warning bell rang, talking and laughing. During open lunch and after school, many of the students could be found at one of the numerous restaurants in the area. Pizza Hut, a national restaurant chain founded in Rightown, was a popular lunch spot for students during the early 2000s. Managers knew students by name and students felt safe and welcome. Just a few blocks to the west of the school was a local convenience store where students spent time. Rightown Southeast High School was a fixture in the neighborhood, bringing commerce and energy with it. The school's assignment area continued to be the largest in the city, drawing students from some of the wealthiest neighborhoods, as well as some of the poorest. This made Southeast one of the most diverse high schools in the city.

The Southeast High School building was well-known in the community, and the realities of shifts in the socioeconomic and racial composition of the neighborhoods directly surrounding the school shaped the Rightown imagination about what happened on a typical day. Only those who attended and worked in the school fully understood the context, and newspaper articles elevating stories of danger and delinquence played a large role in the creation of the reputation surrounding the school. District data indicate stable, and even increasing graduation rates with

simultaneously increasing budgetary strain which pointed to a hard working staff within the

shifting social context. This increasing budgetary strain came in the form of a dramatic jump in

the numbers of English Language Learners (ELL) requiring extra services as well as a steady

increase in the percentage of the student body who were economically disadvantaged. In 2011,

the district was faced with large budget cuts, and in the wake of this increasing demand, teachers

and building staff were pushed to find creative ways to combat racial and socioeconomic bias

and the upshot of public-school alternative options that would challenge community perception

and ultimately their success as educators.

Social Shifts in a Previously Stable Neighborhood

The neighborhood surrounding Southeast High underwent many changes from the

opening of the building in 1957 until the turn of the century. During the 1950s and 1960s, the

surrounding area was home to young families, many of them military who took advantage of

new and affordable housing options. Homes in this community began to fall into ill repair during

the 1990s and early 2000s. Throughout interviews, when asked about the "old" school building,

most people referenced the neighborhood, instead of the building itself. Many teachers enjoyed

the "family feel" of the school and carried this sense of cohesion with them in and out of the

school building. Southeast had a very strong alumni base. Many teachers were also graduates of

the school and had walked the same path to school decades before. Steve West, currently a state-

level education administrator, attended Southeast during the 1980s, then taught mathematics,

coached, and ended his time at the school as Athletic Director. Steve saw dramatic changes in the surrounding neighborhood during this time. "The community changed from the older more mature population, and you can tell driving down the street. This was kind of like a nice quiet neighborhood. It became not so nice and quiet. Houses weren't kept up, yards weren't kept up. There were more cars in the yards than on the street." As the cross-country coach, Steve ran with his athletes through the neighborhoods the entire time he was there. During his interview, he was hesitant to say whether this was still a safe activity during the latter part of the first decade of the century.

The identity of Southeast High was tightly bound to the physical appearance the surrounding neighborhoods, and as this area changed, so did the perceptions of the school. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000, the poverty level within a 1-mile radius of the school building was 27%. In the same time-frame, about one third of all households in this area had children under the age of 18. The neighborhood had transitioned from what many described as an "aging population" to one where only 21% of households included a family member over the age of 65. Median household income for this area was $35,331 and the median home value was $79,381. Opening up the search radius from 1-mile to 3-miles, a dramatic jump in average household income from $46,963 to $61,822 was revealed. This is indicative of the varying income levels of the families who's students attended Southeast High. The racial profile of the

area also shifted throughout the course of the second half of the 20th century. Maps 3 and 4

exhibit the percentage of the population that was White in the 1970 census, and the year 2000.

For the census tract including Southeast High, the percentages of the population which was

White only dropped from 97% in 1970, to 85% in 1980, to 75% in 1990, and finally to 59% the

year 2000. The 2023 census projection for this area continues to fall to 55% White only. While

looking at educational attainment through US Census Data (2010), there was a trend of declining

levels of cultural capital from 2000 to 2010. In 2000, 16% of the population 25+ held a

bachelor's degree or higher, and in 2010, that percentage fell to 9%. All of these indicators help

to understand the overall profile of the community, and how perception changed dramatically

during this time.

When alumni and community members were asked about school culture during this time

period, the story of the school depended upon the experiences of the party being asked. Lisa

Park, a female teacher who did not attend Southeast felt as though there was a dramatic shift

around the year 2000, just prior to her beginning work there, "It used to have the perception that

that's where the rich families went. And then suddenly it was the opposite. When people heard

that I worked there, they would tell me to just be safe." During the same decade, there were

contrasting opinions held by many students. Connor Aust graduated from Southeast in 2004. He

was a socially active, academically high-achieving student, and when asked to recount his years

as a student, he looked at his experiences at Southeast with much less reservation. Connor was

aware of the rhetoric surrounding his alma mater, but looking back, he did not see the same

concerns, "I never felt unsafe at all. I never saw a weapon and I never got threatened."

Sociodemographic changes were an obvious part of the history of the school, but the shifts in

racial composition were met with varying levels of acceptance.

"Those Apartments"

Kate Johnson, a parent of students who attend a local private high school pointed to the

surrounding neighborhood as a reason for not sending her children to Southeast,

> Because you're in a poor neighborhood like that, you don't have parents
> contributing to the school; you don't have anybody going, 'let's make this program
> bigger and better.' And, she [her daughter] was a gifted student and I didn't see
> any of that happening there and I wanted her to grow as a person, so I needed for
> her to be involved in that kind of stuff and with people who actually care. I'm not
> saying the teachers don't care, but there's only so much a teacher can do.

Perceptions such as these were typical in interviews with parents and community members who

did not spend much time in the area. Interview data suggest that even those who did spend time

in and around the school repeatedly referenced the high-rise apartment building directly to the

west of the school as "an eye sore" and as a symbol of the changes that happened during this

time. These apartments had aged and been left without significant maintenance and upgrades for

years. The complex became home to low-income families, many who had recently moved to the

US. This also was a racially diverse group of tennants, and as a result, the building became a

physical manifestation of the socioeconomic decline referenced by people outside of the

community.

Map 3. *Total Population: White Alone 1970*
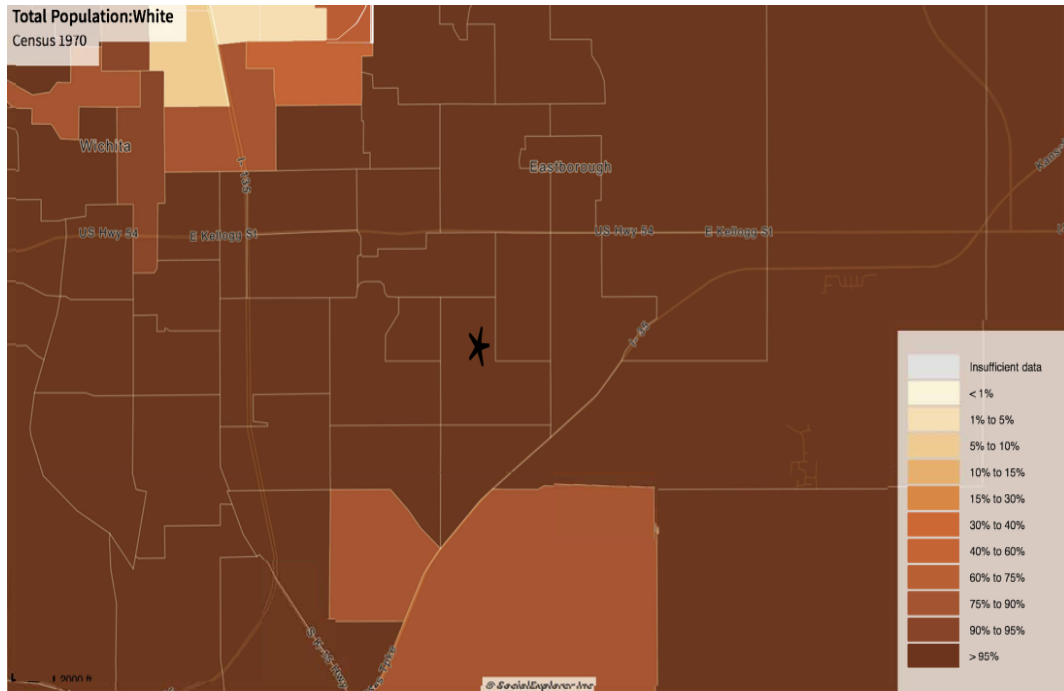
Map 4. *Total Population: White Alone 2000*
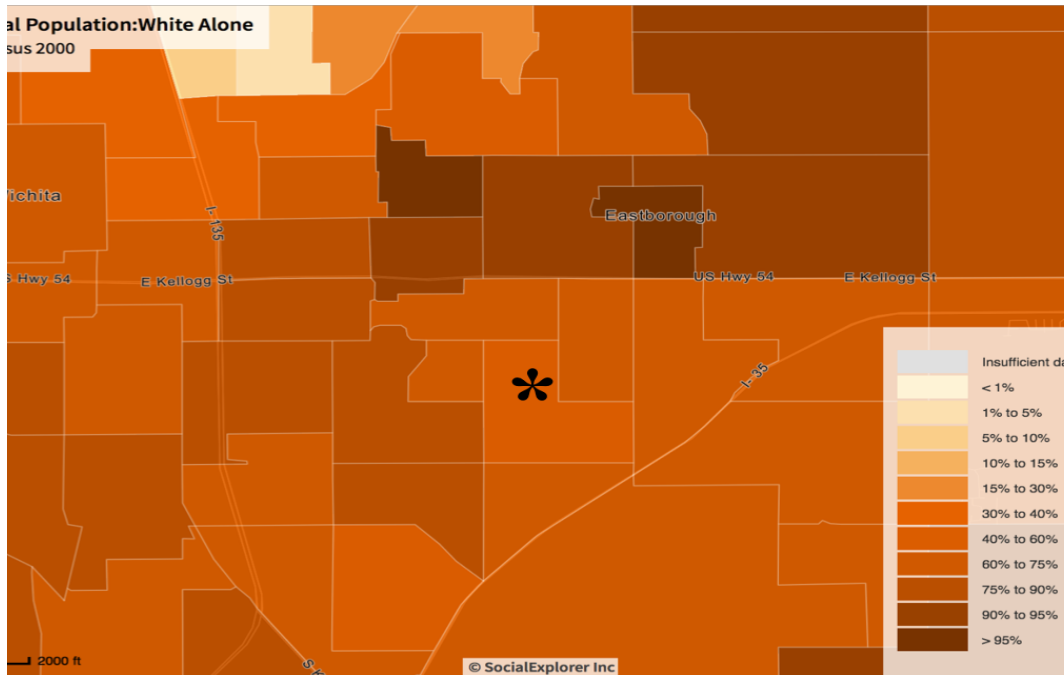
Falling Perceptions of Academic Rigor

Perceptions of community members that point to declining levels of academic rigor and opportunity along with the deteriorating status of the neighborhood were a recurring theme in interviews. During this time, the rhetoric surrounding the school became that of low academic rigor and loss of opportunities for students. Community perceptions, coupled with internal struggles between building administration and district leadership to continue offering an extensive advanced placement curriculum resulted in a dramatic loss of enrollment to other schools, namely East High, which offered an International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Steve West, alumni, teacher and finally district and state level administrator saw changes in the profile of students enrolled at Southeast late in his career as a teacher and coach. The concept of "brain drain" was understood by school administrators as the loss of students from families who hold middle to high levels of income and educational attainment. This loss happened in a multitude of ways, but in Rightown in the early 2000s, it primarily took the form of within-district transfers. Rightown East offered an International Baccalaureate (IB) program and was the closest school geographically to Southeast. Beginning in the late 1990s, the Southeast catchment area also held two new private school options, in addition to the respected Catholic Highland High School, and tuition-based school, Escolar Academy. Steve West watched this process unfold from a district administration position:

> The brain drain to me is all of the programs and schools that pull from the Southeast attendance area. The Southeast attendance area contains Escolar, the Independent school, Holy Cross Academy is right next door, Highland is in the

83

attendance area. The IB program started at East and pulled kids from Southeast for this elite academic experience. Wright Middle School opened its pre-IB program and pulled kids from Norris and Roosevelt Middle Schools to Wright and now they're in the East High feeder pattern. So, all of those programs are significant; all are totally and within or are contiguous to the Southeast area. So with Holy Cross Academy, a lot of them come from the suburbs, but a lot of them also come from Southeast attendance area. So those programs pulled a lot of the family units that supported those kinds of programs. IB has probably had the most negative impact because it's within the public-school system, it's an alternative to Southeast. It provides kids opportunities that kids wanted to have at Southeast.

The district was engaged in a battle of perception, and declining resources, exasperated by a state education funding crisis. The implementation of the IB program worked well to retain high performing students within the district, but had a negative effect on the distribution of high performing students across the district. Northeast Magnet became a symbol of district level decisions during the late-1980s to implement magnet programs to retain students in the face of increasing private options. During the early 2000s, between the IB program and the established Northeast Magnet, Southeast lost large numbers of students.

The reality within Southeast High was also noticed by students engaged in extra-curricular academic activities, especially when comparing their opportunities to other schools. Connor Aust was an excellent debater, who went on to win a national championship in collegiate debate, and he noted that the resources at Southeast left high achievers such as himself wanting, "I remember my sister [student at East High], even through her senior year, being really enthralled in all of these kind of classes that just weren't offered at Southeast; high level AP classes. Like multiple sequences of AP classes such as Calc AB and BC. We just had AB. And

then she had a "theory of knowledge" class. We didn't even have an AP government class, but they did it at East. I think it hindered some of the college hours that I could've gotten on site."

Steve West understood that the declining AP course offerings were an issue that would continue to have ramifications for the student body for years to come. As a result of this knowledge, during his tenure as a teacher at Southeast, he worked to resolve this problem, to no avail, "Later in my career, I pushed for, and was never able to get done, to have something to combat the brain drain. That's the best way that I can describe what has happened to Southeast and has had the most impact." Steve, along with a few other teachers, fought to initiate an AP academy, with hopes of drawing in the enrollment base that they had begun losing during the early 2000s.

> We would offer all of the AP classes, and work within a feeder pattern to have kids at Roosevelt and Norris in this accelerated pre-college track. Those things took resources that we just didn't have. I remember for instance a family we went to church with for 10 years, their kids were All-American athletes in one of those country club sports coming to interview me asking me 'What can you do for my kid academically? What about the programs that they're going be in?' Then they went private school. That was hard. That would never ever happen previously.

Although the numbers of AP courses offered were declining, many students during this time gained important social skills that came from being part of a socioeconomically and racially diverse student body. Apart from a diverse set of peers, Connor Aust also credited his internal drive and motivation to the need to be self-guided during his time at Southeast. As a gifted student, the curriculum offered was not quite as challenging as it would have been at a different

school, but this forced Connor to seek out opportunities outside of the classroom to grow

academically. This learned initiative served Connor as he moved into college, and eventually

graduate work. Students interviewed who attended Southeast during this time period noted a

group of passionate teachers, as well as those who struggled to relate to the changing racial and

socioeconomic composition of the school.

Actual Academic Performance

Although Southeast offered a lower level of rigorous curriculum than surrounding

schools, the academic performance of the school measured by graduation rates stayed stable and

actually improved during this period. In 2006, the high school graduation rate of Southeast High

was 73%, very close to the district goal of 75% (Kansas Department of Education (KSDE),

Report Card 2006-2007). These graduation rates hovered around the same percentage throughout

the following decade. Southeast's school-wide reading and math proficiency, on the other hand

increased substantially during this time period, but these numbers were never referenced by

interviewees, and rarely made the newspapers. In 2006, 52% of students at Southeast were

proficient or above in reading, and only 43% in math (KSDE, Report Card 2006-2007).

However, while looking at the proficiency gains by racial group, a different story surfaced. Table

2 demonstrates that the students making large gains during this time were not the students with

the lowest levels of achievement to start. Reading improvements were seen across all

demographic groups, with an impressive 35% increase in proficiency for English Language

Learners (ELLs). This was a success for the school because of the dramatic increase in ELLs

during this time period. Total enrollment of ELLs jumped from 7% in 2006 to 38% in 2013. The

more concerning statistic was the lack of improvement in math proficiency for Black students

compared to all other groups. Where Hispanic students gained 19% in the number proficient in

Math, the school only saw a 3% increase in Black students at or above proficiency levels.

Table 2. *Math and Reading Proficiency, 2006-2013*
Source: Kansas Department of Education, Data Central, K-12 Reports

Student Group	2006 Reading	2013 Reading	2006 Math	2013 Math
Free & Reduced Lunch	42%	67%	38%	48%
English Language Learners	15%	51%	-	-
African-American	37%	59%	31%	34%
Hispanic	33%	65%	26%	44%
White	70%	89%	59%	75%
Asian	62%	78%	54%	73%

New Leadership: Focus on relatability and diversity

With the hire of a new principal in 2004, Southeast continued a longstanding tradition of

hiring administrators who were alums. The difference between this hire and the others, was that

Henry Bridges grew up in the AAA area and was bused into Southeast during the 1980s. Henry

brought an entirely different set of life experiences than had the previous administrators, and

therefore also brought a different perspective to school leadership at this time. "I grew up in

these streets, so I know a lot of gang members. And I think that was an advantage for me as

principal there because I know the neighborhoods. I knew a lot of the parents of the kids. I knew

the gang affiliations, so I knew how to communicate." This focus on relating to students and

their life experiences was in stark contrast with the continuing struggles of the teaching staff who

had been there for years preceding the demographic changes. Beginning as a principal, Henry

faced the realities of the increasing socioeconomic need of his student body. During the late

1990s, many traditions that had been so important to the staff and students had ceased to exist.

Regaining a sense of shared community was a goal of Henry's and he worked hard to bring these

traditions back to Southeast:

> I really tried to push traditions. Some of the traditions that I think were lost
> between when I left as a student and came back as principal. We didn't do the
> spirit stick anymore. We didn't have hall marches and things anymore. We used to
> have hall marches when kids went off the state. That was our way of sending
> them off to state. I brought a lot of the traditions back, but I went there so I knew
> those things. So, under a different principal, they may or may not know those
> things. And I think the kids responded to that very well.

Elevated student need was met by teachers' varying degrees of understanding and

willingness to evolve along with the shifts in racial composition of the school. The principal who

preceded Henry was also an alumnus who graduated in 1969. When asked about the teaching

staff, she noted:

> Southeast was still, in my opinion, having a hangover from being the highly
> academic rigorous school from when I went there. There were still teachers who

had been there for a long time, and I don't think they had accepted the reality that we went through. How do you accept a more diverse population? You have to be very strategic and you have to work very hard at bringing your staff along. And I don't think they did that at any time for Southeast High School. When I was there, I could still see in the faculty a real gate keeper mentality as far as who went into honors classes. They had certain kids they wanted in there and certain kids they didn't want in there. So, I began to work on that. Just because of the color of students' skin, that doesn't mean they can't be in an honors class.

Opinions of an outspoken group of teachers described a Southeast where negative student behavior had escalated to dangerous levels, and these opinions were what informed education reporting and community perception. The following is a quote from a teacher had been at Southeast for decades, and is an example of the ideas noted above,

Over the years as society has changed, behavior and expectations have changed. To the point where, now, I'm not throwing anybody under the bus, but now there's really no consequences for anything. Yeah, if you get in a fight, you're going to get sent home. But the other behaviors which are a distraction and cause issues and problems, there's really no consequences. As long as you don't fight, you can act however you want.

As the principal, Henry saw that the root of conflicts between staff and students were grounded in the school's rapidly changing socioeconomic and racial composition:

You have a set of folks that had been there for a while, and they didn't change their views. What you're presented with when you're looking at the students is different than what they're used to and they were wishing Southeast was what it was [in the decades prior] and it just wasn't anymore. I think that is part of the issue. I think also is that culturally, folks my age and older don't relate with kids of today.

During his tenure as principal, the school did face a few gang related crises, such as lock-downs and even a shooting. It was imperative to Henry, that whether a student was involved in gang activity or not, that they felt as though Southeast was safe and was their home. Henry remembered many instances where a student would get into a gang related fight off school

grounds, but immediately come back to school. To Henry, this was a great success in battling

external forces placed upon many of his students.

The United States Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) 2015

survey of days of school missed due to out of school suspension speaks to the point that Henry

referenced above. Table 3 demonstrates that of the four schools with the highest number of days

missed, Southeast ranks number three, with 1276 total days missed. Student enrollment and

shifts in socioeconomic and racial composition across these four Rightown Public Schools are

similar, but the racial composition of students being suspended was an aspect of the data that

stood out. Across North, West and East Highs, these data align with the overall racial

composition of their total enrollment, demonstrating a relatively equitable suspension track

record. Most concerning is the disproportionality of Black student suspensions at Southeast

High, accounting for 60% of all days missed due to suspension. At East High, this number is

only 37%, at North High, it is 18% and at West High it is 29%, which aligned much more closely

with the school's overall racial composition. Connor, who graduated in 2004, remembers

occasions that this racially differentiated discipline was obvious to him and his fellow White

classmates:

> This is another advantage that, at the time I was very thankful for but in retrospect kind of makes me cringe. Since I was academically advanced, I wasn't really subjected to discipline and I was able to kind of walk the halls or leave campus when I needed to. I pretty vividly remember walking, or like sneaking out of class with some black kids and them being stopped and me not being stopped. I'd be like, 'Sorry guys! I'll get you some Wendy's!' So, at the time I was like, 'What a great privilege!' And now looking back it's like, that's not a good feeling to have.

Spencer, another student who graduated in 2007 noted that the instances of fights and physical conflict in the school never actually amounted to the levels referenced in daily conversations. "There were always kids who were talking about fights but I never really saw much of anything, even though I know they were going on." Spencer credited this to his different experience as an academically advanced student. His experience amounted to almost an entirely "different school" as he compares his experience at Southeast in AP and honors classes with the experiences had at the neighboring private schools, "And with my tunnel vision I did see a different side of the school in my honors and AP classes. It was more like Highland or Escolar, or something because the kids were hardworking and focused on their education." The perception that those who were in AP and honors classes worked hard, while others did not, was pervasive, even among the teaching staff. This would continue to be an issue in the years to come.

During his time at Southeast, Henry noted that staff did not tolerate gang colors being flown, nor did they tolerate aggressive behavior. The media coverage during this time frame does not fully reflect the elevated gang membership because Henry worked extremely hard to battle the negative perceptions surrounding Southeast. "You control the media, or it will control you." For this, he gained a reputation of being unavailable to media outlets, but to him the trade-off was worth it. This marked the beginning of a strained relationship between the school

Table 3. *School Days Missed due to Out-of-School Suspension, 2015*
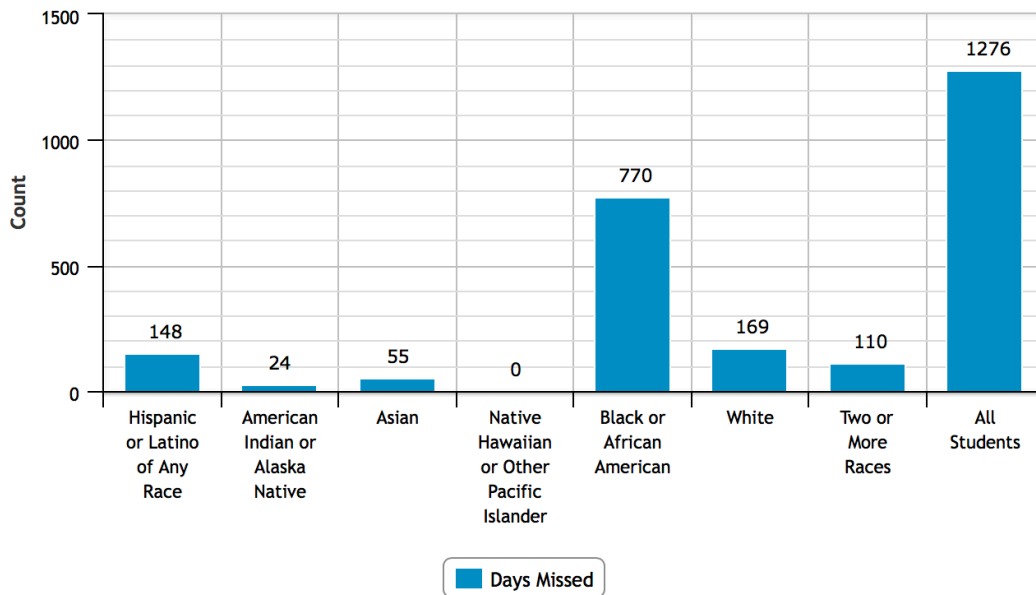
administration and the education correspondent for the Rightown Enquirer. This reporter argued

that, "The school just needed to be transparent about what's going on. I think there's just been

this defensiveness and maybe, you know, not really being upfront about what their challenges

really are." From Henry's perspective, even when he encouraged coverage of student successes,

they never made headlines. The distrust mounted in both directions, which set the stage for

continued tension in following years.

Henry was principal at Southeast for nine years, and during that time, he became

increasingly taxed by the demands of leading a large school with, high levels of socioeconomic

need. Henry's high level of personal investment in the staff and students began to take a toll on

his mental and physical health, "It was killing me. I was taking eight or nine different meds,

blood pressure medications. It was all stressing me out. If it was just the kids, it'd be beautiful."

The struggles of training and working with a mostly white staff from middle-class backgrounds

took a toll on Henry. His philosophy was made evident in the intentional hiring of staff with

backgrounds similar to the students now served by the school.

> I mentioned the lack of diversity. I think when I began, we had two black
> teachers. When I left we had 14 or 16. I tried really hard to get a balance in
> teacher diversity that was as diverse as the kids are. That's my philosophy. But
> the battles with the old mindset with the new folks and the new mindset, that I
> was bringing in, it got to be too much.

There were two different camps represented in the school staff; one camp- of teachers who were

not engaged in district and school politics, and one camp of vocal teachers who subsequently

spoke for all. These teachers submitted letters to newspapers, spoke out at board meetings and

public events about the working conditions of the school, specifically referencing difficult

student behaviors such as physical outburst and violent language.

As staff across the district struggled to manage changing and disruptive behaviors, the

district hired a new superintendent who lead with these issues in mind. Southeast continued to

lose students from middle and high-income backgrounds to the IB program at East and to the

surrounding private schools. Ron Grayson, who began as new superintendent in 2009, made a

choice that brought significant scrutiny, but ultimately made a statement about his loyalty to and

trust in Rightown Public Schools; he sent his children to Southeast.

> They [his children] will tell me now that the diversity within the school they feel
> is an advantage for them as they have entered the workforce or college. You know
> it also gave them some perspective of the difference they had from a

socioeconomic status compared to other kids. You know, which was also good for me to see in relation and to see how some of the decisions that were made by buildings or at the district level impacted students and families directly because of those relationships I was able to develop.

As he felt invested in a school within the district with declining status, Ron felt that he was able to understand how his decisions at the district level effected families. The decision to enroll his children at Southeast High was met with concern from colleagues and friends who were aware of the rhetoric surrounding the school, and suggested that he and his wife send their children to either East with the IB program or at the very least Northeast Magnet. He heard, "Oh! You want to send them there? There are drug deals going on in the hallway! It's a ghetto school!" Being aware of the curricular opportunities, and the school level leadership, Ron felt comfortable with his decision. This negative rhetoric increasingly surrounded Southeast over the other public schools in the district, but those who worked within the school district knew that the student behavior issues that had been frequently cited in the local newspapers were characteristic of all schools, not just Southeast. With his students attending Southeast, Ron was able to better understand the internal struggles facing the school:

> They struggled in keeping the perspective and wanting to maintain high academic standards and some of those types of things. You know, I think a lot of it was around the diversity, and perceptions of it not being safe, and there's discipline problems, and this and that. I would also say that there had been some teachers that have been there a long time and that the demographics changed and never changed what they wanted to do. That became their excuse of "why bother?" Which was not a good scenario either. When you look at other buildings who had embraced the diversity, West is a perfect example, they decided parents aren't keeping the best kids at home. Let's work with what we have.

The above quote demonstrates the perspective that multiple district leaders faced in light of

shifting socioeconomic and racial composition of the district. Leaders battled perceptions that

the student body was somehow incapable of a rigorous academic experience, and this led to

reconsideration of curriculum at the district level.

When beginning his position as superintendent in 2009, one of his first initiatives was to

examine the existing language arts and writing programs. He felt as though the district was not

doing nearly enough to prepare students for life after high school, therefore a rigorous new plan

which aligned all reading initiatives at the elementary and middle school level was implemented,

but not without opposition. The local teacher's union pushed back on this initiative, but

ultimately, under his new leadership, language arts and writing curriculum received a significant

facelift. The majority of this work took place at the elementary school level to ensure

consistency across all buildings. When Ron began his tenure as superintendent, the district faced

dramatic budget cuts as a result of a tax deficit at the state government level. These budget cuts

reframed how Ron was able to lead the district, and ultimately dictated the next eight years of his

role in the district:

> We cut between $15 and $16 million because of state funding. We had to close
> schools, and redraw boundaries. The bond plan that had passed right before I got
> there was pretty significant; it was going to touch a lot of buildings. The budget
> cuts required us step back and completely remap that because a big part of the
> bond with the idea of building two new high schools as well as adding classrooms
> to almost every building to reduce class size, well when you're cutting budgets we
> couldn't afford new teachers. We realized that we couldn't staff the buildings
> even if we built them.

This was the reality facing the district, but many community members believed that the district was not doing enough to ensure the success of every child.

District Investigation of Southeast's Out-Migration

Southeast High continued to lose families from affluent backgrounds to the district's magnet and IB programs, as well as surrounding private schools. The district was aware of this problem and sought council from RSP & Associates, a consulting firm who was hired to investigate housing patterns and to help inform future decisions. The consulting firm was hired to highlight the enrollment patterns, strictly to inform decision-making, not to solve the issues.

The study concluded that nearly one-third of students living within the Southeast High School boundaries actually attend other schools. This data was not a surprise to district staff, because they knew this problem existed, but the extent of the problem, once documented was striking. In the 2011-2012 school year, 2,138 high school age students lived within the Southeast boundary, but only 1,476 attended Southeast. Of those living within the boundary, approximately one third attended other schools. This reality fueled the negative perceptions surrounding the school and its physical environment. Not unrelated is the transition of the racial composition of students served by the school, as evidenced by the sharp increase in racial and ethnic minorities in the area. Henry commented in the local newspaper on the issue, "Some families do come in and are concerned about the location as well as the perception."

The east side of Rightown experienced a significant increase of private school options in the 1990s and early 2000s. These options, combined with the dramatic growth of the neighboring suburbs resulted in large numbers of families opting out of Southeast High. Options for alternative choices in the area either required advanced academic standing demonstrated through placement testing or tuition payment. This had implications for who was able to and chose to transfer out of the school. In a 2013 newspaper article addressing the topic of Southeast's enrollment loss, families explained their decision to enroll children elsewhere was primarily based on teacher quality and student comfort. "To be able to go to those smaller, private schools – people feel like their kids are safer. Teachers are going to be more aware, maybe know the kids a little better. You have that extra little security blanket that parents want."

These smaller private schools touted appealing achievement data. Escolar and Highland High Schools both advertise an average graduation rate of 100%. Highland advertised an average ACT score of 30. Within the school district, Northeast high also has a strikingly high graduation rate of 95%. As previously mentioned, tuition rates for these schools dictated who of the approximately 2,000 students were able to enroll in neighboring private schools. For Escolar Academy, tuition rates fell on a sliding scale, ranging from $5,400 per academic year to $19,710. Escolar advertised itself as the most affordable of the east side privates during this time, but the median tuition was still higher than the Independent school, at $10,600 per academic year and Holy Cross, at $9,600 per academic year. The fact that so many students from high-income

backgrounds were opting to attend neighboring private schools, in Henry Bridge's opinion, contributed to the declining status and graduation rates of Southeast, "So if you just took those kids and put them in Southeast where they were supposed to be, what does that do to your graduation rate? What does that do to the mean? How does that impact Southeast?"

The far east Rightown suburban areas population exploded from 1990 to 2010. Copper Hill borders the eastern city limit of Rightown and drew young families into its city limits with the metaphorical promise of a great education, affordable new housing and a small town feel with all the same benefits of convenience offered by the east side of Rightown. In 1990, the census tract representing most of the Copper Hill area had a total population of 4,251. Between the 1990 census and the 2000 census, population had increased so dramatically that the census boundaries were redrawn and split into three tracts. At this point, the tract neighboring Rightown held a population of 6,253, but Copper Hill also held 2 more census tracts totaling 5,345 persons. By 2010, the Copper Hill area held a population of 16,132. The city's two small high schools also touted high graduation rates (90% and 94%). Also notable was the dramatic difference in the populations served by this district from that served by Rightown Southeast High. The status of families who moved to this suburb was quite homogenous. During the decade following 2000, Copper Hill High was over 90% white and under 10% economically disadvantaged (US Census Data, 2000; 2010).

City Adopts Largest Bond in History

Community education and outreach during this time surrounded the fact that the previously improving district ACT and graduation rates had flatlined, and that another bond was

an important step toward boosting these rates. The previous bond issue approved in 2000 was

worth $284.5 million and finished on time and on budget. With the finalization of the 2000 bond

in 2007, the district was ready to propose the next steps in facility improvement. The on time and

on budget completion helped the school district promote the following bond issue proposal in

2008 (Bond Issue Analysis, Wichita State University, 2007). The city economy was strong and

there was not widely believed evidence of the Great Recession being right around the corner.

Timing could not have been better for the proposal of this bond, as Rightown School Board

member Nancy Dorman commented on the topic:

> The one in 2000 we won by a landslide. The one in '08 we just barely
> won. If we had waited just six months more we would've lost because of
> the recession. We got in right before it came swinging down. But both of
> them we had fairly strong opposition in the city and they were the biggest
> bond issues ever done in the state for public ed. They were huge. Millions
> and millions of dollars.

The 2008 bond was narrowly accepted with a 2% margin of victory, but the political factions

behind the vote would continue to influence public opinion for years to come (Rightown Eagle,

April 29, 2017).

Details of the 2008 Bond

The 2008 bond issue proposal totaled $370 million and included improvements to 75

buildings in the Rightown Public Schools. As part of the project, the district would also add 9

schools, 2 being comprehensive high schools. The project would result in the closing of 8

schools, including 3 of the district's alternative high schools. In addition to the 275 new

classrooms being added, schools would benefit from upgrades to the music, technology, fine arts

and athletic facilities. The local contracted architecture firm agreed to a 1% standard fee of the

total budget; $3.7 million in revenue for the company. The proposal of an expedited 3-year timeline increased the appeal of the project. Although the tax increase would span a 20-year period, the benefits of this increase would be seen quickly. The bond proposal was announced early in 2008, with a vote to be held on November 4, 2008.

The proposal for 2 new comprehensive high schools was of particular interest to Rightown citizens on the far east side of town. The proposal would retain Southeast High in its current location, with multiple upgrades to the facility. There would be a new high school placed on the Northeast side of town and one in the far Southeast quadrant of town. The location for both of the new comprehensive high schools were informed by population studies conducted by RSP & Associates indicating that these areas stood to encounter the most growth (Rightown Eagle, April 21, 2013). The plot of land southeast of the city that was set to house the new 5A class high school serving 800 students had been purchased as a result of the bond approval. This land was largely rural, with 3 of the four bordering plots being farm land. There were new subdivisions directly to the north of the purchased land, but other than that, it was wide open space.

Fiscally conservative groups in the city voiced concern, with particular interest in the transparency of the district's plans. Although the district took meaningful steps to make clear it's plans, their role was strictly to educate citizens, not to campaign for acceptance of the bond proposal. These steps took the form of townhalls, and widely distributed flyers. Unfortunately, this was not enough information and left many groups concerned about the believability of the existing campaigns. These campaigns were run by either private investors and contractors who

stood to benefit financially from the passing of the bond. Other campaigns were organized by groups who advocate for small-government no matter the issue (Voice for Liberty, July 8, 2008). The passing of the bond was just the beginning of the political turmoil surrounding the bond issue in Rightown. Once the bond passed the recession hit. The district was forced to reassess its resources in light of the state's education funding crisis, and uphill battle over responsible resource allocation amidst major budget cuts began.

2008 Bond Issue: Renovate or Build a New Southeast

School Board President, Dean Latner commented on how this crisis began as a result of the bond proposal and continued issues with state education funding, "I remember being asked the question, 'Do you have the money to operate the school?' And I said we did; little did I know or think that the state Legislature would ignore a Supreme Court ruling." Financing the staff to maintain a new high school would require $9.3 million a year, and was no longer an option once the realities of a state education funding deficit of approximately $15 million became apparent. This became the crux of the major decision to be made by the board. Was it best to renovate the current Southeast and retain its location or should the district build a new school to house the 1800 students from Southeast and bus the students to the outskirts of town?

The district embarked on a campaign to listen to the community's needs as well as to educate the community on the potential options. Students were surveyed to inform the district on transportation patterns for the existing student body. Survey results indicated that approximately 20% of the student body walked to school (Rightown Public Schools Community Survey, 2012). The Superintendent held multiple town hall meetings with the media, parents, and community

members surrounding the school. He recalled, "We did a lot of community outreach, and then we got accused that we didn't do enough community outreach." Not all of the information available to the district was intended for public consumption, but efforts to keep the topic as transparent as possible were taken. For example, in order to expand the existing school enough to keep up with the other high school facilities in town, the district would need to acquire more land surrounding the Southeast building where it stood. This land was home to duplexes, which were investment properties owned by a local wealthy investor. This investor and the board could not agree upon a price. Superintendent Ron Grayson recalled:

> A lot of communication, trying to explain the only way Southeast could be comparable to the other schools and being able to do the additions and provide the same access to field space and all of that without them being shortchanged forever meant buying the property with the duplexes behind, that were owned by a family that had no interest in selling without it being at a higher premium. One of the family members came to a presentation of the board of why they were opposed to it, and it was because their rentals. The board could have used eminent domain, but they really didn't want to.

In a newspaper article outlining the community discussion, a city council member voiced his concern about the lack of investment being allotted to neighborhood schools, "Why is it that our inner-city areas cannot have these great new schools that the other areas around Rightown receive?" This sentiment characterized the opposition faced by the district in the decision to renovate or move Southeast High (Rightown Eagle, June 24, 2013). This same council member recalled the opinions of the opposition during these townhall meetings:

> It seemed like each board member kind of knew that they were going to do this anyway. They all had written statements to show why they needed to do this. Their minds were already made up. We didn't really want to see intercity schools moved to the outskirts because of access. These neighborhood schools helped make neighborhoods strong. You know, kids

who have transportation issues, if you're walking into school, you don't have those issues if you live down the street. If you're struggling to get to school now it's because it's way out on the outskirts and you're asking for rides, you know, that kind of adds to peer pressure and things and you don't want that. We all were working together and united to stop moving these schools to the outskirts and it fell on deaf ears.

This distrust was shared by many others who did not completely trust the district to do what was best for the community surrounding the existing school. Maxine Johnson, a long-time employee of the school recalled this time:

I told my husband, 'They are just putting up face. They are going to move out there, you know it.' Because the surrounding neighborhood had changed a lot. The people that lived in that area had changed a lot. So, they're just talking. They are going to move Southeast High. Yeah, I knew that. I knew all the money they put in it to redo all that they did. I knew Southeast was going to move.

Sentiments such as these framed the conversation surrounding the placement of the new Southeast High for years to come. Connor Aust, a graduate who followed the politics of the school move decision felt as though the district's choice was "a decision that privileges the suburbs." Other school staff felt as though "they already knew what they're going to do."

The process that the district took to inform, allow debate and finally vote on the future location of Southeast High took months. During this time, the media covered much of the debate, between factions opposed to the move and those in favor, and some district officials were not pleased with the coverage, "One of the most frustrating pieces I saw was the shift that occurred in Rightown in my eight years, which was that the media reporting became less about reporting the story as it did about creating clicks." Each side of the vote to move the school building faced issues of distrust; some registered distrust of the district, while the district leaders expressed discomfort with the media. In June of 2013, the school board voted 6-0 to build a new building

with the capacity to house 1,800 students and to move the existing Southeast student body the

fall of 2016. In an effort to maximize the use of district facilities, the current Southeast High

would transition into district administrative offices. The debate had occupied school staff's time

and energy, and as such, the final vote was a relief for many. It meant that they could start

focusing on the new placement of the school. The result was a relief to district and school

administration, but the general feeling in the neighborhood north of the plot of land set to house

the new school was quite the opposite.

When the initial bond was passed in 2008, it stated that a new, small high school serving

800 students would be built at this location. Students from the surrounding neighborhoods, and

from the inevitable growth in this area would attend the school. Families made home-buying

decisions as a result of this bond, only to see the vote change the size, socioeconomic

composition and racial composition of the student body to inhabit the school. One of these

fathers was quoted in the Rightown Eagle, "We made life decisions based on this bond issue. We

looked at several houses and options but we wanted our kids to have the benefit of those new

schools, and especially the smaller high school" (Rightown Eagle, April, 2013). Steve West, an

alumni of Southeast, and a district administrator saw this perspective play out in more negative

ways:

> An interesting dynamic is that the community near the new school doesn't
> want Southeast there. They want *their* school there. They want Copper
> Hill West. They have flat told me in public meetings that we don't want
> "those kids" in our school, and our community. Those kids being the AAA
> kids, the minorities that are a huge part of what makes Southeast
> awesome. The diversity that is there - the Hispanic group, the Asian
> influence, the African-American influence, the groups that make Southeast
> an incredibly diverse and incredibly rich school, they didn't want them.
> They flat said it. We don't want those kids in our community. We don't

want those kids in our school. I have bad news for you, this isn't your school! This is Rightown Public Schools and those kids are every bit as worthy as your kids.

Kate Johnson, a mother interviewed for this project echoed the sentiments reflected in Steve West's account above. When asked about the impact of moving the school to the outskirts of town, she stated, "I was really excited for it because it was brand spanking new and the location of it, but it was always in the back of my head that the same kids are still going there."

Conclusion

The story of Rightown Southeast High School at the turn of the 21st century is one of a school in transition and a community grappling with this transition in varying ways. Those who attended Southeast during the later portion of the 20th century as well as those who have lived in the neighborhood proximate to the school have watched the racial and socioeconomic profile of the school shift dramatically. What was once a high-status high school was now the target of elevated concern surrounding safety and academic rigor. This concern fed a phenomenon of enrollment out migration of affluent Whites from the Southeast attendance area into neighboring private schools, the East High IB program, and the adjacent suburban school district, Copper Hill. These schools continued to increase in status and drew more and more families with high achieving students into their programs, which in turn reinforced the profile of the schools. Southeast began to compete for enrollment with its neighboring Rightown Public School, East High. It was more likely that East High would have the majority of the area's National Merit finalists than any other school.

Although rhetoric surrounding the falling academic rigor of the school was pervasive throughout the city, during this period most student groups saw an increase in reading and math achievement, most noteworthy being Hispanic students. Just as there had been in decades leading up to the turn of the century, Southeast was home to many high achievers who went on to accomplish scholastic success through prestigious scholarships, graduate degrees, and even faculty positions. This reality was in stark contrast to the reputation that Southeast carried throughout the city. Southeast took on the character of school that was past its prime, but many asked about this reputation could not point to any one reason for the declining status other than the physical appearances of the building and the students who attended the school.

With a series of leadership changes, Southeast in the mid-2000s experienced a revived focus on diversity and relatability of staff. Henry Bridges, the new principal in 2004 grew up in the AAA area and was bused to Southeast High during the 1980s. He carried many of the same life experiences as the growing number socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Southeast, which he used to help him relate to students and challenge the teaching staff. Henry fought to increase the diversity of the teaching staff, but was not as successful as he would have hoped. Perception of the school became a focal point for Henry, and he worked tirelessly to ensure that the media representation during this time reflected a Southeast that all students could be proud of, instead of one that dwelt on the negative. Despite the efforts, many Rightown citizens were regularly informed solely through the local newspaper of more negative occurrences than positive, which continued for years to come.

The 2008 bond proposal was the largest proposed in the state up to that point. This bond project proposal included the addition of two new comprehensive high schools, which was enticing to the voters of Rightown. This change would address the growing enrollments of schools in the North and Southeast attendance areas. The bond passed just months before The Great Recession hit, crippling the local Rightown and national economies. During this time the state education budget declined dramatically, forcing Rightown Public Schools to function in a deficit. This financial shortfall pushed district leadership to reconsider their original bond plan since they now were not able to staff the new comprehensive high schools. This ultimately forced them to retract plans for new comprehensive high schools, and choose from renovating Southeast High School where it stood, or to build an entirely new school and move the student body to the outskirts of town. After extensive community engagement and conversation, the school board voted to move the school to rural fringe neighborhood at the edge of the city. This vote the construction project that followed was covered extensively by the media, leading into the final complicated stage of the Southeast's status transition.

Chapter 5: A School Transitioning While Under the Microscope

Large urban school districts' budgets and achievement data are open for public comment and criticism, with good cause. As recipients of public funds, schools are of particular interest to newspaper correspondents and other media specialists who work to ensure that communities are informed of the efficacy of public schools. This reality rang especially true for the Rightown Public School District with its largest bond in state history, adding two new elaborately appointed high schools. The building of Southeast High had garnered a significant amount of media attention across the city over the last five years. The construction of the school remained on time, but approximately $10 million over its initial budget of $54 million. This budget overage contributed to the media spotlight placed on the school in years following its opening in 2016. The first new high school built in the district in nearly 40 years was designed with the goal of having a modern, open feel, boasting a "main street" hallway concept. Students and staff at the "old building" of Southeast High School waited anxiously to make the move to the new building for the 2016-2017 school year. Replacing Henry Bridges as principal in 2014, Stacy Jones, touted as a curriculum and instruction specialist, stepped in to lead the students and staff into a new and exciting time for the school, "I look forward to seeing the kids in the building and the teachers in the building. It is all very exciting." (Perez Tobias, Rightown Eagle, October 01, 2015).

The new high school opened for its inaugural academic year in August of 2016, maintaining an enrollment of approximately 1,700 students over the past two decades. These

enrollment numbers had been steady for the decade leading up to the move, and recent memories of crowded hallways in the old building encouraged excitement for the spaciousness of the new facility. Members of district leadership were hopeful that the new building would offer greater opportunity for those attending, but they did not foresee the school becoming the target of significant media attention. The school faced an onslaught of negative press which focused on declining graduation rates and low levels of academic rigor. The most prevalent theory was that attendance and transportation issues were at the root of the decline in graduation rates. Others pointed to violent and disruptive student behavior as the strongest contributor. Amid this battle for perception, the school district was also challenged by charges of functioning with a lack of transparency and "back door dealings".

The primary problem highlighted in this chapter is that Southeast High after the move into the new building was negatively affected by a small faction of teachers associated with the area teachers' union. This group was active in creating the negative narrative surrounding the entire school by speaking to the press on behalf of the entire teaching staff, while their opinions did not accurately represent those of the entire staff. This chapter outlines student, teacher and district staff accounts that characterize a diminished sense of value and esteem as resulting symptoms of the problem at hand. Following the student accounts, media coverage of the transition into the new building then complicate the narrative with multiple teacher and district staff stories about the realities within the school and community at this time and how they do not align with the rhetoric communicated through newspaper articles, primarily shared on social media platforms. Finally, attendance and discipline data are discussed to challenge the accuracy

of the rhetoric which blames declining graduation rates on issues of transportation, rather than that of a dramatic increase in suspensions and expulsions.

Southeast Student Realities – Post Building Transition

Focus group data from conversations with Southeast seniors in the spring of 2018 revealed a group of students who have been impacted by increased media attention. These students spent two years at the old building and two years at the new building. Independent of teacher statements referencing that the "same kids" were being moved from the old building to the new, students interviewed in focus groups mentioned the same phrase, "Yeah, the environment is better. But it's the same thing on the inside that it was at the old building." When asked if the perceptions surrounding Southeast had changed since the move, one student replied, "No, it's still the same. Same school different building. Same people, same delinquents. Same teachers." Another student echoed the sentiment, "Just because the building is in a different spot doesn't mean that it's going to change the way people act. It's not really about the outside of the building it's about what's on the inside of it."

Students interviewed were at an important point in their high school career; the final approach to graduation. In reflecting on their experience as Southeast students, they were asked about traditions. The following response demonstrates a reflection of feeling like the target of constant reprimand and discipline,

> We don't do anything or have traditions. Like senior pranks, we don't do
> that. We get in trouble for everything here. We would get in trouble for it.
> But they will do something to us. We're not allowed to react or respond to

it. You know have how other people have school things like after prom?
We don't even have that.

According to the experiences outlined by the students in the focus groups, being a student at

Southeast came with negative reputation. There was a definite lack of sentimentality that is to be

expected during this time, and the conversation repeatedly returned to the low status of the

school as the reason. The following exchange is a great example of how this reputation shaped

the students' opinions of themselves,

> Student: Just as soon as you tell someone who doesn't go to Southeast that you go
> to Southeast they're like "oh, I feel sorry for you!"
> Lauren: Why do they feel sorry for you?
> Student: They just do! I mean, if we were talking about the roster for the best
> schools, we're at the bottom. All the other schools in the district were higher than
> us.
> Lauren: So how do people react when you tell them that you go to Southeast?
> Student: They laugh like Southeast is a big joke. They feel sorry for you. Or
> they'll start laughing.

Not all students interviewed shared the same opinions about the reputation of the school, but

there was a common thread in all focus group data about the low status of the school having an

impact on student behavior and self-esteem as a student body. When the instances of vandalism

that had received news coverage were mentioned, most students agreed that these acts were

committed because the students were in need of some form of attention that they were not

already receiving. These students also saw that they are part of a school with a history of having

a negative reputation,

> Lauren: Why do you think students have been doing that? [vandalizing]
> Student: They want attention.
> Lauren: So you think these instances have been mostly for attention?
> Student: Yeah
> Lauren: Then why do you think it's happening more here?

> Student: Cause people here are crazy! Because they have a bad reputation,
> so they want to live up to that reputation.
> Lauren: So students are trying to live up to that reputation?
> Student: Yeah
> Lauren: So that reputation comes from where?
> Student: The past, you know. Like in the 90s and early 2000s we were
> known as a bad school.

Students were aware that they were under a microscope and that this media attention did not accurately portray what happened at Southeast from day to day. A feeling of defenselessness pervaded the focus group, especially when students were asked about the onslaught of media scrutiny. With the awareness of the status of their school, the following excerpt displays a reluctance to try to explain their differing experiences as students at Southeast,

> Student: They really focus on the bad news and not the good news here.
> Like we could win the state championship and they would be like "Yeah,
> well ya'll still have fights!"
> Lauren: So you keep saying they. Who is they?
> Student: People outside of Southeast. Everybody else. We can sit here and
> try our hardest to make Southeast sound like better than it is, and people
> are just going to go back to history and continue saying that were not a
> good school. People are just like "Well, if we are not a good school we
> might as well just show them that we're not!"
> Lauren: Do you think a lot of people feel that way?
> Student: Yeah
> Student: Like I said, you can tell people what school you go to, and I'll be
> like Southeast, and they'll sit there and dog your school. What are you
> gonna do? Defend it? There is nothing much you can say besides "Okay"

Negative perceptions of the types of students who attend Southeast unfortunately informed these students of who they are. Students at Southeast were susceptible to being strongly impacted by media and community messages thus further lowering self-esteem. One of the most disturbing messages that has reached these students about who they are as a student body was difficult to garner, but ultimately stood out as one of the most important,

> Lauren: So is there a perception that goes along with going to Southeast or like the kind of student goes to Southeast? Just people who assume things and don't know you guys?
> Student: ***mumbles***Cause we're so diverse *Laughs*
> Lauren: What did you say?
> Student: Oh, we're not saying it!
> Lauren: Oh, come on!
> Student: **Dumb people, I guess. More violent people; ignorant people come here.**

District officials, teachers and even some community members realized the importance of these messages and how they impact students.

Southeast Becomes Focus of Media Scrutiny

Graduation rates across the Rightown Public School District have stayed steady over the last decade, hoovering slightly below the state graduation rate. Southeast High School graduation rates have fluctuated, with an upward trend beginning in 2010. The 2010 adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate was 67% increasing to 72% in 2011 and continuing this trend into 2013 with a graduation rate of nearly 78% (Kansas Department of Education Report Card, Southeast High). This graduation rate has fallen since 2013, and remained stagnant at 72% for the 2015, and 2016 cohorts. A dramatic dip in graduation rates to 65% the year (2017) following the move to the new school building became a major focal point of media scrutiny and forced district officials into a defensive posture, seeking answers to the community's concern. Without the future knowledge that the school's rate would rebound the following year to the same 72% rate, district officials were left wondering what was the cause of such a dramatic drop. The calculation of this graduation rate remained the same from year to year, as "The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students in a cohort, adjusted for transfers

into and out of the school, district, or state, who graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of entering high school", thus not being a plausible explanation for the dip in rates (Kansas Department of Education, *Data Central*).

Continued speculation surrounding this graduation rate produced multiple newspaper articles, and opinion pieces from the local newspaper, The Rightown Eagle. In March of 2018, the newspaper published an article outlining the metropolitan area's graduation rates, prompting the community to compare rates across the district as well as against private schools and suburban schools. This article highlighted Southeast's 7% decrease encouraged further investigation into what was happening. This prompted multiple in-depth articles exploring the reasons behind this dip. One of the most publicly shared articles was titled "The new Southeast High is bigger and better. So why is its graduation rate dropping?" The opening sentence of this article pointed to a drop in attendance rates since the move of the building in 2016. The specifics of the attendance data were not cited, but the article continued to use the falling attendance rate to assert that the attendance problem was the most viable explanation for the decline in graduation rates. The article stated that although the graduation rate had dropped consistently since its peak in 2013, the community should be concerned with transportation and location of the new building above all else. The assistant superintendent was quoted in the article, having a difficult time understanding the drop as well. He speculated that the drop could be an unintended consequence of the new location as well. "At the old location, 'children had the opportunity to walk to school, so tardies would not have turned into attendance problems,' Assistant Superintendent Dan Mendez said. 'If a kid now does not make the bus and doesn't have a car to

get there, it's not walking distance, so that becomes a challenge.'" (Perez Tobias, Rightown Eagle, April 29, 2018). The location of the new building was cause for concern from the beginning of the project, but the falling graduation rate reinforced beliefs that it was a poor district decision.

Attendance data do not corroborate the increased negative community and even district staff discourse encouraged by this article. Average attendance during the 2016-2017 school year was nearly 92% which was in line with the previous decade, and higher than the rates at other city schools with similar socioeconomic and racial composition (Kansas Department of Education, *Data Central*). These data were not cited in the article, and therefore left the community to comment on attendance and transportation issues as if they were the sole explanation for the declining graduation rate. An opinion piece a few days following the release of this article from the Rightown Eagle Editorial Board suggested that the district had a chance to review and anticipate this problem, but the superintendent and other district leaders did not give the problem ample attention. The article suggested that this problem would not go away, and that the district was exclusively culpable for the falling graduation rate. A City Counselman who advocated to keep Southeast in its previous location and renovate was quoted in the article speaking to the challenges of the new location, "When you move a school way out of the neighborhood, it makes it harder for some families. You have to make sure they catch the bus on time and if they don't there aren't a whole lot of options" (Rightown Eagle, April 29, 2018). Solutions such as a partnership with the city transportation department are cited, as well as a bus initiative targeting tardy students. The board did include other potential contributing factors such

as behavioral problems, but these were not flushed out or dealt with to the same extent as is the location of the building.

An opinion piece in the newspaper following the impactful April article was less forgiving of the decision, postulating that the decision to move the school was made to benefit district officials who moved into the old Southeast building after being renovated to house district offices, "To the School Board, 'what were you thinking?' Pretty convenient for district administration to occupy the old school. No one seems to care how early these kids may need to get up so they don't miss the school bus, which is possibly their only way to go those seven miles out in the country to the new school." (Rightown Eagle, 19A, May 2, 2018). Others point to families placing little to no value on education. Although a vocal community member, one contributor directly blamed parents,

> Excuses, excuses. Parents of Southeast students, be responsible and get your kid up to get on the bus or get them out the door so they can be in school and stay in school. They should get an education and not end up in our correctional system or out on the streets because they don't have the knowledge to work at a profession that was available to them when they were younger.

(Rightown Eagle, 19A, May 2, 2018). One solution referenced by district leadership in subsequent articles is the initiation of on-site "learning centers". These learning centers would be available for extended hours in order to help students who are behind in credit accumulation due to chronic absenteeism have an alternative path to graduation. The district also cited plans to increase attention paid to 9th grade students across the district, "alerting students and family members early on if they're in danger of falling behind on graduation credits." (Rightown Eagle, April 29, 2018).

Media Coverage of Student Behavior

Another prevalent topic in media outlets and even online chat forums was that of student behavior. Disruptive student behavioral incidents such as verbal altercations, threats of violence and physical confrontations were on the rise district-wide, with total documented incidents increasing from about 45,000 in 2014 to almost 51,000 in 2017 (Rightown Eagle, June 16, 2017). The focus of the article surrounded increasing poverty and traumatic family situations. The problem was framed as a crisis with multiple quotes from the city teacher's union president, Carl Keyes pointing to escalating disruptions and harsh working conditions for teachers. "Any time you have children who are so damaged that their behavior is affecting everyone else in the classroom on a more-or-less consistent basis, then I would consider that a crisis," said Keyes. The district is held to federal standards which keep students in the "least restrictive environment", pushing teachers to deal with disruptive behaviors of children with severe behavioral and emotional needs in class.

Many teachers across the district did not feel prepared to address the needs of students with these extra needs, as cited by Julie Arches, a school board member and part time para-educator, "We've asked teachers to be experts on autism, on ADHD, on children who've dealt with trauma. They might have all of that in their first period. And then we've asked them to deal with it successfully, without the training of someone who's dealt with that." (Rightown Eagle, June 16, 2017). This lack of training and support felt by many teachers was not lost on district leadership, but they have felt ask though their hands are tied. With reductions in teacher training

117

time, and budget shortage, district leadership struggled to include adequate teacher training to keep up with the increasing behavioral need cited across the district. The district's previous superintendent Ron Grayson was quoted, "What we're able to do with the time we have is triage. You can only do so much in the time that we have available, and until that is corrected, I think we're going to struggle to make the types of gains we want." Tension between training and resources available for teachers and the behavioral of students have created a space where many teachers across the district do not feel prepared to face the challenges in their classrooms. In fact, according to a 2017 all district teacher survey, just over 25% of teachers stated that their schools' handling of misbehaving students was "not very effective" or "poor", signaling a high number of dissatisfied educators (Rightown Eagle, June 16, 2017).

This tension was continually documented and highlighted by the area teacher's union president Carl Keyes, arguing that district leadership, with a "drone's-eye view" does not understand the challenges faced by teachers when students with behavioral issues are kept in a mainstream classroom. "I would submit that keeping and expecting that child to be at their best for six hours in a classroom with other kids is unreasonable and irresponsible." Further arguing that existing protocols do not work, Keyes worked hard to disseminate his views as president of the local teacher's union and these views ultimately focused directly on student behavior at Southeast High. In the middle of Southeast's second year in the new building, an article titled "Teachers 'fearful' about escalating violence at Southeast High", the Rightown Eagle cited "grave concerns" held by teachers and staff through a petition spearheaded by Keyes (Rightown

Eagle, December 01, 2017). The petition which garnered over 20 signatures stated, "It has come to the point that we are fearful for not just students, but staff as well because of the continuing escalation of disruptive, unacceptable and violent student behavior".

The new location was extremely relevant to media attention surrounding this petition. Although the number of violent offenses cited during the 3-month period preceding the petition did not top the list of Rightown Public high schools, it received the most attention. Through interviews, teachers and staff speculated that the isolated geographic location of the building as a contributing factor for student violence. The article discussing staff's fear of students postulates that where students used to move fights into the surrounding neighborhood, they no longer can "take them outside", thus resulting in on-site confrontations. The number of offenses per 1,000 students severe enough to call in the police, Southeast was third on the list. Also running counter to the title of the article published covering the petition, Keyes was quoted, "I think people (at Southeast) are frustrated more than they are angry or scared or frightened. I think there's an overall concern about administrative follow-through on behavior, whether it's violent or not." (Rightown Eagle, December 01, 2017). A newspaper headline of "Teachers frustrated with student behavior" did not have the same dramatic ring to it as "Teachers fearful of escalating violence".

After this article was published, another article covering a student arrest contributed to the already damaged reputation of the school. A number of students in the new building had been caught vandalizing bathrooms and the Rightown Eagle covered a story of a potential fire in

the boys bathroom (Rightown Eagle, March 08, 2018). The title of the article, "Teen arrested after fire in the Southeast High bathroom" lead readers to conjure images of destructive flames and extensive damage, but upon deeper reading, the incident occurred after "A teacher smelled smoke in the boy's restroom and found ashes in a trash can at Southeast High school." Reporting such as this continued to place Southeast in the spotlight in comparison to the other city schools with similar behavior incidents.

Without a critical, nuanced look at exactly when and how disciple incidents were occurring around the district, it is not conscientious to interpret an increase in these incidents as strictly an increase in negative behaviors. As referenced in previous articles, teachers were struggling to manage behavior, so depending on the teacher's experience and patience, the same behavioral incident could result in a multitude of disciplinary actions. The experience of teachers varied greatly, and symptomatic of the larger issue, only those who were veteran teachers associated with the teachers' union were being heard by the media outlets. Concerns of a small group of teachers continued to be vocalized to media outlets, thus shaping the Rightown community's perceptions of the school as a whole.

Political Backdrop: Concerns about Transparency

Related to the increasing media coverage of the small vocal group who put forth a petition, during 2017 the Rightown Eagle also covered a number of other conflicts between the school board, the Rightown area Teacher's Union, and even the Rightown Eagle itself. Beginning with an article published in February of 2017 titled, "School board meeting in secret to consider superintendent candidates", the Rightown Eagle made clear that the school board's decision to meet in private to discuss candidate prior to their final vote was worthy of media

attention. Repeatedly citing that the meeting was legal, the article continued to shine a spotlight

on the private nature of the dealings. Following the "secret meeting" article, the Eagle published

documentation of their formal complaint filed with the County District Attorney's Office. Within

this follow-up article, the Eagle's executive editor and vice president for news was quoted, "We

believe the school board has thumbed its nose at the basic tenant of open government, and that

decision should not stand unchallenged."

This article was followed by an April article reporting on the complaint filed by The

Rightown Eagle stating that the private recess held by the school board to interview and consider

superintendents violated the Kansas Open Meetings Act. Transparency in regard to Rightown

Public School Board's dealings was, and continues to be a big concern for the local newspaper.

The April article concluded that the County District Attorney's Office ruled that the School

Board did not violate the Act, and that the meetings held by the board were within their rights.

As a result of the accusation, the district's spokesperson defended the board stating, "The Board

of Education will continue its commitment to transparency in the manner in which the district

does business, and we appreciate the thoughtful consideration given to this matter by the district

attorney's office." (Rightown Eagle, April 04, 2017). These articles, although clearing the

district of any wrongdoing, encouraged skepticism of the school board.

Immediately following the resolution of the Rightown Eagle's accusations of lack of

transparency shown by the school board, an OpEd written by a disgruntled resigning school

board member made the news across the Rightown area. School board member of 4 years,

Wendy Glass wrote a pointed piece in the Eagle claiming that the newspapers concerns from

earlier that year about transparency were in fact founded. This article claimed that many tasks

conducted by the school board were completed "behind closed doors" and that there was little

actual democracy within the school board meetings. She stated,

> I believe the issue stems from the misguided belief held by some board
> members that everyone should be on the same page and agree all the time
> on the issues before the board. Board members with this mindset are quick
> to attack others that aren't in lockstep with their views. I have been told by
> some members that a vote of 6-1 or 5-2 is harmful – even dangerous.
> Being out of step with the board is reason for some to attempt to
> intimidate the disagreeing board member or members, create false stories
> about their motivations and character, and attempt to marginalize their
> voice.

Later that October day, the president of the school board replied to this OpEd with a clear

statement about this board member's accusations. "I don't think there would be very many other

board members who feel that way." This same board member voted against the $60 million

contract to build the new Southeast High school and she claims that these closed-door

conversations began with the unanswered questions pertaining to that vote and continued since

(Rightown Eagle, October 20, 2017). This disagreement continued to escalate in the press with

subsequent articles published covering Facebook arguments between a sitting school board

member and Ms. Glass. All of the coverage was unwanted attention for the district and further

tarnished the board's reputation by reminding the readership of the controversial decisions made

surrounding the building of Southeast High and lead up to the November 7th vote to fill the

majority of school board seats.

"Principal Shuffle"

Principal Stacy Jones stepped into leadership at Southeast High after receiving great acclaim for "turning around" another high school in the district. Replacing Henry Bridges in 2014, Ms. Jones lead the school in its transition from the old building to the new and was in her third year of leadership once the student body transitioned buildings in the fall of 2016. Much of the staff angst cited in the media spoke to "lack of follow-through" and "inconsistent leadership" regarding discipline. The petition circulated just months into the school's second year in the new building encouraged district leaders to take "decisive and strong actions" to combat the increasing negative student behaviors. Although the total number of discipline incidents actually declined from 2016-17 school year to the 2017-18 school year, the negative discourse surrounding the school and its leadership did not reflect this reality (Synergy Database, Rightown Public Schools, June 4, 2018). The obvious conflict between a vocal set of teachers and Ms. Jones's administration lead the district to do what was titled a "Principal Shuffle" by an April 2018 article published by the local newspaper (Rightown Eagle, April 12, 2018). This "shuffle" moved four Rightown high school principals to other schools, Ms. Jones being one of them. Principal Frank Moreno who was near retirement and according to teachers anticipating his leadership, had a reputation for "running a tight ship" was set to step in as new principal at Southeast High in the fall of 2018.

Impacts of Negative Reputation

The negative reputation surrounding Southeast High followed the student body and staff into the new building. Undesirable opinions were not confined to the media, but extended into the staff resulting in low teacher morale. These opinions were partly based in the achievement data tied to the school, but according to this teacher, also had basis in overall pride of occupation:

> Having such a low graduation rate has had a significant impact on us. So I just wish we could wave a magic wand. I would never give up working here at Southeast. I love the people I work with - all of the staff members here. They're awesome. But there is not a sense of pride, even among teachers. We have had a big change in staff from one year to the next school year and I don't know if it's a lack of pride of working at Southeast or just a lack of pride of being a teacher. Sometimes we don't even treat ourselves as professionals.

Other teachers referenced the large, spread-out nature of the new building as a contributing factor to low morale. Southeast's teaching staff held many teachers who had been in the school for decades, and who were very used to the old building, "Within the old building, each hall had its own personality. We had camaraderie as teachers, and now we are isolated." This low morale was ubiquitous among teachers and staff at the school, so much so that many teachers fielded questions from students about their lack of optimism. The article published in the Rightown Eagle in the fall of 2017 which reported on the petition signed by 20 of the school's teachers had an extreme impact on community perception of the school, and according to the following teacher, it had a strong impact on students:

> When the news article came out saying that a group of staff members have signed a petition, I didn't think the kids would read too much into it, but

they came in and were very concerned, "do you guys really feel scared of us?" I said "I don't, but I think that there are some teachers who have been threatened." They didn't know that. They were so far removed. We have a small core of kids that all of the attention is being focused on. We have 98% of the kids who are not being focused on. That media perception is strong.

With media attention being focused on the negative aspects of the school move, students and staff began to internalize this rhetoric as their own, regardless of multiple positive elements of the move. Many teachers who did not completely agree with the petition felt as though it represented an "undercurrent of a few disgruntled teachers who were feeding the media negative information." One of the school counselors did not agree with petition, and thought it had very negative ramifications for students,

It's was not a good thing. [After the article was published] The very next day the kids were like "Hey, are you guys really scared of us?" And I'm like "No, I'm not scared you." Some of the other kids were like "Oh! They're scared of me, so I can do whatever I want to do." That was a very small percentage of teachers who were included in that petition, so the rest of us felt like you just put us out there! It was completely unnecessary, so the rest of us are being affected by something that you could've sat down and had a conversation about.

The Rightown community was informed about the realities within the four walls of Southeast High through multiple outlets, which told a consistent, but not nuanced story of what it was like to attend and work in the school.

Another important piece of information that informed the public on the school was public achievement data. These data, though made available through the Kansas Department of Education's website, were made most accessible through reports shared on social media outlets. Between the misinformation about student behavior advertised by a small vocal faction of teachers, the media focus due to the new location and contradicting student achievement data, Southeast became the easiest target of scrutiny within Rightown Public Schools. Tables 3. and 4.

outline ACT and state assessment trends in the years leading up to and immediately following the move into the new building in 2016. These data do not tell a consistent story of student achievement, as ACT scores remained stable during the four years surrounding the move but both the ELA and Math state assessments show increasing percentages in students who are underprepared for college. The drop in ACT scores seen in 2018 also contributes to negative perceptions of Southeast High, even if the drop mirrored North High, a comparison school as well as a consistent drop in the overall district average.

Table 3. *Average ACT Scores for Southeast High School and Rightown Public School District, 2013-2018*
Source: Kansas Department of Education, Data Central, K-12 Report

School Year	SE Avg ACT	North Avg ACT	District Avg ACT
2013	17.6	18.7	19.8
2014	18.2	18.9	19.7
2015	18.2	18.9	19.6
2016	18.1	19	19.7
2017	18.2	18.2	19.3
2018	17.2	17.6	19.0

Table 4. *Percent of Students at Southeast High School scoring Level 1 (below grade level) in ELA and Math State Assessments, 2015-2019*
Source: Kansas Department of Education, Data Central, K-12 Reports

School Year	% Level 1 - Math	% Level 1 - ELA
2015	60%	43%
2016	55%	41%
2017	57%	45%
2018	70%	51%
2019	70%	54%

Different School, Same Kids

A recurring theme in staff, student and community member interviews was that of the "broken" nature of the student body. The student body at Southeast High was referenced time and time again as the problem. These opinions ranged from lamentations of the students' poor homelife and tough life experiences, to disturbing sentiments of students being "criminals", undeserving of teachers' time and energy. This teacher saw the task of teaching students at Southeast as an uphill battle,

> I think self-esteem is one of the biggest obstacles because they're coming to us kind of already broken and we try to put them back together, but we can't do everything. We're focusing more on, you know, trying to get a relationship and trying to do some things to help them become whole instead of worrying so much about instructional content.

Other teachers' opinions of how the public-school system handles discipline were less sympathetic in nature, "When there's a bad student, what happens unfortunately is they go to another school, it's like a prisoner trade off. We give one and then you get another one." This teacher described her feelings about students who misbehaved:

> Just the small criminal element of students that need to be removed. There's about 32 of them that are the cause of things and they've identified who they are and they just have to figure out how to get rid of them and move them into some other situation. Whatever they want to do with them, but just not be at Southeast and not causing problems. So letting that behavior continue just makes more bad behavior spread. They're not there for the purpose of being educated. I have students that go to school everyday and they don't do any work there in my class every day and they choose not to work as well. Go get a job, go do something else!

With the move of the building, many teachers interviewed stated that they were hopeful that a new building might encourage a culture of good behavior among the students that had

frustrated them previously. Once the student body was moved, according to these teachers, their hopes did not come to fruition.

> We have this brand-new building and yet, you know, we kind of have the ghetto crazies out here and you know, we knew coming out here wasn't going to change everything. I think some people thought okay, if we move them over there then it's going to change the whole culture and it didn't. You moved the kids out of the ghetto, we cannot take the ghetto out of the kids and it's been kind of frustrating.

This sentiment was a common thread within interviews with the teachers who were frustrated with student behavior, although the degree to which they referenced such negative opinions of students varied. The majority of teachers interviewed fell in the first camp; that of empathy and understanding for student's increasingly traumatic home experiences being the primary influencer of negative student behaviors. The same teachers who speak to an irreversible culture of subversion were those who informed the media of what was going on within the school. Many of the negative opinions of seasoned teachers were juxtaposed with their experiences as students at Southeast, when the socioeconomic and racial composition of the student body differed dramatically,

> Well, "those kinds of people" were still there when I went there, it's just that, for whatever reason, there's a prevalent problem with the ability of the administration to get rid of bad students. Maybe I just didn't notice it, but there just weren't students that were, what I call the criminal element or just constant problems causing the destruction of the day.

Sentiments like this one and the comments in the preceding quotes demonstrate that there is a select group of teachers who are struggling to relate to students. Throughout interviews, it was obvious which teachers felt threatened by students and which did not.

The teaching staff underwent a larger than normal turnover between 2016 and 2018, with

many teachers interviewed speculating that the reasons many left were due to the new location

increasing their commute, as well as a few leaving due to student behavior. Due to this turnover,

many new teachers were hired, one being a young alumnus of Southeast High, Molly Leburn.

Molly's outlook on teaching and student behavior differed dramatically from many of the older

teachers on staff, which was surprising since she was physically attacked by a student in 2018.

While describing the incident, Molly nonchalantly spoke of the student as a student who had a

bad day. A student who made a poor decision, but when given a chance to reconcile, he did. She

valued the experience and understanding nature of the vast majority of teachers, but did note

issues with cultural competence,

> Ninety percent of them [relate well to students]. There's some that are
> pretty terrible. There are some that will tell kids they can't speak Mexican
> in class, but then there's others who if they know a little bit of Spanish,
> they will try and communicate with those kids and I mean it's really just
> cool to see them try and connect with in that way. So, ninety percent of
> our teachers are fantastic.

This reality was reflected in interviews with recent alumni, all telling tales of wonderful

teachers who pushed them to achieve their best, alongside accounts of teachers who had

"checked out" or who were too "old school" to maintain high levels of effectiveness as teachers.

Students believed that there were teachers who related better than others. On an online school

ranking site called Niche.com, students were asked to comment on categories such as academics,

clubs and activities, college readiness, overall experience, student life and teachers. When

analyzing the student comments pertaining to teachers from 2015-2018, data suggested that

multiple students could point to teachers who had their best interest in mind and those who did not. The overwhelming majority of teacher comments were positive, but of those that were not included the following:

> I think that while the school has a lot of good teachers, the bad ones really weigh us down a lot, especially when some of the worst teachers are teaching higher level classes. Most of the teachers are good at actually teaching, but learning environment can become hostile because of how they relate to the students.

Somewhere along the line, a consistent story began to be told about the student body of Southeast High and its lack of worthiness to occupy the new school building. Interviews with community members who did not have intimate knowledge of the Southeast community reveal the same consistencies in the story, which is concerning given that their only information comes from the media. When asked if she thought the new building would have any impact on the surrounding community, Kate Johnson, a mother of two who requested a special transfer for her children stated,

> I think it's going to actually make the area worse. Well you have all these kids being bused out there or have to drive out there, but they're still not being babysat for lack of a better word. So unless their parents have instilled good work ethics or you know, they get jobs or whatever, then they're still left on their own out there.

As a real estate agent, Kate also commented that the placement of the new building will have negative ramifications on the new housing market surrounding the school. Most disconcerting is that the newspaper articles that informed the Rightown community of the events within the building began to take a toll on students.

The articles, which were widely shared on social media, disrupted day to day

proceedings, leaving teachers to clean up the confusion. This teacher noted a marked difference

in student concern the day immediately following one of the newspaper articles, "When those

articles come out, for the first 10 minutes of my class, every single time we had to talk about it

because they just want to know what's going on. Most of it's just inquisitive questions about

who. None of them really have an opinion either way, but I do have quite a few students who

were like, 'the kids are just bad here.'" The messages meant to inform the community of the

realities within Southeast had a tremendous effect on the students who actually attended the

school.

Twenty Positives for Every One Bad Story

Rightown Public Schools Communications Specialist Penny Adams had been with the

district for approaching 20 years when asked to reflect on the importance of the local newspapers

in building the reputation of Southeast High. She had been through many tumultuous school

bonds, school board elections, and scandals. Penny stood firm in her assessment that opinions

held by people who do not work or send their children to Rightown Public Schools are often

mislead.

> I almost always do challenge people in a friendly manner to understand
> how they know us. Because if you know us based upon the occasional
> media headline that is motivated by a very different set of business
> concerns, that's how you know us. You don't know us. And what I find
> more often than not is that, um, people don't know us because they've been
> in our hallways and visited our classrooms and met our kids and interacted
> with our staff. They know us because of what they see in a newspaper.

Throughout interviews, the majority of the negative opinions surrounding Southeast were held

by either community members who were not directly involved with the school, a handful of

disgruntled teachers, and students. One counselor interviewed constantly fielded comments

about the physical appearance of the building, "People say 'it looks like a jail'. I've said 'Hey, I

don't think that it looks like a jail! I've never seen a jail that looks that pretty!' And for me, like,

if you're saying that, my kids are hearing that, my kids are taking it to heart."

There was a large group of teachers and district staff who constantly were in defense of

the school. Steve West, a Southeast alumnus, former Southeast teacher, school administrator,

and finally district and state department of education administrator had very strong opinions

surrounding the amount of work that it takes a school to rebound from negative media coverage,

> It turned into a storytelling of negativity around what was happening in
> Southeast, when the reality was it wasn't what people were saying it was.
> It just was not the case. But just like any first impression, if you make a
> bad first impression, takes 20 positive ones in order to make up for that
> bad one. So any negative story, it's going to take 20 positives.

Positive stories covered by news outlets in the city were increasingly difficult to come by

according to the Rightown Eagle correspondent interviewed. Aligning with previous

stories about the district's lack of transparency, her top concern was that the relationship

between the district and the media had become strained, making her task of covering

education in the city an increasingly difficult one.

Along with the opening of the new Southeast High School, the district also started its first

agriculture career pathway housed at the new site. This story did not reach nearly as many

people as the stories of vandalism and student violence, but not at any fault of the Rightown

Eagle. The Eagle correspondent who wrote the articles covering negative events at Southeast

was also responsible for multiple articles covering new pathways across the district, including a front-page article about career pathways in aviation (Rightown Eagle, September 03, 2018; Rightown Eagle, May 08, 2018). Strained relationships between the media and the district were repeatedly referenced and to blame for the lack of great coverage on what is happening day-to-day within the school. The correspondent interviewed felt strongly that her ability to tell the whole story of what was going on inside of Southeast was hampered by the district's increasingly closed off media policies,

> Here's a thing too, my perspective of Southeast, I don't know a whole lot about it because I haven't exactly been welcomed as a reporter and walked around on my own. This has changed a lot over the years as a journalist. It's become much more button-down; it has to go through communications. That has actually hurt our coverage because I don't feel the freedom that I used to have in the 90s in early 2000's. I could call a principal up and say "hey I'm interested on doing this story on AP history class can I sit in?"

Throughout the interview, this correspondent referenced the previous Superintendent as the champion for a stricter media policy. She missed the days where she could walk through the halls and speak with students. Since this move away from what she felt was a more free and open line of communication, she had to rely on sources within the school who were vocal, leaving the picture painted up to a small group of vocal teachers.

> During his tenure he really put its foot down and got the message to teachers and principals that all communication should go through the central office. That has really affected my coverage, but also my perception of the district and what's really going on because I never know. I'm always escorted, not always, there's a few principles I can talk to off the record, but for the most part it has been very calculated messaging. What it does is it just raises suspicion about what's going on if you don't let the teachers and principals come to me directly. There has been some

negative coverage of Southeast just very recently, but then they really put the walls up.

From the district's perspective, much of the media coverage had become damaging to the school and its student body, so they felt as though the reins needed to be tightened. Penny Adams, being the head of the district's media and communications policy stated firmly that there exists a relationship between both the media and the community and that both are equally important, "And we all know that relationships are built on trust and trust is built on relationships. And so we've worked endlessly, it seems, and it will be the endless quest to build relationships with the community, creating opportunities to bring people in to see what our schools are like." The manner in which stories are covered was of great concern to district officials in interviews. Instances of police chases, or unrelated violence would be associated with the school because it was the closest public school building to the incident, but had no other relationship to the event. Coverage like this concerned the previous superintendent, and much of his concern was grounded in the new compensation structures of the local newspaper,

> One of the frustrating pieces I saw was the shift that occurred in Rightown in my eight years, that the media reporting became less about reporting the story as it did about creating clicks. I was told by one of the previous editors that left the paper because of it that one of the things the owner of the newspaper did was change the compensation structure so that it was incentivized if someone can get more clicks.

Another district administrator felt as though the poor reputation of Southeast was further exacerbated by articles shared on social media. People who were not familiar with the school, who also might hold certain biases about groups of students were able to share opinions linked to

newspaper articles. This new method of "sharing" news comes at a price, "If you think that a certain demographic group it's not intelligent or doesn't get along with people, if that's your belief, then you're going to have an issue. So I think that tends to tell a story for some people. There is just too much great going on in this district, but unless you're in it and see it, you'll never know."

In the words of a parent who lived within the Southeast High boundaries, but chose to send her students elsewhere, "The impoverished kids are the face of Southeast. They don't have any money and they travel in packs like they want to be tough or something." This was a gross misunderstanding of the Southeast student body that was reinforced throughout the interviews. Multiple teachers interviewed commented on negative community reactions when they would tell people where they teach. These reactions ranged from fear for teacher safety, to a general curiosity about the differing cultural backgrounds of students who attend the school, and concern for the student body. Some conversations were more discerning, asking questions like "Is it really as bad as the media makes it out to be?", in which case the majority of teachers asked respond with tales of hard-working students and involved families. One of the school's counselors frequently fields questions pertaining to the school's culture, academics and safety. She is the first contact for parents who are considering sending their students to Southeast, but call or stop by with a list of questions. Her response is always calculated and positive, "I tell them to come in and see about us." She encourages visits with an open invitation to families to

come experience a day at Southeast. It is important to her to counter the negativity surrounding the school. Another teacher who has been with the school since 1993 was asked how comments and perceptions have changed in the 25 years that she has taught there. Comments in 1993 were ones like, "Oh! That's the Richie-rich school!" which were countered dramatically with current comments like, "There are more cops than kids there! Why would anyone want to send their kids there?" She was saddened by this reputation because she was also filled with pride in the school.

When asked about negativity surrounding public schools in general in the Rightown community, the leading education correspondent agreed that narratives matter tremendously, but did not tie this understanding back to what her newspaper actually publishes,

> That's what's hurting public schools, you have to believe in them, here in Rightown and all over the country. It's a vicious circle though. If someone has a bad experience, and you can believe in the system, but it appears to still not be good and I understand that you want your kid to be in a school where there's not major distractions. When it comes your child, I totally understand that.

Continuing with the conversation about what has contributed to the increasingly poor reputation about Southeast, this correspondent commented that it was due to external, unnamable forces, "Just in conversations with people over the years it became very clear that Southeast was not necessarily a top-flight school you wanted to send your kids to for whatever reason."

While Southeast has suffered a dramatic decline in status since the turn of the 21st century, its enrollment numbers have not reflected this change. Although the demographics of district as a whole have shifted, it has not struggled with decreasing enrollments like similar large urban districts have. In fact, Southeast's enrollment took a dip in the few years leading up

to the building move, but they have steadily increased since then. Figure 6. shows the change in enrollment since 1992 to the current school year (2019-2020), but has since rebounded. District staff and building counselors have theories about the increasing enrollments, but there has been no one reason credited with the increase in enrollment. The district's communications specialist has an intimate understanding of enrollment data and suggests that some of the increase is that families are moving kids back out of private schools and into Southeast. This is not enough to explain the steady increase over the previous 5 years. The school's counselor has also seen similar stories play out,

> What people don't see is that we have parents who don't send the kids to Southeast, and then they bring them back. Where the kid had gone to Southeast, then the parents take them somewhere else, and then they finally bring them back and they're really glad that they did. There's just something about it, the school spirit and the traditions, even moving to a new building, we still carry some of that with us.

Whether the increase in enrollment is attributed to families returning to the district, or simply population growth in this area of the city, one thing is corroborated in interview data; Southeast has a poor reputation, which suggests that the media coverage does is not reflective of the actual school culture.

Conclusion

Southeast High faced a rise in media coverage between the years 2008-2018 due in part to the passing of the largest public school bond in the history of Kansas public schools. The coverage of the school spanned the building of a new school, but also placed student behavior and achievement under a microscope. The Rightown community became transfixed with the

negative rhetoric that surrounded this new school and unfortunately much of the news pertaining

to student behavior and the culture of the school was informed by a small group of discontented

teachers. Stories that gained the most traction focused on the cost of the building, dangerous

student behavior, and falling levels of student achievement. One of the most frequently cited

articles by interviewees in this study was the article titled, "The new Southeast High is bigger

and better. So why is its graduation rate dropping?" This article published at the end of the

school's second year in the new building suggested that the new location plays a role in the

declining graduation rate and even has quotes from district officials pertaining to difficulties with

transportation. (Rightown Eagle, April 29, 2018).

Figure 4. *Total enrollment for Southeast High School, 1992-2020*
Source: Kansas Department of Education, Data Central, K-12 Reports
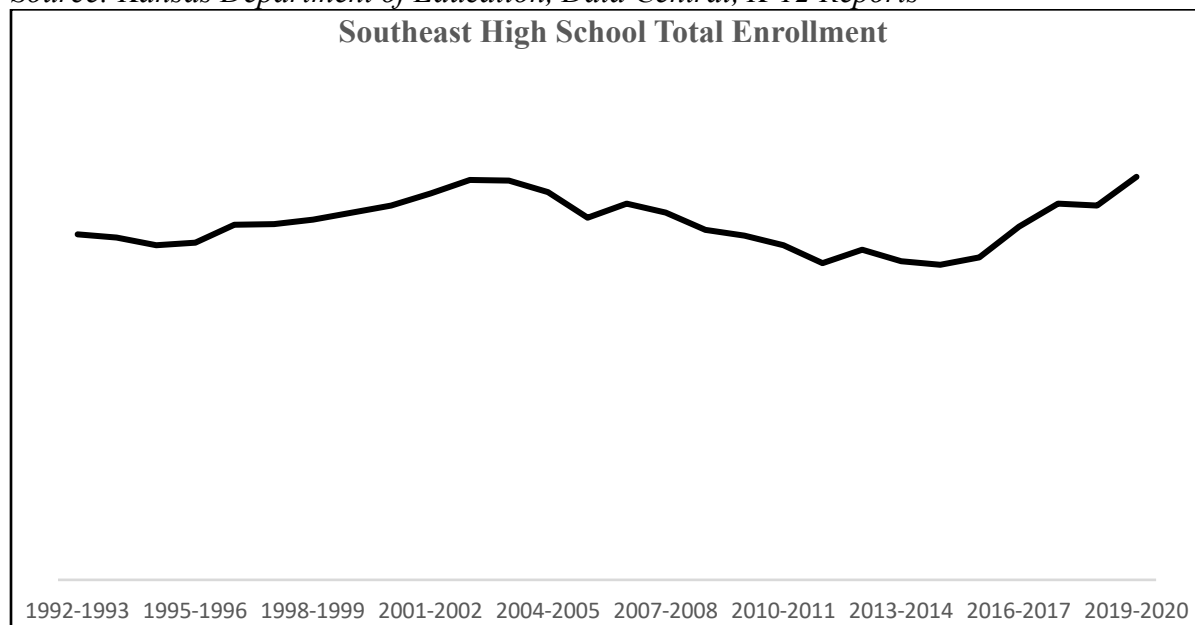
The article played a large role in informing the community of the realities within the new

building, without giving enough context for readers to understand the big picture.

District graduation data does not align with the bold statements made in the article. The article states that the graduation rate has "dropped steadily over the past several years, from nearly 78% in 2013." In reality, yes, the graduation rate has decreased, but not in the dramatic fashion suggested by the article. There was an unexplained drop in graduation rates the year that the student body transitioned into the new building, but Table 6 demonstrates that this was an anomaly. Graduation rates for the school year in which the article was published actually rebounded back to the same rate it had been in previous years, and have even shown an increase since then.

Table 6.
Southeast Graduation Rates 2015-2018
Souce: Kansas State Data Central

School Year	Graduation Rate (%)
2015	72
2016	72
2017	65
2018	72
2019	77

A similar story is told when comparing the media focus on student behavior with the realities told by district data. Southeast's total number of behavioral incidents was actually lower than that of other high schools in the district with similar enrollment numbers. Table 7 outlines the end of year total numbers of behavioral incidents at North High, East High, South High, and

Southeast High. All numbers dropped from 2016-17 school year to the following school year,

but the total number of incidents is not only comparable, but actually higher in 2016-17 at all

three of the other school buildings. These stories given a platform by the local newspaper allude

to a school that has gone off the rails and a student body that is extremely difficult to manage.

Interviews point to a different reality within the building.

Table 7.
Incident Counts by School, 2016-17, 2017-18
Source: Synergy Database, Rightown Public Schools

School	End of Year Total Incidents 2016-17	End of Year Total Incidents 2017-18
East	2,533	2,093
North	2,608	2,012
South	2,981	2,619
Southeast	2,367	2,256

The majority of teachers, school and district staff interviewed suggest that most kids at Southeast

do what they are asked and that there are many outstanding stories of success to be told. What is

covered by the media in Rightown is complex, but data in this chapter suggest that choices made

in regard to what is covered should not be taken lightly. One vocal group of teachers steered the

ship regarding what the media produced, which contributed to a domino-effect finally resulting

in a low status school. The overarching story of Southeast High School is one of a building in

transition, and that transition being made much more difficult by a cloud of negativity and media

scrutiny that did not accurately reflect realities within the school. Students and staff endured low

morale during a time that could have been depicted by the exciting transition, but community opinion played a large part in the falling morale. Southeast High can be characterized as a school demonstrating perseverance and grit, highlighted by increasing graduation rates, innovative career pathways and business collaborations, but the building staff and study body will need help in deciding the future of its reputation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The history of Rightown Southeast High School is not unlike the histories of similar large urban schools across the United States. What sets this story apart is the physical move of the school building, which opened for its first year in 2016, as well as distinctive policy changes on the part of Rightown Public Schools. The composition of the student body faced socioeconomic and racial shifts, again, much like many urban schools throughout the second part of the twentieth century. These shifts were less a product of dramatic White flight as was seen in large urban school districts across the country, and more a product of two very intentional district policy changes in the 1980s and 1990s. Rightown Public Schools accomplished its goal of creating "pull factors" to maintain its enrollment numbers with the opening of a highly sought-after magnet high school option, as well as a new International Baccalaureate program. It became evident during the decades surrounding the turn of the twenty-first century that these initiatives would have the direst consequences for Southeast High as it was the closest in proximity to the IB program at East High, and Northeast Magnet. Southeast began losing increasing numbers of high achieving students to these neighboring programs. With the move of the school building came increased media attention which shined a spotlight on the declining reputation of the school. In an attempt to flesh out the details that differentiated Southeast's story from national trends, this study was guided by two research questions:

1) To what extent does the history of Rightown Public Schools—and more specifically Southeast High—mirror broad national public education trends?

2) What are the key factors that have contributed to the declining reputation of Southeast High?

The descriptive nature of this project illuminates the mainstream argument of educational sociologists, in that our public school systems are a reflection of society at large (Anyon, 2005; 2009; Billingham and Hunt, 2016; Coleman, 1988; Darby and Rury, 2018; Gamoran and An, 2016). Southeast High School's physical surroundings began the process of changing during the 1990s and the school's reputation followed suit. Chapter 3 outlines the high status of the school held during its first three decades, which is important to note when trying to understand the problems of reputation and status today. The profile of the average student attending Southeast became lower income, and majority racial minority. This shift was not unlike those seen in other Rightown Public high schools, but in comparison to the origin of the school, it does stand out. Taking a broad look at the history of Southeast High, we can confirm theories about why sweeping policy changes often do not have substantive effects on schools such as Southeast High once they begin the process of losing students with high levels of social and cultural capital (Anyon, 2009). Unless coupled with fundamental social policy commitments, school districts do the best they can with the resources given to them. An important piece of this puzzle to note is that while student body now looks quite different than it did in the 1970s, the teaching staff does not. This detail is critical when sorting through the narratives in Chapters 4 and 5 related to student behavior and discipline, and even the composition of students tracked into AP and Honors classes.

Contrasting Narratives

The descriptive accounts in this project point to two conclusions that stand out as "out of the norm" in regard to the national narrative of urban schools. Conflicting narratives exist between the media and the majority of those who work in and attend Southeast. If only informed by Rightown Eagle articles printed and shared on social media, one would walk away with the

impression that Southeast was a failing school prior to the move of the building, and that the achievement and behavior of students has only declined since the student body moved in 2016. The group of teachers behind the series of negative articles informed the media of their reality. One teacher suggested that the entire staff was "fearful" of student violence, but this was only true of that teacher's experience. The issue became that one teacher's experience informed an entire community about what goes on inside of the school from day to day. Contrary to media scrutiny, the majority of district leaders, teachers, and students interviewed described a different situation within the school.

The articles also reference accurate graduation data, specifically in comparison to neighboring schools. Graduation rates did take an unexplained dip the year that the student body transitioned buildings, leaving room for community speculation about the cause. When coupled with accounts of disruptive behavior, these arguments make for a compelling narrative; this narrative is especially salient for those who do not have any experience within Southeast High or with its students. Running counter to the accounts of the small faction of disenchanted teachers, the narratives told by the majority of district leaders, teachers and students told a story of a proud high school staying afloat through a difficult transition. Instances of disruptive student behavior did not define the educational experience of students who attend Southeast, and these instances definitely were not unique when compared to similar schools from around the district. Up-to-date graduation data indicate an increase in graduation rates since the first year of the school's opening. Behavior data show a decrease in instances of disruptive behavior, which could indicate better abilities to relate to students on the part of staff, or falling numbers of behavioral instances, or both. In accordance with most teachers interviewed, a school administrator and a school counselor both pointed to the fact that most students do a great job of staying on task. The

majority of students want to learn. The majority of families want to see their students succeed. These sentiments were echoed in the majority of interviews, and when taken with the behavioral and academic data, they make a more compelling case than that of the small group of disenchanted teachers. Ultimately, both arguments hold some validity, but multiple pieces of the data collected in this project lead me to believe that the reality within Southeast High School is not accurately portrayed in the media.

District Policy Impacts on Southeast

Policy changes within the district during the 1990s have had a strong impact on the composition of the district, igniting the prevailing difference between Southeast High School and historical public school accounts. These policy changes were a means to an end; keeping high achieving students enrolled in the district instead of transferring to one of the increasing number of private school options. This specific piece of the history of Rightown Public Schools also counters the overarching American historical narrative, in that while other large urban school districts were losing enrollment at a dramatic rate, Rightown Public Schools was able to retain its enrollment numbers. The district accomplished its goal through these policy initiatives, but has had a tremendously negative impact on Southeast High. The strongest contributing factors to Southeast's declining reputation were the shifts in socioeconomic, racial and academic profiles of the students. Although negative media attention surrounding the move of the school building contributed to the declining reputation, it was more a symptom of the deeper problem; the profile of Southeast High declined most dramatically when high achieving students were given the option to transfer to Northeast Magnet or East High for the IB program.

Reflection on Aims and Methods

The goal of this project was to understand the realities of those who have attended this institution from its opening in 1957 to today and the extreme differences in those realities depending on the time period discussed. These aims aligned with the two research questions stated above and enriched our understanding of how this specific educational institution differed from national trends. This project also highlighted specific context in which district policy changes have taken shape. The scope of this work began broad and narrowed in focus as the data was analyzed. This method was established as the best way to make sense of the data after the data was collected, therefore it was not part of the initial plan. In sorting through the data, new questions arose, as they do with any quality research project, but those new questions became an obstacle to maintaining focus. Through a process of constant reflection on the specific goals of this project, I was able to provide specific answers to the two research questions while outlining future research opportunities.

Throughout this research project I reviewed a large number of archival sources, all needing to be categorized and sorted by relevance to the topics being discussed. Ultimately building a database sorted by decade and topic area became most helpful in seeking alignment with interview data. This method was advantageous when pursuing data to triangulate interview participants' accounts of historical events, but did not stand alone in the analysis process. This is not a limitation, but a consideration moving forward with this research. In hindsight, this method informed how I coded the interview data and if given the chance to do each of these analyses simultaneously, I think that the depth of analysis could have been greater. This was a product of time constraints and functioned effectively for the narrow focus of the project, but when this

project moves forward into answering more sociological questions, the archival database will need to be updated and recategorized.

Limitations and Future Research

Greater access to current student experiences and perceptions would have enriched this research significantly. This access was stifled by IRB protections, and the logistics of consent were a greater obstacle than I had the capacity to overcome with a 1-person research team. In this same vein, a more refined look at student discipline reports by teachers would have been helpful to understand nuances in the discipline strategies of veteran, alumni and new teachers, but this was not possible given permissions with district. More interview subjects would have lent themselves to a more accurate depiction of each decade of the school's history. Further analysis of the elevated media scrutiny and specific teachers' perceptions and opinions is warranted, but beyond the scope of this project. Additional attention should be paid to the application of sociological concepts such as *representative bureaucracy,* and could help explain the motivations of the small faction of disgruntled teachers and how they relate to their past experiences with the school. Additionally, student perceptions are of paramount importance to these questions of educational experience and telling the entire story of the decline of Southeast High's reputation. In order to gain a holistic understanding of how students experienced the decade surrounding the move of the high school, a follow-up study including students, now alumni of the school would add a tremendous amount of value to the understanding this school and how students have experienced the elements such as academic achievement and discipline that are fundamental to this school's reputation.

References

Alba, R., Sloan, J., and Sperling, J. (2011). The integration imperative: The children of low-status immigrants in the schools of wealthy societies. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *37*, 395-415.

Albrecht, S. F., Skiba, R. J., Losen, D. J., Chung, C. G., and Middelberg, L. (2012). Federal policy on disproportionality in special education: Is it moving us forward? *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, *23*(1), 14-25.

Anderson, E. (2010). *The imperative of integration*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Anyon, J. (2005). A political economy of race, urban education, and educational policy. *Race, identity, and representation in education*, *2*, 369-378.

Anyon, J. (2009). Progressive social movements and educational equity. *Educational Policy*, *23*(1), 194-215.

Anyon, Y., Jenson, J. M., Altschul, I., Farrar, J., McQueen, J., Greer, E., ... and Simmons, J. (2014). The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *44*, 379-386.

Artiles, A., Harry, B., Reschly, D., and Chinn, P. (2002). Over-Identification of Students of Color in Special Education: A Critical Overview. *Multicultural Perspectives, 4*(1), 3-10.

Baumgartner, F. R., and Jones, B. D. (1991). Agenda dynamics and policy subsystems. *The journal of Politics*, *53*(4), 1044-1074.

Beadie, N. (2000). The limits of standardization and the importance of constituencies: Historical tensions in the relationship between state authority and local control. *Balancing Local Control and State Responsibility for K-12 Education, Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education*.

Berends, Mark, Lucas, Samuel R., and Penaloza, Roberto V. (2008). How Changes in Families and Schools Are Related to Trends in Black-White Test Scores. *Sociology of Education, 81*(4), 313-344.

Berry, E., Brian Grace, and Leonard Wesley, (June, 1991). Ad Hoc Desegregation Committee: Final Report.

Billings, S. B., Deming, D. J., & Rockoff, J. (2014). School Segregation. *Educational Attainment*.

Billingham, C. M., & Hunt, M. O. (2016). School racial composition and parental choice: New evidence on the preferences of white parents in the United States. *Sociology of education*, *89*(2), 99-117.

Blanchett, W. J. (2006). Disproportionate representation of African American students in special education: Acknowledging the role of white privilege and racism. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(6), 24-28.

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1946, January 24).

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1947, May 5).

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1951, Seeptember 4).

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1960, October 3).

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1962, April 16).

Board of Education Agenda: Wichita Public Schools. (1963, August 5, September 17, October 7).

Boland, T., and Fowler, A. (2000). A systems perspective of performance management in public sector organizations. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *13*(5), 417-446.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of theory and

        research for the sociology of education (pp. 241-258) New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bozick, R., Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., Dauber, S., & Kerr, K. (2010). Framing the future:

        Revisiting the place of educational expectations in status attainment. *Social forces*, *88*(5),

        2027-2052.

Brand, J. E., & Xie, Y. (2010). Who benefits most from college? Evidence for negative selection

        in heterogeneous economic returns to higher education. *American sociological*

        review, *75*(2), 273-302.

Breen, R., & Lindsay, R. (1999). Academic research and student motivation. *Studies in Higher*

        Education, *24*(1), 75-93.

Callahan, R. E. (1964). *Education and the cult of efficiency*. University of Chicago Press.

Campbell, R. F., Cunningham, L. L., Nystrand, R., and Usdan, MD (1990). *The organization*

        and control of American schools (6th ed.). Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.

Campbell, R. F., and Mazzoni Jr, T. L. (1976). State Policy Making for the Public Schools: A

        Comparative Analysis of Policy Making for the Public Schools in Twelve States and a

        Treatment of State Governance Models.

Carr, D. S., Selin, S. W., and Schuett, M. A. (1998). Managing public forests: Understanding the

        role of collaborative planning. *Environmental management*, *22*(5), 767-776.

Center for Responsible Politics. (2006). *Lobbying overview.* Washington, D.C. Accessed at:

        http://www.opensecrets.org/index.asp.

Clark, B. T., and Allen, D. W. (2004). Political economy and the adoption of everyday

        environmental policies in the American states, 1997: an exploratory analysis. *The Social*

        Science Journal, *41*(4), 525-542.

Clotfelter, C. T. (2004). *After Brown: The rise and decline of school desegregation.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. (2005). Who teaches whom? Race and the distribution of novice teachers. *Economics of Education review*, *24*(4), 377-392.

Cohen, M. D., March, J. G., and Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative science quarterly*, 1-25.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*, *94*, S95-S120.

Collins, R. (1994). Four Sociological Traditions: Revised and Expanded Edition of Three Sociological Traditions.

Condron, D. J. (2009). Social class, school and non-school environments, and black/white inequalities in children's learning. *American Sociological Review*, *74*(5), 685-708.

Condron, D. J., & Roscigno, V. J. (2003). Disparities within: Unequal spending and achievement in an urban school district. *Sociology of Education*, 18-36.

Creswell, John W. "Collecting qualitative data." *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. Fourth ed. Boston: Pearson* (2012): 204-35.

Danielson, M. N., and Hochschild, J. (1998). Changing urban education: Lessons, cautions, prospects. *Changing urban education*, 277-295.

Darby, D. and Rury, J. (2018). The color of mind: Why the origins of the achievement gap matter. Chicago, IL. The University of Chicago Press.

Darby, D., and Saatcioglu, A. (2015). Race, inequality of opportunity, and school choice. *Theory and Research in Education*, *13*(1).

Davies, S. (1999). From moral duty to cultural rights: A case study of political framing in

        education. *Sociology of Education*, 1-21.

Davis, N. (1978). A History of Wichita Public School Buildings. Unified School District No.

        259.

DeBoer, Marilyn. (May 2, 2018). "Too far southeast for Southeast High School." Pg. 2A.

        Wichita Eagle Newspaper.

DeLeon, P. (1999). The stages approach to the policy process: What has it done? Where is it

        going. *Theories of the policy process*, *1*(19), 19-32.

Deil-Amen, R., & Rosenbaum, J. E. (2003). The social prerequisites of success: Can college

        structure reduce the need for social know-how?. *The Annals of the American Academy of*

        Political and Social Science, *586*(1), 120-143.

Domhoff, G. W. (2006). Who Rules America? Wealth, Income, and Power. *Who Rules America:*

        Wealth, Income, and Power.

Downey, D. B., & Condron, D. J. (2016). Fifty years since the Coleman Report: Rethinking the

        relationship between schools and inequality. *Sociology of Education*, *89*(3), 207-220.

Eakins, Joy. (October 20, 2017). "Joy Eakins: Transparency indeed an issue with Wichita

        school board." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Easton, D. (1965). *A systems analysis of political life*. Wiley.

Edsall, T. B., and Edsall, M. D. (1992). *Chain reaction: The impact of race, rights, and taxes on*

        American politics. WW Norton and Company.

Eick, G. (2008). Dissent in Wichita. Urbana, Illinois. *University of Illinois Press.*

Elder, C. D., and Cobb, R. W. (1983). *The political uses of symbols*. Longman Publishing Group.

Epstein, A. (1991, January 16). "Busing efforts hit breaks". *The Wichita Eagle.*

Fairclough, A. (2001). *Better day coming: Blacks and equality, 1890-2000*. New York: Viking.

Fielding, Nigel G., and Jane L. Fielding. *Linking data: the articulation of qualitative and quantitative methods in social research*. 1986.

Frazier, E. (1940). The Negro Family and Negro Youth. *The Journal of Negro Education, 9*(3), 290-299.

Fowler, F. C. (2009). Policy studies for educational leaders: An introduction.

Furnas, D. (1970, September 19). "School Battles Blamed on Outside Agitators". *The Wichita Eagle and Beacon*.

Gamoran, A. (1986). Instructional and institutional effects of ability grouping. *Sociology of Education*, 185-198.

Gamoran, A. (1992). Synthesis of research: Is ability grouping equitable? *Educational Leadership*, *50*, 11-11.

Gamoran, A., & An, B. P. (2016). Effects of school segregation and school resources in a changing policy context. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *38*(1), 43-64.

Gamoran, A., & Berends, M. (1987). The effects of stratification in secondary schools: Synthesis of survey and ethnographic research. *Review of educational research*, *57*(4), 415-435.

Goldsmith, W., and Blakely, E. (2010). *Separate societies: Poverty and inequality in US cities*. Temple University Press.

Goyette, K. A. (2008). College for some to college for all: Social background, occupational expectations, and educational expectations over time. *Social science research*, *37*(2), 461-484.

Grissom, J. A., Kern, E. C., & Rodriguez, L. A. (2015). The "representative bureaucracy" in education: Educator workforce diversity, policy outputs, and outcomes for disadvantaged students. *Educational Researcher*, *44*(3), 185-192.

Grodsky, E., & Jones, M. T. (2007). Real and imagined barriers to college entry: Perceptions of cost. *Social Science Research*, *36*(2), 745-766.

Guthrie, J. W., and Reed, R. J. (1991). *Educational administration and policy: Effective leadership for American education*. Allyn and Bacon.

Hannaway, J., and Rotherham, A. (2006). *Collective bargaining in education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Hanselman, P., & Fiel, J. E. (2017). School opportunity hoarding? Racial segregation and access to high growth schools. *Social Forces*, *95*(3), 1077-1104.

Harding, D. J. (2003). Counterfactual models of neighborhood effects: The effect of neighborhood poverty on dropping out and teenage pregnancy. *American Journal of Sociology*, *109*(3), 676-719.

Harrah, J. 2008. *Wichita Public Schools: Impact Analysis.* Report from Center for Economic Development and Business Research, Wichita State University.

Hassrick, E. M., & Schneider, B. (2009). Parent surveillance in schools: A question of social class. *American Journal of Education*, *115*(2), 195-225.

Heck, R. H. (2004). *Studying educational and social policy: Theoretical concepts and research methods*. Routledge.

Henig, J. R. (2009). Mayors, governors, and presidents: The new education executives and the end of educational exceptionalism. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *84*(3), 283-299.

Henningfeld, D. (2014). *Little Rock Nine* (1st ed., Perspectives on modern world history).

Hess Jr, G. A. (1999). Expectations, opportunity, capacity, and will: The four essential components of Chicago school reform. *Educational Policy*, *13*(4), 494-517.

Hindera, J. J. (1993). Representative bureaucracy: Imprimis evidence of active representation in the EEOC district offices. *Social Science Quarterly*.

Holme, J. J. (2002). Buying homes, buying schools: School choice and the social construction of school quality. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(2), 177-206.

Horn, M., and Modell, J. (1990). Into One's Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States, 1920-1975. *The American Historical Review, 95*(5), 1604-1604.

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M., and Perl, A. (2003). *Studying public policy: Policy cycles and policy subsystems* (Vol. 3). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hula, R., and Haring, C. (2004). Shaping urban agendas: An examination of state intervention in local policy arenas. In *annual meeting, Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago Illinois, April*.

Hunter, F. (1953). Community power structure A study of decision makers.

Incident Counts by Level, School, Month and Year – 2 Year Comparison. June 4, 2018. *Synergy Database,* Rightown Public Schools.

Innes, J. E. (1996). Planning through consensus building: A new view of the comprehensive planning ideal. *Journal of the American planning association*, *62*(4), 460-472.

Innes, J. E., and Gruber, J. (2005). Planning styles in conflict: the metropolitan transportation commission. *Journal of the American planning Association*, *71*(2), 177-188.

Jones, B. D. (1983). *Governing urban America: A policy focus*. Little Brown and Company.

Jones, B. D., and Baumgartner, F. R. (2005). *The politics of attention: How government prioritizes problems*. University of Chicago Press.

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2006). The history of collective bargaining among teachers. *Collective*

   bargaining in education: Negotiating change in today's schools, 7-25.

Kaestle, C. F. (2001). Federal aid to education since World War II: Purposes and politics. In

   J. Jennings (Ed.), *The future of the federal role in elementary and secondary education*

   (pp. 13-35). Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy.

Kaestle, C., and Lodewick, Alyssa E. (2007). *To educate a nation: Federal and national*

   strategies of school reform (Studies in government and public policy). Lawrence, Kan.:

   University Press of Kansas.

Kamin, L. (1974). The science and politics of I.Q. *Social Research,41*(3), 387-425.

Kansas Department of Education, *Score Card Report: Southeast High*. Retrieved from:

   https://ksreportcard.ksde.org/home.aspx?org_no=D0259&bldg_no=1842&rptType=1

Kansas Department of Education, *Data Central.* Retrieved from:

   https://datacentral.ksde.org/report_gen.aspx

Kansas State Department of Education, Report Card, 2006-2007. Retrieved from:

   http://ksreportcard.ksde.org/summary/FY2007/D02591842.pdf

Kansas Teacher, (1969, January). p. 14-15.

Karlson, K. B. (2015). Expectations on track? High school tracking and adolescent educational

   expectations. *Social Forces*, *94*(1), 115-141.

Kelly, S., & Price, H. (2011). The correlates of tracking policy: Opportunity hoarding, status

   competition, or a technical-functional explanation? *American Educational Research*

   Journal, *48*(3), 560-585.

Kennedy, Jack. (1970, January 18). "Protests Could Busing Plan". *The Wichita Eagle.*

Kennedy, Jack. (1970, May 10). "Parents Here to Indicate School Preference for Fall". *The Wichita Eagle.*

Kennedy, Jack. (1970, September 18). "City's Integration Stride Called Both Short, Long". *The Wichita Eagle.*

Kerchner, C. T., and Mitchell, D. E. (1988). *The changing idea of a teachers' union*. New York: Falmer Press.

Kinder, D. R., and Dale-Riddle, A. (2012). *The end of race: Obama, 2008, and racial politics in America*. Yale University Press.

Kingdon, J. W. (2001). A model of agenda-setting, with applications. *L. Rev. MSU-DCL*, 331.

Kohn, A. (1998). Only for my kid. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *79*(8), 568-578.

Konstantopoulos, S., and Borman, G. (2011). Family Background and School Effects on Student Achievement: A Multilevel Analysis of the Coleman Data. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(1), 97-132.

Koppich, J. E., and Callahan, M. A. (2009). Teacher collective bargaining: What we know and what we need to know. *Handbook of education policy research*, 296-306.

Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. Broadway Books.

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American sociological review*, 747-776.

Lareau, A., & Goyette, K. (Eds.). (2014). *Choosing homes, choosing schools*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Lareau, A., & Muñoz, V. L. (2012). "You're Not Going to Call the Shots" Structural Conflicts between the Principal and the PTO at a Suburban Public Elementary School. *Sociology of Education*, *85*(3), 201-218.

Lareau, A., Weininger, E., & Cox, A. (2018). Parental Challenges to Organizational Authority in

    an Elite School District: The Role of Cultural, Social, and Symbolic Capital. *Teachers*

    College Record, *120*(1), n1.

Lasswell, H. D. (1951). The policy orientation. *Communication Researchers and Policy–Making*.

LEAP Committee. *School and Society in One City* (full report). Wichita: Unified School District

    No. 259, July 1969.

Legette, K. (2018). School Tracking and Youth Self-Perceptions: Implications for Academic and

    Racial Identity. *Child development*, *89*(4), 1311-1327.

Lewis, A. E., & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives*

    in good schools. Oxford University Press.

Lewis-McCoy, R. H. (2014). *Inequality in the promised land: Race, resources, and suburban*

    schooling. Stanford University Press.

Lim, H. H. (2006). Representative bureaucracy: Rethinking substantive effects and active

    representation. *Public administration review*, *66*(2), 193-204.

Lindquist, E. (2006). Organizing for policy implementation: The emergence and role of

    implementation units in policy design and oversight. *Journal of Comparative Policy*

    Analysis, *8*(4), 311-324.

Liu, X., Lindquist, E., Vedlitz, A., and Vincent, K. (2010). Understanding local policymaking:

    Policy elites' perceptions of local agenda setting and alternative policy selection. *Policy*

    Studies Journal, *38*(1), 69-91.

Logan, J. R., Minca, E., and Adar, S. (2012). The geography of inequality: Why separate means

    unequal in American public schools. *Sociology of education*, *85*(3), 287-301.

Logan, J. R., and Molotch, H. (1987). *Urban fortunes* (p. 262).

Logan, J. R., Oakley, D., & Stowell, J. (2008). School segregation in metropolitan regions, 1970–2000: The impacts of policy choices on public education. *American Journal of Sociology*, *113*(6), 1611-1644.

Losen, D. (2015). *Closing the school discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive exclusion* (Disability, culture, and equity series).

Love, R. (August 11, 2008). "How to pass the Wichita bond issue." *Voice for Liberty.* Retrieved from: https://wichitaliberty.org/wichita-kansas-schools/how-to-pass-the-wichita-school-bond-issue/.

Lucas, S. R. (1999). *Tracking Inequality: Stratification and Mobility in American High Schools. Sociology of Education Series*. Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.

Lucas, S. R., & Berends, M. (2002). Sociodemographic diversity, correlated achievement, and de facto tracking. *Sociology of Education*, 328-348.

Lyken-Segosebe, D., & Hinz, S. E. (2015). The politics of parental involvement: How opportunity hoarding and prying shape educational opportunity. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *90*(1), 93-112.

McDonnell, L. M., Timpane, P. M., and Benjamin, R. (2000). *Rediscovering the Democratic Purposes of Education. Studies in Government and Public Policy*. University Press of Kansas, 2501 West 15th Street, Lawrence, KS 66049.

McLendon, M. K., and Cohen-Vogel, L. (2008). Understanding education policy change in the American states: Lessons from political science. *Handbook of education politics and policy*, 30-51.

Malen, B., and Muncey, D. (2000). Creating "a new set of givens"? The impact of state activism on school autonomy. *Balancing local control and state responsibility for K-12 education*, 199-244.

Marshall, C., Mitchell, D., and Wirt, F. (1986). The context of state-level policy formation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *8*(4), 347-378.

Marshall, C., Mitchell, D., and Wirt, F. (1989). Culture and education policy in the United States.

Martinez, S., and Rury, J. (2012). From "Culturally Deprived" to "At Risk": The Politics of Popular Expression and Educational Inequality in the United States, 1960-1985. *Teachers College Record, 114*(6), 8.

Massey, D. S. (2007). *Categorically unequal: The American stratification system*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Massey, D. S., and Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Harvard University Press.

Meier, K. J., Stewart, J., & England, R. E. (1989). *Race, class, and education: The politics of second-generation discrimination*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Meier, K. J., Wrinkle, R. D., & Polinard, J. L. (1999). Representative bureaucracy and distributional equity: Addressing the hard question. *The Journal of Politics*, *61*(4), 1025-1039.

Michener, A. "Committee Report on Study of Community Resources for Race Relations Clinic, Wichita, Kansas," 1947, October 4). Ablah Library Special Collections, *Wichita State University.*

Mickelson, R. A. (2003). When are racial disparities in education the result of racial discrimination? A social science perspective. *Teachers College Record*, *105*(6), 1052-1086.

Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd Ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (1994).

Mintrom, M., and Vergari, S. (1996). Advocacy coalitions, policy entrepreneurs, and policy change. *Policy studies journal*, *24*(3), 420-434.

Mintrom, M., and Vergari, S. (1998). Policy networks and innovation diffusion: The case of state education reforms. *The Journal of Politics*, *60*(1), 126-148.

Mitchell, D. E., and Spady, W. G. (1983). Authority, power, and the legitimation of social control. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *19*(1), 5-33.

Molotch, H. (1976). The city as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place. *American journal of sociology*, *82*(2), 309-332.

Morgan, K., Kingston, K., & Sproule, J. (2005). Effects of different teaching styles on the teacher behaviors that influence motivational climate and pupils' motivation in physical education. *European Physical Education Review*, *11*(3), 257-285.

Morris, A. E. Letter to Leon Panetta. (1969, August 19).

Murphy, J., & Hallinger, P. (1989). Equity as access to learning: Curricular and instructional treatment differences. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *21*(2), 129-149.

Nearly 70,000 Wichita Students Will Attend School Here This Fall. (1957, August 25). *Wichita Beacon.*

Neuroth, Jeanne-Marie. (May 2, 2018). "Responsibility for attendance is on students, parents." Pg. 2A. *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Nicholson-Crotty, J., Grissom, J. A., & Nicholson-Crotty, S. (2011). Bureaucratic representation, distributional equity, and democratic values in the administration of public programs. *The Journal of Politics*, *73*(2), 582-596.

Nicholson-Crotty, S., Grissom, J. A., Nicholson-Crotty, J., & Redding, C. (2016). Disentangling the causal mechanisms of representative bureaucracy: Evidence from assignment of students to gifted programs. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *26*(4), 745-757.

Oakes, J. (1987). Tracking in secondary schools: A contextual perspective. *Educational psychologist*, *22*(2), 129-153.

Oakes, J. (1990). Multiplying inequalities: The effects of race, social class, and tracking on opportunities to learn mathematics and science.

Oakes, J. (1994). More than misapplied technology: A normative and political response to Hallinan on tracking. *Sociology of Education*, *67*(2), 84-91.

Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track*. Yale University Press.

Ogawa, R. T., Sandholtz, J. H., Martinez-Flores, M., and Scribner, S. P. (2003). The substantive and symbolic consequences of a district's standards-based curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*, *40*(1), 147-176.

Oh, C. H., and Rich, R. F. (1996). Explaining use of information in public policymaking. *Knowledge, Technology and Policy*, *9*(1), 3-35.

Orfield, G. (1978). *Must we bus?: Segregated schools and national policy*. Washington: Brookings Institute.

Osborne, J. W., & Jones, B. D. (2011). Identification with academics and motivation to achieve in school: How the structure of the self influences academic outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, *23*(1), 131-158.

Parson, E. A., and Fisher-Vanden, A. K. (1997). Integrated assessment models of global climate change. *Annual Review of Energy and the Environment*, *22*(1), 589-628.

Patterson, James. *Brown v. Board of Education: A civil rights milestone and its troubled legacy*. (2001). *Choice Reviews Online, 39*(02), 39-1142.

Patterson, James T. *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life: From LBJ to Obama*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Perez Tobias, S. (April 21, 2013). "Southeast High School: Renovate or build anew?" *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (June 24, 2013). "Wichita school board votes to build a new Southeast High School." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (April 29, 2017). "Wichita bond issue by the numbers: A look back." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (October 1, 2015). "Wichita Officials Tour New Southeast High School" *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (February 21, 2017). "Eagle files open meetings complaint against Wichita school board." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (April 04, 2017). "Wichita school board largely followed transparency law, ruling says." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (April 29, 2017). "Wichita bond issue by the numbers: A look back." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (June 16, 2017). "Behavior is getting worse in Wichita classrooms, data shows."

    Wichita Eagle Newspaper.

Perez Tobias, S. (October 20, 2017). "Wichita school board member speaks out about closed-

    door dealings." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (December 01, 2017). "Teachers 'fearful' about escalating violence at Southeast

    High." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (March 08, 2018). "Teen arrested after fire in Southeast High bathroom."

    Wichita Eagle Newspaper.

Perez Tobias, S. (April 12, 2018). "Principal shuffle: Four Wichita high schools will have new

    leaders this fall." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (April 29, 2017). "The new Southeast High is bigger and better. So why is its

    graduation rate dropping?" *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Perez Tobias, S. (May 08, 2018). "Pathway could lead to jobs at $40,000 right out of high

    school." *Wichita Eagle Newspaper.*

Phillips, D., and Coleman, J. (1966). Adolescents and the Schools. *Social Forces, 44*(4), 590.

Plan of Compliance Wichita Public Schools, USD #259, (1968, December 2).

Ravitch, D. (1983). *The troubled crusade: American education, 1945-1980*. New York: Basic

    Books.

Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor:

    New evidence and possible explanations. *Whither opportunity*, 91-116.

Reardon, S. F., & Owens, A. (2014). 60 years after Brown: Trends and consequences of school

    segregation. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *40*.

Rich, P. M., & Jennings, J. L. (2015). Choice, information, and constrained options: School

transfers in a stratified educational system. *American Sociological Review*, *80*(5), 1069-

1098.

Riccucci, N. M., Van Ryzin, G. G., & Lavena, C. F. (2014). Representative bureaucracy in

policing: Does it increase perceived legitimacy?. *Journal of public administration*

research and theory, *24*(3), 537-551.

Roch, C. H., Pitts, D. W., & Navarro, I. (2010). Representative bureaucracy and policy tools:

Ethnicity, student discipline, and representation in public schools. *Administration &*

Society, *42*(1), 38-65.

Rochefort, D. A., and Cobb, R. W. (1994). Problem definition: An emerging perspective. *The*

politics of problem definition: Shaping the policy agenda, *1*(4).

Rogers, Lynn. (October 20, 2017). "School board members have common mission." *Wichita*

Eagle Newspaper.

Rosenbaum, J. E. (1980). Track misperceptions and frustrated college plans: An analysis of the

effects of tracks and track perceptions in the National Longitudinal Survey. *Sociology of*

education, 74-88.

Rosenbaum, J. E. (2001). *Beyond college for all: Career paths for the forgotten half*. Russell

Sage Foundation.

Rowan, B. (2002). The ecology of school improvement: Notes on the school improvement

industry in the United States. *Journal of Educational Change*, *3*(3), 283-314.

RSP & Associates, "Wichita Public Schools Enrollment and Boundary Analysis", 2012.

Rury, J. (2009). *Education and social change: Contours in the history of American*

schooling (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Rury, J., and Hill, Shirley A. (2012). *The African American struggle for secondary schooling, 1940-1980: Closing the graduation gap*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Rury, J. L., & Saatcioglu, A. (2011). Suburban advantage: Opportunity hoarding and secondary attainment in the postwar metropolitan North. *American Journal of Education*, *117*(3), 307-342.

Sabatier, P. A. (1999). Fostering the development of policy theory. *Theories of the policy process*, *2*, 321-336.

Sampson, R. J. (2008). Moving to inequality: Neighborhood effects and experiments meet social structure. *American journal of sociology*, *114*(1), 189-231.

Sardell, A., and Johnson, K. (1998). The politics of EPSDT policy in the 1990s: policy entrepreneurs, political streams, and children's health benefits. *The Milbank Quarterly*, *76*(2), 175-205.

Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). The Semi-Sovereign People (Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, New York).

Schneider, B., & Stevenson, D. (1999). The ambitious generation. *Educational Leadership*, *57*(4), 22-25.

Schon, D. A., and Rein, M. (1995). *Frame reflection: Toward the resolution of intractrable policy controversies*. Basic Books.

School Integration Success in Wichita. (1980, February). *Wichita Public Schools Newsletter for Parents and Community.*

Sevetson, M. (1990, August 17). "Jump in suspensions stuns school officials". *The Wichita Eagle*. p. 4A.

Sharkey, P. (2013). *Stuck in place: Urban neighborhoods and the end of progress toward racial equality*. University of Chicago Press.

Sharkey, P., & Elwert, F. (2011). The legacy of disadvantage: Multigenerational neighborhood effects on cognitive ability. *American journal of sociology*, *116*(6), 1934-81.

Shipps, D. (2006). *School reform, corporate style: Chicago, 1880-2000* (Studies in government and public policy). Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas.

Skiba, Russell J., Michael, Robert S., Nardo, Abra Carroll, and Peterson, Reece L. (2002). The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment. *Urban Review,34*(4), 317-42.

Skiba, R. (2002). Special Education and School Discipline: A Precarious Balance. *Behavioral Disorders, 27*(2), 81-97.

Skiba, R., Poloni-Staudinger, L., Gallini, S., Simmons, A., and Feggins-Azziz, R. (2006). Disparate Access: The Disproportionality of African American Students with Disabilities across Educational Environments. *Exceptional Children, 72*(4), 411-424.

Smith, S. (1940). Library Facilities in Negro Secondary Schools. *The Journal of Negro Education, 9*(3), 504-512.

Smith, J. S., Estudillo, A. G., and Kang, H. (2011). Racial differences in eighth grade students' identification with academics. *Education and Urban Society*, *43*(1), 73-90.

Solecki, W. D., and Shelley, F. M. (1996). Pollution, political agendas, and policy windows: environmental policy on the eve of Silent Spring. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, *14*(4), 451-468.

Stiefel, L., Schwartz, A. E., and Chellman, C. C. (2007). So many children left behind:

       Segregation and the impact of subgroup reporting in No Child Left Behind on the racial

       test score gap. *Educational Policy*, *21*(3), 527-550.

Stone, C. N. (1989). *Regime politics: governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*. University Press of Kansas.

Stone, C. N. (1993). Urban regimes and the capacity to govern: A political economy

       approach. *Journal of urban affairs*, *15*(1), 1-28.

Stone, C. N., and Sanders, H. T. (1987). *The politics of urban development*. University Press of

       Kansas.

Stone, D. (2002). Policy paradox (Rev. ed.). *NY: WW Norton and Company*.

Stringer, J. (1970, January 15). "All Black Elementary Schools Virtually Emptied by Boycott".

       The Wichita Beacon.

Stringer, J. (1970, July 21). "Wichita School Compliance Rule Due in 90 Days". *The Wichita*

       Beacon.

Stringer, J. (1970, August 1970). "Volunteer Blacks Assigned to White Elementary Schools".

       The Wichita Beacon.

Taylor, W. L. (1974). Desegregating Urban School Systems after Milliken v. Bradley-The

       Supreme Court and Urban Reality: A Tactical Analysis of Milliken v. Bradley. *Wayne L.*

       Rev., *21*, 751.

Tilly, C. (1998). *Durable inequality*. Univ of California Press.

Turner, G. (2003). *British cultural studies: An introduction*. Psychology Press.

Tyack, D. B., and Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia*. Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D., and Hansot, Elisabeth. (1982). *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in*

       America, 1820-1980. New York: Basic Books.

Tyack, D., and Hansot, Elisabeth. (1990). *Learning together: A history of coeducation in American schools*. New Haven: New York: Yale University Press; Russell Sage Foundation.

Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, black students, and acting White after Brown*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Urban, Wayne J., and Wagoner, Jennings L. *American Education: A History*. Fifth ed. 2014.

U.S. Census Bureau (1970). Total White Population, 1970. Retrieved from: https://www.socialexplorer.com/4b80b0169c/edit.

U.S. Census Bureau (1980). Total White Population, 1980. Retrieved from: https://www.socialexplorer.com/4b80b0169c/edit.

U.S. Census Bureau (1990). Total White Population, 1990. Retrieved from: https://www.socialexplorer.com/4b80b0169c/edit.

U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Total White Population, 2000. Retrieved from: https://www.socialexplorer.com/4b80b0169c/edit.

U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Total White Population, 2010. Retrieved from: https://www.socialexplorer.com/4b80b0169c/edit.

U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection. Days missed due to Out-of-School Suspension, 2015. Retrieved from : https://ocrdata.ed.gov

VanMeter, Sondra. (1977) Our Common School Heritage. Shawnee Mission, KS. *Inter-Collegiate Press.*

Vinovskis, M. (2009). *From a nation at risk to No Child Left Behind: National education goals and the creation of federal education policy*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Vinovskis, M. (2015). *From A Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind: National education goals and the creation of federal education policy*. Teachers College Press.

Warren, R., Rosentraub, M. S., and Weschler, L. F. (1992). Building urban governance: An agenda for the 1990s. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *14*(3-4), 399-422.

Wichita Beacon. (1968, May 27).

Wichita Beacon. p. A5. (1970, January 15).

Wichita & Nation. *Decisions for Development*, p. 193-208. 1982.

Wimberly, H. (1952, September 8). School Population Boosted 10 Times in Half Century. *Wichita Eagle.*

Wirt, F. M., and Kirst, M. W. (1989). *Schools in conflict: The politics of education*. McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Wirt, F. M., and Kirst, M. W. (1982). The politics of education: Schools in conflict.

Wu, S., National Institute of Education, N.I.E, and NIE. (1980). *Student suspension: A critical reappraisal*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Yin, Robert K. "Case study research: Design and Methods. SAGE publications." *Thousand oaks* (2009).

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Statement
The Evolution of Wichita Southeast High School

INTRODUCTION

The Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You are being asked to participate in an interview in connection with the Southeast High School Oral History Project. You are being asked to participate because you either attend, have attended, work or have professional or community relationships with the school. You will be asked about your experiences with Southeast, specifically what it was like to be a student, teacher, or work in policy decision making. The purpose of the study is to better understand the history of the school and of Wichita Public School District.

PROCEDURES

Interviews. Following the collection and organization of archival data, interviews will be conducted with teachers, community members, school alumni, students and support staff. Following a recruitment email or phone call, participants will be asked to schedule directly with the researcher. An outline of topics to be covered as well as information about the study and length of interview will be disclosed in a follow-up reminder email. Prior to the oral history interview, the participant will be walked through an informed consent process informing them of the procedure, risks/benefits and dissemination procedures. Interviews will be conducted during the Spring, Summer and possibly Fall of 2018. Interviews will last approximately 40 minutes. This is the extent of the time commitment requested with the exception of any follow-up questions. In follow-up situations, a second interview may be used to enrich or add nuance to existing information taken from previous interviews and archival data (newspapers, yearbooks, district reports, etc.).

RISKS

There are no risks anticipated by participating in this study.

BENEFITS

The anticipated benefits of the research project to society is a historical study outlining contextual factors that have contributed to the current state in a high-need, highly-diverse, urban school.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

There will be no monetary or non-monetary incentives or rewards associated with this study.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will preserve the confidentiality of all personally identifiable information about all individual students obtained in accordance with applicable law, including the Federal Social Security Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and any regulations promulgated there under. All aspects of the study will be conducted in a manner that do not permit personal identification of parents, teachers and students by persons other than required for research activities undertaken by the research team.

As such, the researcher will not disclose any such information to any persons except as required by law and will report results of the study with *school, district and individual name pseudonyms*. All interview recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password secured laptop that only the researcher will have access to throughout the dissertation writing phase. After submission and approval of the dissertation, all data will remain secured for 3 years after the completion of the project in case of any follow-up, before being destroyed.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: *Lauren Coleman-Tempel, 1122 West Campus Rd, Rm 610, Lawrence, KS 66045*.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the researcher may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTION ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____   _____
    Type/Print Participant's Name   Date

_____
          Participant's Signature

Researcher Contact Information

Lauren Coleman-Tempel, PhD Candidate
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
KU School of Education
lecoleman@ku.edu
316-619-1305

John L. Rury, PhD
Professor of Education (ELPS)
Professor (by courtesy), History and African & African American Studies
423 JR Pearson Hall, University of Kansas
1122 West Campus Rd, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101
jrury@ku.edu
p 785 864 9697
f 785 864 4697

Appendix B: Student Assent Form

Southeast High Study

 Student Assent Form

You are receiving this questionnaire because you are a student at Southeast High School. I am interested in learning about your experiences as a student over the past two years. This is to help me understand the transition from your old school building to this new one, I will be asking some general questions about what it has been like to be a student.

The benefit of your participation is to contribute information regarding your experiences as a student in the Wichita area, as well as specifically here at Southeast High.

If you choose to participate, other people will not know that you are in the study. All student comments will be put together, so no one can attribute comments to you. In telling other people about this research, I will not use your name, and you will not be identified in any other way.

Your parents or guardian have to approve your participation in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, that will be fine. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's fine too. You can stop at any time.

If you don't feel like answering any questions, you don't have to, and you can stop speaking anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now or

when we are talking together. If you decide you would like to participate in the group discussion, and be a part of the study, please sign your name below.

Name:_____ Date:_____

Appendix C: Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent

The Evolution of Wichita Southeast High School

INTRODUCTION

The Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and he or she will not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw such permission at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this academic department, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Your child is being asked to participate in a student focus group in connection with the Southeast High School Oral History Project. He or she is being asked to participate as current students at Wichita Southeast High School. Your student will be asked about her or his experiences with Southeast, specifically what it is/has been like to be a student before and after the transition to a new school building.

The purpose of the study is to better understand the history of the school and of Wichita Public School District.

PROCEDURES

The study is being conducted by a Doctoral Candidate-Lauren Coleman-Tempel in partial fulfillment of her PhD.

In the study, your child will be asked to participate in the following activities:

Child:

Participate in focus group interviews that are designed to better understand your student's experiences as a student at Southeast High School. Focus groups will last between 30-60 minutes, and will be comprised of other Southeast High School students.

It is important to note, that the researchers will keep all information confidential that is acquired during this discussion, the researchers cannot control what is said by other group members outside of the focus group.

RISKS

There are no risks associated with this study

BENEFITS

The potential benefit of your student's participation is to contribute key information regarding the evolution of this Wichita High School.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. To ensure anonymity, your child's name will be replaced with a unique identifying number or a pseudonym. We will keep all of your child's records separate from identifying information. Your child's identifying information will not be associated in any publication or presentation. Your child's identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or unless you give written permission. Finally, your child's information will be stored on a FERPA/HIPPA compliant server at the University of Kansas; all files will be encrypted with password-protection; and the researchers will be the only ones who have access to these files.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Lauren Coleman-Tempel, The University of Kansas, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 W. Campus Rd., Lawrence, KS 66045.

If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

DISSEMENTIATION OF FINDINGS

Findings from this study will be disseminated to the researcher's faculty advisors in the form of a formal dissertation. The final dissertation is a public document and can be accessed through ProQuest online. USD 259 (Wichita Pubic Schools) also will have access to the final dissertation.

AUDIO RECORDINGS

Focus groups in this project will be audio recorded. This is procedure is optional and we ask for your consent below prior to beginning taping. By initialing below you are agreeing to be audio recorded. If at any time your student feels that they would not like to be taped, they will be informed that they may ask the researchers to stop taping. All recordings will be transcribed by Lauren Coleman-Tempel. Only Lauren will have access to the audio recordings as they will be stored on a protected FERPA compliant server.

_____ Initial

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

_____   _____

       Type/Print Participant's Name   Date

_____

        Participant's Guardian Signature

Researcher Contact Information

Lauren Coleman-Tempel, PhD Candidate

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

KU School of Education

lecoleman@ku.edu

316-619-1305

John L. Rury, PhD

Professor of Education (ELPS)

Professor (by courtesy), History and African & African American Studies

423 JR Pearson Hall, University of Kansas

1122 West Campus Rd, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101

jrury@ku.edu

p 785 864 9697

f 785 864 4697

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview PROTOCOL
Evolution of Wichita Southeast High School

You are being asked to participate in an interview in connection with the Southeast High School Oral History Project. You are being asked to participate because you either attend, have attended, work or have professional or community relationships with the school. You will be asked about your experiences with Southeast, specifically what it was like to be a student, teacher, or work in policy decision making. The purpose of the study is to better understand the history of the school and of Wichita Public School District.

1. Can you please describe your relationship with Southeast High School? (e.g. student, alumni, teacher, staff)

2. What was Southeast like when you attended/worked there?

3. How has Southeast changed since you attended/worked there?

4. Have you seen any dramatic changes in the student body since the move of the school building in 2016?

5. How has the move been received by students? Staff? Parents?

Questions for Alumni Only

6. Could you tell me about a memorable event that happened while you were a student at Southeast High? What about this event was remarkable?

7. What did an average day look like in your neighborhood? How has that neighborhood changed since you were a high school student?

8. Would you send your child/grandchild to the current Southeast High School? Why or why not?

Questions for Staff/Community Members

9. What is the community current perception of Southeast High? Has this changed over time?

10. What are the current challenges facing Southeast High? Are these different than they were in previous generations?

Appendix E: Student Focus Group Protocol

**Evolution of Southeast High
Student Focus Group Protocol**

PROJECT INTRODUCTION
- Assent Form
- Demographic Survey
- Who I am—background, doctoral program, etc
- Why I chose SE for the study
- What happens with their responses
- Recording, OKAY??

1. What is it like to be a student here at Southeast?
    - What are the cliques like here? What kind of friend groups are there?

2. How have things changed from attending the old building to the new?

- What do your families think about the new building?
- What is the best part about the new building?
- What was the worst part about the old?
- Is there any part of going to school at the old building that you miss?

3. Could you describe the school spirit here at Southeast? Do you think you have more or less school spirit than other schools?

- Who is your school rival?
- Are there traditions here at Southeast?

4. So, Southeast has been in the news a bit lately (graduation rates, violence, behavior, etc.) has this had any impact on you as students? How have you seen these stories play out here as students?

5. When you tell other people that you go to Southeast, what is their reaction? Is there a specific perception that goes along with going to Southeast?

6. How do you feel that you rank compared to other high schools in Wichita? Has this changed over the last couple of years with the move?

7. So you're all about to graduate...What are you most fond memories of being a student here at Southeast?

8. Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know about what it's like to be a student here at Southeast?

Appendix F: Local Education Policy-Making Literature

Public policy-making often asks the difficult question of "should we" because the law can only answer questions of "may we" and "must we" (Hannaway and Rotherham, 2006). This places key policy-making players in an often-ambiguous space where political climate, special interests and local educational authority dictate policy outcomes. There has been a sharp increase in the interest given to educational policy formation, which has coincided with the proliferation of high stakes testing and accountability movements (Vinovskis, 2015). These movements emphasize both academic rigor, but more importantly institutional accountability and efficiency (read cost control) deeply influenced by Taylorism's scientific management and the "Cult of Efficiency" (Callahan, 1964). Recently, educational research has pointed to public school systems' failures to effectively educate all students, again, adding to the imperative for educational change (Kozol 2012).

While much interest is paid to the process and uptake of new policy initiatives, Tyack and Cuban (1995) famously point to a distinction between "policy action" and "policy talk". The difference in these two types of attention paid to policy lies in the compartmentalized nature of education and the power of local education institutions to either accept or reject new policy initiatives. Tyack and Cuban (1995) speak of the dramatic increase in "policy talk", which is generally quite political in nature. This increase does not always correspond with policy change; in all actuality, the authors argue that it rarely does. This argument places the "grammar of schooling" at the center of why educational policy rarely results in dramatic change. The "grammar of schooling" is the notion that at the turn of the 20th century, our educational institutions were set, and the durability of these institutions is what keeps policy reform slow and often ineffective.

The process of deciding what is important to a local education system and worthy of policy intervention is an intricate and convoluted process. At a foundational level, we can point to differing social paradigms for explanations as to why certain issues are privileged over others. Collins (1994) labels four differing sociological traditions that can help us to understand the competing paradigms and ways of understanding social problems. Each of these traditions holds distinct school emphases, each orienting those positions differently. The four sociological traditions spoken of by Collins (1994) and elaborated on by many others are *Goal Oriented Functionalism, Power Based Conflict, Marketplace Exchange and Symbolic Interaction* (Mitchell and Spady, 1983; Turner, 2003). Drawing from Collins (1994) we can see that the emphasis placed on schooling from a *Goal Oriented Functionalist* point of view is that of institutional effectiveness. In order for the primary goals of a society to be met, a school must fulfill its duty of effectively imparting skills and knowledge to its citizens. In a *Power Based Conflict* social paradigm, the emphasis placed on schooling is that of equal opportunity. This connects much more closely with notions of schooling as a mechanism of social mobility and would emphasize mediation of achievement gaps over a prescribed curriculum or workforce preparedness. The next paradigm discussed is that of *Marketplace Exchange*. In this paradigm, competition in the form of competitive academic achievement is where we place school emphasis. Finally, the social paradigm of *Symbolic Interaction* places school emphasis on cultural development; this emphasis would result in students' increased ability to navigate a culturally complex society and to draw deeper meaning out of interactions with institutions and other citizens (Collins, 1994). Key players in local education policy development might hold one of these competing social paradigms while others hold a conflicting view. This often results in a policy reform stalemate at local and state levels.

An example of conflicting goals in education policy could be the push and pull of advocacy for vocational education at the middle and high school levels. Proponents of career pathway and vocational reforms argue from a *Marketplace Exchange* paradigm, claiming that it is to the students' advantage to focus primarily on gaining a competitive edge in the workforce following their stent in compulsory schooling. In siding with this perspective, it is good and right to prepare students for economic success. One could argue against reforms of this nature using a *Power Based Conflict* paradigm, pointing to the social inequality of the students placed in manual labor tracks as opposed to students seeking a foundation in biomedical science and moving through a pre-med track. Both arguments make sense, but will not find an easy conclusion due to the differing paradigms undergirding their arguments. Others have argued that it is social priorities that take the wheel when policy decisions are framed and eventually made or forgotten. Stone (2002) and Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt (1986) identify core public values of Liberty, Quality, Efficiency and Equity as cornerstones in the policy-making process. One of these four values must be engaged through public advocacy or private interest for educational policy to be successful. Agenda-setting will be discussed at length in a later section, but it is imperative to point out that within a political decision-making setting, "the argument about what the argument is about" is the most important (Schattschneider, 1960).

Key Local Policy-Making Players

Local policy reforms take many shapes, with a multitude of central concerns. As previously mentioned, the goals undergirding the proposed policy dictate the nature of that reform. Backing out just one step, the groups behind the policy at hand dictate the goals of the reform in question. The evolution of public school systems in the United States has allowed for the growth of "tension between local authority and central authority" (Beadie, 2000, p. 48).

187

Many reforms emphasize competing purposes such as professional expertise, academic rigor, democratic governance and professionalism (McDonnell, Timpane and Benjamin, 2000). We have a tradition of local control of educational decision making, which has happened to also take the form of incremental decision making as well (Oh and Rich, 1996). Decisions made at the local level are often a result of involvement of "local cartels" which work to involve community activists and other local interest groups to sway policy decisions in their direction to garner public attention and enhance legitimacy, but do not fundamentally change the day to day function of schools (Hess, 1999; Ogawa, Sandholtz, Martinez-Flores and Scribner, 2003).

Policy research seeking to understand the key actors involved in a policy decision can often face struggles in determining the bounds of study because actors involved cannot be determined *a priori* (Howlett and Ramesch, 1995). The actors involved may impose influence through a variety of ways. These methods of influence include but are not limited to specifying rules, allocating or withholding resources or information, or even less concrete influence such as framing agendas, altering perceptions of problems or defining priorities (Malen and Muncey, 2000). Again, listing key players involved in educational policy decisions must be determined through in-depth, contextual research of current policy processes. Of the deep body of research in this field, notable policy influencers are school boards, superintendents, teachers' unions, legislative bodies, corporations, mayors, federal courts and state educational agencies (Danielson and Hochschild, 1998). The influence of each group is intricately tied to the policy decision at hand and political climate and location in the election cycle, within each specific context.

Policy research can point to trends in the involvement of these groups over time, with particular interest in shifts in governmental control. Authority arrangements have a strong impact on the players "at the table" during both the policy-making and implementation phases of this

process (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand and Usdan, 1990; Henig, 2009). The 1950s and 1960s represent a time when reform decisions were deeply local and influenced greatly by public opinion and local political leanings. During this period, the state educational governance represented a "weak link" in the chain of control. Federal reforms, much like those following events such as *Brown v. Board* and the launch of *Sputnik* found implementation to be difficult due to local acceptance and strength in authority. Into the 1970s and 1980s, a strong association between federal and state funding and fidelity at the local level became established (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976). As a response to this increased imposition from the top-down, state and local coalitions have grown to be present and active in the decision making process, such as teacher unions, parent activism groups and state partisan initiatives (Beadie, 2000).

Although images of the uncompromising teacher union are often at the forefront when policy formation is discussed, there has been little research after the 1990s on the effectiveness and processes by which these collective bargaining decisions are made (Koppich and Callahan, 2009). The literature covering the movements of teacher unions and collective bargaining was analyzed by Hannaway and Rotherham (2006) and found that this topic has garnered very little attention. Not all policy issues are of interest to teacher unions, and subsequently, they are not active in all policy formation. A common perception of teacher unions is that their only concern lies with the profession itself, rather than interests of students and curriculum (Kahlenberg, 2006; Kerchner and Mitchell, 1988). High profile presence of teacher unions generally surround issues such as teacher benefits, contracts and salaries and therefore, these perceptions are what underlay the public and educational administrative perception of these organizations.

Levels of power between political actors are not constant over place and time. Mazzoni (1991) points to the arenas in which policy decisions are made as an important and evolving

189

piece of the policy-making process. Depending on where and when a policy debate takes place, certain actors might be privileged above others. These arenas constitute political landscapes, election cycles, incentives for action and resources available, among other things (Mazzoni, 1991). The understanding of this process becomes even more complex and dizzying when you add the ever increasing members of "the school improvement industry" such as corporations, text book companies, test developers, management organizations, think tanks, issue networks and so on (Rowan, 2002). As with all public policy, the success of federal or state educational policy implementation is inexorably tied to local school systems' acceptance, as they are the first line of defense for the durable and inflexible institution.

Another manner of assigning policy actors to groups comes from Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989). This framework allows for a clean designation of groups to better understand the roles of those involved in policy action. The groups listed are insiders, near circle, far circle, sometimes players and forgotten players. Policy actors who participate consistently in the drawing up of policy proposals and are constantly involved in the actual setting of the agenda are included in the list of "insiders". These actors could include political leaders, prominent legislators or even governors and presidents. One characteristic that sets these actors apart from others is that they have access to media outlets and the public through opportunities to speak or get their case heard (Mitchell et al., 1989). The second group outlined in this analysis of policy actors is the "near circle". These people sit in groups that are able to persuade the "insiders" described above. This group has a very strong presence in the agenda-setting phase of policy formation and is able to draw attention to topics through lobbying and political pressure. This group of players often includes businesses or special interest groups, education agencies or even the state legislature. The "near circle" is often underestimated as they regularly function behind

the scenes. According to a report by the Center for Responsive Politics (2006), the number of registered groups lobbying on educational issues rose 55% between 1998 and 2005. This also signals a strong presence of financial investment in educational policy-making with a $50 million increase in money spent on these activities during the same time period. Opfer, Young and Fusarelli (2008) have written a concise piece detailing the complex movements of educational interest groups from the purposeful organizational ambiguity to the lobbying activity characteristic of these groups. The next group of interest is the "far circle". From a layman's perspective, these might be the actors thought to make most of the policy decisions within a school district, but after further investigation, it becomes clear that these people are more impactful in the policy implementation phase than the actual formation of policy phase. These actors include teacher unions, other professional interest groups and district and state education administrators.

The remaining two groups in Marshall and colleagues' (1989) grouping analysis are "sometimes players" and "forgotten players". "Sometimes players" are those who might have an occasional influence on policy decisions, depending on the closeness of that policy to their everyday life. Examples of "sometimes players" could be parent organizations such as booster clubs or special education advocate groups. Finally, actors who fall in the "forgotten players" category are those who reside on the margins of policy decisions. These actors are often those who are the most directly affected by policy changes within schools and who exhibit their requests through sporadic protests, demonstrations or even occasional violence. Historically, these groups have taken the shape of student lead protests. "Forgotten players" are generally not part of the equation during the agenda-setting phase of policy formation, but tend to be more reactive.

Policy-Making Frameworks

As previously noted by Danielson and Hochschild (1998), it is ill advised to set out to understand the policy-making process with a prescribed formula in mind. This does not mean that scholars have shied away from making sense of this process through framework formulation and theory production. The distinction is that each case of policy formation and implementation is distinct and each case study can only be informed by preexisting theories, not defined by them. The policy-making process is not as simple as the structure of school districts would make it seem. From a traditional vantage point, a school district is entrenched in local control, with popularly elected school boards, administrative and business staff that answer to public concerns (Eliot, 1959). The field of educational policy studies has evolved tremendously since the 1950s and continues to grow with our understanding of what it takes to bring an issue to the forefront and who has control of this conversation.
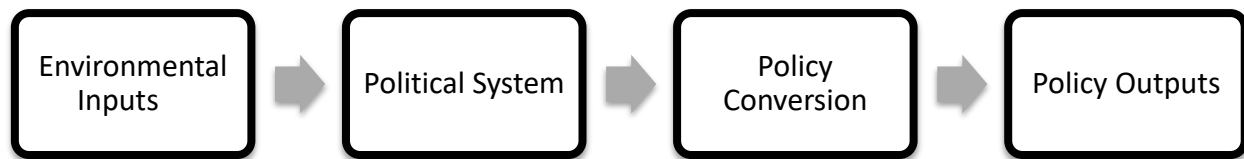
Evolution of Policy-Making Stages

Early frameworks set to explain local policy-making are quite interesting and have all but been abandoned in exchange for a variety of agenda-setting frameworks. A couple of these earlier frameworks point to fragmented power, a disproportionality of power distribution and the presence of strong entrepreneurial coalitions. The elite theory of local politics emphasizes that local power is disproportionately held in the hands of a few elites who hold their self and business interests above the interests of the community at large (Domhoff, 2006; Hunter, 1953). The growth machine thesis pushes this theory even further to detail that depending on the community, there exists a combination of powerful land developers, commercial interests, and other business coalitions that shape public policy priorities and decisions (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976). The Urban Regime Theory has not yet been abandoned in policy studies

and continues to garner attention from researchers in both sociology and political science. This theory holds that the growth machine thesis and other elite-pluralist frameworks oversimplify the policy-making process into a useless dualism. This theory holds that decision-making power is held by a combination of coalitions, which can be governmental or non-governmental in nature, and are not always simply motivated by business interests (Stone, 1989, 1993; Stone and Sanders, 1987).

Policy formation studies experienced an upsurge in the 1960s and David Easton's (1965) systems framework was a cornerstone framework used in the following two decades to understand the increasing political and public involvement in the education policy-making processes. This framework was applied to multiple studies, but none as extensively as Wirt and Kirst (1982, 1989). This application applied systems theory to the political demands that resulted in dramatic policy changes at the federal, state and local levels. The framework proceeds from the definition of an environment's demands (e.g., economic and political conditions) through this framework to eventually become policy outputs. Figure 2 demonstrates Easton's systems framework by which policy inputs, or ideas are subject to the political system context ultimately converting that policy into an acceptable policy output. Critiques of this framework point to the lack of causal processes involved throughout the policy conversion, as well as the lack of discussion surrounding the specific environmental stressors that occasionally led to adjustments and even sometimes whole system change.

Figure 2. *Systems analysis framework for studying educational policy*
Source: Adapted from Easton (1965)

```
┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│ Environmental│  ▶  │  Political   │  ▶  │   Policy     │  ▶  │   Policy     │
│    Inputs    │     │   System     │     │  Conversion  │     │   Outputs    │
└──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘
```

Not all policy studies frameworks are as schematic as Easton's (1965). Another widely used framework is the policy stages typology, which has roots in Lasswell's (1951) work surrounding the stepwise nature of policy analysis. Through the clear and sequential nature of this framework, it is easy to see how this policy studies orientation became a general "textbook approach" to understanding policy formation. This framework ordered stages of the policy-making process as follows: agenda-setting, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (Heck, 2004). Much of the application of this framework has applied the distinct stages to separate occurrences, many times without reference to the other stages of the process (Sabatier, 1999). A strong critique of this staged process is that it is often unrealistic and places emphasis on making policy action fit into this framework and that it uses misleading claims about the orderly nature of policy formation (Schon and Rein, 1995; deLeon, 1999).

Agenda-Setting

The identification of policy issues is of primary concern to policy formation analysts because it is in this phase that conversations surrounding change begin or are snuffed out. The agenda-setting approach focuses on how governments (local, state and federal) cope with a never-ending list of public concerns and problems (Elder and Cobb, 1983; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Kingdon, 1995; Rochefort and Cobb; 1994). Because the government has limited time and information processing resources to push out policies, there can only be a short

list of problems being considered at any given time. Those residing on the periphery of the policy-making process must become inventive in the ways that they push forward their agendas in order to have them be considered in the broader educational context. According to Marshall and colleagues (1989), these policy actors would fall into the "near and far circles" of policy formation. Member of these groups construct coalitions, adapt their message to the broader cultural environment and even define the meanings and goals of education to fit their purposes (Davies, 1999). This work is all in order to appeal to those in close proximity to the "insiders" or those who have final say on the policy issues that land on the table for discussion.

Policy issues can also develop at the national or state level in political agencies. Those in and within close proximity to these agencies (e.g. members of congressional committees, special interest groups) interpret public opinion and values, coupled with their perceptions of the role of the government in solving these problems to finally decide upon what is worth pursuing and what policy issues are not worth their time or effort (Boland and Fowler, 2000; Guthrie and Reed, 1991). The policy issues decided upon represent an underlying set of goals and values. Fowler (2009) discusses policy subsystems of actors who form groups with particular interests in policy agenda-setting and formation. These groups can take the shape of foundations, corporation, educational association and think tanks. Each of these groups has their own political leanings which place them in tandem to or in opposition with other educational policy subgroups. These groups frequently interact with local, state and federal policy makers to ensure their issues land on the agenda (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991; Fowler, 2009).

Modern Policy Formation: Kingdon's (1984) Model

Although there are varying levels of interest and research surrounding local policy formation, it has become evident that much of the processes at the local level mimic the same

process at the national level (Jones, 1983). In further developing the 1970s "garbage can" model of organizational choice (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972), Kingdon specifies three distinct streams within the decision-making process. Each of these streams, represented in Figure 3, have their own rules and subtleties within a policy-making framework: problems, policies/alternatives and politics (Kingdon, 1995). The problem stream represents the manner in which problems obtain or lose attention of decision-makers through systematic indicators, focusing events or feedback; the policy or alternatives stream is moved forward by professionals outside of the public eye (e.g., academics, career bureaucrats) who reside in close proximity to solutions, new concepts or innovative combinations of past ideas; finally, the political stream is subject to public mood swings, interest group requests, and electoral decisions-which can all have a drastic effect on what makes it to the agenda (Kingdon, 1995). Due to the independent nature of these three streams, Kingdon proposes that only once these three streams are united, or coupled by factions outside of the small "insiders" group, will policies be enacted (Liu, Lindquist, Vedlitz and Vincent, 2010).

This model has been adapted and applied to multiple public policy studies. A comprehensive study of local policy-making employed four distinct parts of Kindgon's (1995) framework to better understand who are the major participants on the inside and outside of a local governmental process to select policy options and alternatives (Liu et al., 2010). This large-scale qualitative project sought to better understand 1) the *important policy participants* by identifying both governmental players who influence policy through programs, regulations and funding opportunities (Hula and Haring, 2004; Warren, Rosentraub and Weschler, 1992). 2) *Attention attractors* can take the form of new information previously overlooked or until recently, irrelevant.

Figure 3. *Kingdon's Three Stream Model of Agenda Setting*
Source: Adapted from Kingdon (1985)
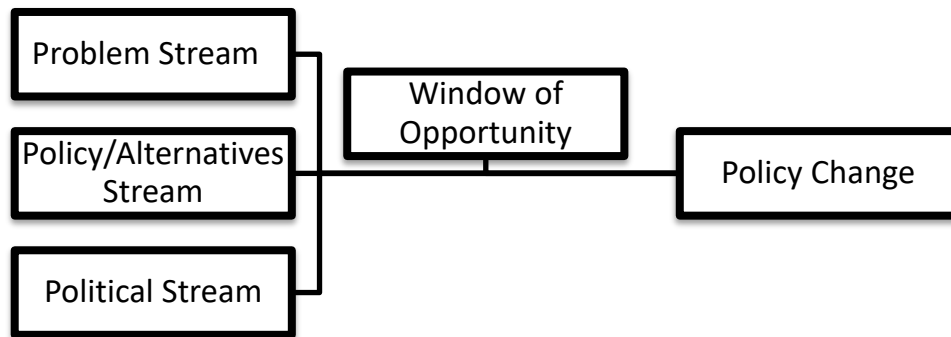
Focusing events such as crises or disasters also qualify as attention attractors that can spark the policy-making process. Information in the form of messages and signals from governmental programs or new public issues can also inform policy-making. Finally, budget cycles and changes can open or close a window to address a specific problem (Kingdon, 1995). 3) *Alternative attributes* are discussed in this study as the attributes that make an idea or alternative, often in a constant stream of these new suggestions, stand out and succeed. These characteristics are: technical feasibility, value acceptability and anticipation of future constraints. For a new alternative to be accepted and pushed forward in the policy-making arena, it must fit with the values of that community as well as the policy-making party. Liu et al. (2010) describe this as "policy compatibility". The fourth of the elements studied by Liu et al. (2010) is the third policy stream highlighted by Kindgon (1995). 4) *Political factors* matter tremendously in the fight over relevance and acceptance of new policies. Components of this piece of the puzzle are political mood, personnel changes in government, battles over jurisdiction, stresses and crises and consensus and coalition building (Kingdon, 1995; Carr, Selin and Schuett, 1998; Innes, 1996; Innes and Gruber, 2005). This study is a model for the application of Kingdon's (1995) framework in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the policy-making arena.

Liu et al. (2010) notes that the Kingdon (1995) multiple-streams framework has been applied to a variety of policy studies. Examples include environmental policy research (Clark and Allen, 2004; Solecki and Shelley, 1996), climate change policy studies (Parson and Fisher-Vanden, 1997), transportation policy research (Lindquist, 2006), and health policy (Sardell and Johnson, 1998). There have been limited applications of Kingdon's (1995) multiple-streams framework in education policy studies, most widely in coalition studies (Mintrom and Vergari, 1996, 1998; McLendon and Cohen-Vogel, 2008).

Making Local Educational Policy: Windows of Opportunity

The process of local education policy-making is complex from the outside, due to the many competing voices at all levels of process. The "cycles of policy talk" that Tyack and Cuban (1995) illuminate pose an opportunity as well as an obstacle to understanding this multifaceted process. Policy-makers only have the capacity to move forward a few policies at a time; therefore the windows of opportunity are only open for brief periods of time. It takes the alignment of all three policy streams to push an initiative onto the docket for consideration. As previously mentioned, there exist multiple frameworks and ways of making sense of the key players and functions of this intricate activity. At the inception of a study aiming to better understand a particular policy-making context, researchers must be careful to choose the proper framework and group coding methodology. This decision cannot be made *a priori*, but rather as the understanding of the local context deepens. When looking specifically at a local education policy decision, it would be advantageous, as part of the data analysis, to place policy actors into the groups suggested by Marshall and colleagues (1989) which are insiders, near circle, far circle, sometimes players and forgotten players. This is a first step to understanding the placement of those involved, be they members of local school politics, policy entrepreneurs or

even student groups. This process of assigning players to groups can help to move into either an existing framework or modify one to fit the needs of the study. Through this process, it will become clear which groups hold the reins in policy decision-making and who commonly fall on the periphery, rarely to have their concerns make the rotating agenda.