This study sought to understand the impact of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision for Black teachers, Black students, and Black communities by eliciting and interviewing expert researchers in the field of education who have studied Brown in some depth over the course of their respective careers. Findings from the three expert participants point to Black-teacher demotion and Black-teacher voicelessness as two of the consequences of the Brown decision for Black teachers. In addition, the study revealed that issues around Black teachers, post-desegregation, cannot be studied in depth without considering the relationship among Black teachers, Black students, Black communities, and Brown.

BACKGROUND

In this article, we consider the impact of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision of 1954 on the desegregation of public schools in the United States of America, and secondarily on the provision of better learning opportunities for Black students. To this end, we identified researchers in the field of education, noted scholars whose research addressed issues pertaining to the Brown decision. They were interviewed and asked to address several salient questions that might help educators better understand the impact of Brown on Black teachers, Black students, as well as Black communities. Three main issues provide the impetus for this study: (a) the Black teaching force has declined significantly over the last few decades and continues to decline even in 2003; (b) Black students have not been faring well in public schools since the Brown decision; (c) there seems to be important connections among Black teachers, Black communities, Black students and the Brown decision. Indeed, we are mindful of Hudson and Holmes’ (1994) perspective that:

...the loss of African American teachers in public school settings has had a lasting negative impact on all students, particularly African American students and the communities in which they reside...[A]lthough the shrinking African American teacher pool has been attributable to several factors, it is partly a fall-out of how Brown was implemented by White American policy makers. (p. 389)

We attempt to understand how the loss of Black teachers in public school contexts may have impacted Black students in schools and how the implementation of Brown may relate to Black teacher attrition, Black student achievement, and Black communities.

A DECISION THAT CHANGED EDUCATION AS WE KNEW IT

In 1951, the family of Linda Brown complained to the NAACP that their daughter was walking over a mile to her Black, segregated elementary school when a White elementary school was located only a few blocks away. Upon the recommendation and guidance of the NAACP, the family attempted to enroll young Linda Brown into the segregated White elementary school, as did many other Black families in the community. These requests were denied, which resulted in a
lawsuit, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. It is important to note that the *Brown* case was not the first attempt at dismantling the injustices inherent in the schooling of Black students.

On May 17, 1896, after years of struggle, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case decision, which ruled against integration but advanced the notion of “separate but equal,” brought attention to segregation and to integration. In essence, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated sections of buses and schools, for instance, were to be equal. The idea was that these buses and schools would be segregated but the facilities and accommodations would be equal to that of White’s. Of course, this ruling was never really carried out or actualized as Blacks continued to receive “second-class” facilities and accommodations—especially in schools. Arguments in favor of integration in the *Brown* case pointed to the harmful effect and psychological messages and images that Black students may have endured as they observed better facilities for White students in comparison to the dilapidated buildings in which Black students experienced from day-to-day. The argument suggested that Black students experienced and observed images that pointed to Blacks being inherently inferior to Whites. Ultimately, the courts found that Black students were not provided equal rights and protection under the law (14th Amendment) when they attended segregated schools by force. Therefore, the doctrine of “separate but equal” in public school systems was challenged and ultimately overturned. But was the *Brown* decision really a victory for Black students, for Black teachers, for Black families and communities, as well as for Blacks in general?

**A LOOK AT THE BLACK TEACHING FORCE**

As Hudson and Holmes (1994) pointed out “...it is clear that African Americans have failed to get the results they envisioned [after the *Brown* decision]. This is especially true with regard to the African American teaching force” (p. 388). While the decreasing number of teachers of color is a growing concern for many educators, the dramatic decrease of African American teachers, in particular, is most alarming. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002), African American teachers make up approximately 6.5% of the teaching force, and there are projections that these numbers are expected to decrease over the next decade. The loss of African American educators had a significant effect on the quality of education that African American students received in public schools. To illuminate, in segregated school systems, Black students attended schools operated mostly by experienced, dedicated, concerned, and skilled Black educators. These teachers and administrators often had better credentials and were more familiar with the cultural context of their students than their White counterparts (Southern Education Reporting Service, 1959). Having lived in the communities in which they taught, many Black teachers developed meaningful relationships with their students and their families outside of the school.

With desegregation came massive layoffs and demotions: Approximately 38,000 African Americans teachers and administrators in 17 states lost their positions between 1954 and 1965 (Holmes, 1990; King, 1993). These numbers do not tell the full story that these layoffs and demotions had on some Black communities. Foster (1997) explains that according to U.S. census data at the turn of the 20th century, the number of Black teachers had risen close to 70,000—close to half of the Black professional population at the time. She suggests that between 1932 and 1948 the number of Black teachers doubled. Thus, as the Black population grew throughout the South, as well as the North and Midwest, so did the Black teaching population. Yet, to consider the fact that close to a third of these teachers lost their teaching positions after the *Brown* decision tells a grim story. Some would argue that this marked the beginning of the troubled cycle of underachievement for many African American students and that their quality of education has not been the same since.

For many African American students, African American teachers represented surrogate parent figures, acted as disciplinarians, counselors, role models, and overall advocates for their academic, social, cultural, emotional, and moral development. According to one study, low-achieving
African American students benefited most from relationships with African American teachers (King, 1993). African American teachers also tended not to rationalize student failure by blaming family or society (Foster, 1990). Rather, African American teachers tended to accept the students (even with their areas of weakness) and did their best to help students achieve.

**A LOOK AT BLACK STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: PROGRESS OR REGRESS SINCE BROWN?**

The current demographics for African American teachers are alarming, but they pale in comparison to the state of achievement among African American students. Effectively educating African American students remains one of the most pressing tasks facing educators at all levels. Today, a half-century since the *Brown* ruling attempted to make desegregation the law of the land, African American students, the very group of students who were supposed to benefit most from *Brown*, are arguably the most underachieving group of students in U.S. schools. Amidst the plethora of school restructuring, desegregation attempts, and other educational reforms, the disproportionate underachievement among African American students has remained a consistent challenge (Ford, 1996). Although the number of African American students completing high school, attending and completing college, and enrolling in graduate and professional schools has increased over the past five decades, African American students continue to lag behind most ethnic groups on a number of academic indices.

Data from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) has shown that over the past decade that African American students have perennially underachieved (NCES, 1998, 2000, 2002). The NCES data also revealed that over the past eight years a majority of African American students in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades had not reached grade level proficiency in core subject areas such as reading, mathematics, history, and science. In addition, less than one-quarter of African American students were at or above grade level in these same subject matters. Furthermore, a mere 3% of African American students were at advanced levels in these areas.

The academic underachievement of African American students only represents part of the educational dilemma that educators face in U.S. schools. A growing concern among advocates of African American students is what some would consider subjective, and frequently misdiagnosed assessments of social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment issues. Consider that African American students make up 16% of the nation’s school enrollment yet they represent approximately 30% of students in special education classrooms. In addition, the percentage of students in remedial programs increases with the percentage of African American students in the student body. In many school districts across the nation, the percentage of African American students labeled “at-risk,” educable mentally retarded, trainable mentally retarded, seriously emotionally disturbed, and developmentally delayed is grossly disproportionate to the overall percentage of African Americans in the school or district (Ford, Grantham, & Bailey, 1999; Harry & Anderson, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

One of the prevailing explanations offered by many educators for the low academic achievement and social maladjustment of African American students is low socioeconomic status. Some researchers have argued that students coming from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, in particular African Americans, tend to underachieve because they are “deprived” of various resources, or are products of a “culture of poverty” or suffer from an “anti-achievement” environment (McWhorter, 2000; Steele, 1990). Moreover, they contend that when students from low-income backgrounds can benefit from many of the attributes that middle and upper class students receive, such as high quality schools, qualified teachers, strong administrative leadership and improved educational resources that the underachievement dissipates. While the achievement data has revealed that African American students from middle and upper class backgrounds do perform better than African American students from low-income backgrounds, concerns still remain. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) maintained that:

> Although both class and gender can and do intersect race, as stand-alone variables they do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between Whites and students of color. Indeed, there is some evidence
to suggest that even when we hold constant for class, middle-class African-American students do not achieve at the same level as their White counterparts. (p. 51)

These differences are consistent at every level of schooling (pre-kindergarten through grade 12), and the predictors, as we have studied them, are not merely results of socioeconomic status. Most disturbing is the gap that remains intact between African American students from middle and upper class backgrounds and White American students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. These achievement disparities merit interventions that attempt to explain why such achievement gaps exist, even when socioeconomic status is held constant as a variable. It is these discrepancies in light of the decrease of Black teachers since Brown that must be explored, and serve as one of the primary purposes of this work.

METHODS

In an attempt to understand some of the impact of Brown for Black teachers, for Black students, and for Black communities, we invited six experts (educational researchers) to participate in an interview and help us understand the connections among these matters. It is important to note that these “experts” had studied Brown in some dimension of their research. In some cases, the experts may form speculative arguments about the nature of our questions because they had not studied (with any depth) that particular issue. In such cases, we were sure to frame these speculative claims as such. That is, we trust the level of expertise that the experts shared but understood that in some cases they were relying on a database that related to an issue rather than focus specifically on that issue. Finally, the terms “experts” and “participants” will be used interchangeably throughout this article.

The six experts that we selected and invited to participate in the interview met several criteria: (a) they had engaged in research and writing about Brown (and in some cases taught courses that highlighted Brown from various perspectives); (b) they were experts who had been in their respective fields of study for longer than five years; and (c) they were willing to participate in the interview and follow-up interviews if necessary. We found it necessary to have conversations with experts around the country who had studied these and similar issues to get their viewpoints at the 50-year anniversary of Brown to assess where we have been, to think about where we are presently, and to chart a research agenda about where we are going.

From the six invitations extended, three experts agreed to participate in the study. The first author of this article (Milner) and his research assistant conducted the telephone interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. In some cases, follow-up calls were made to the participants to clarify information and to ensure accuracy of their comments. Participants in the study were asked several questions. As themes and issues emerged throughout the interviews, follow up questions were asked. Thus, these interview questions are not exhaustive. Rather, they represent the thrust of questions posed:

1. What happened to Black teachers after the Brown decision (e.g., morale, dedication, self-concept, retention)?
2. What impact might the Brown decision have on Black teachers leaving the profession?
3. How might Brown have influenced the education of Black students?
4. Why is it important to have Black teachers educating Black students?
5. How might we think about increasing the number of Black teachers in the teaching profession?
6. What types of questions should we research and address regarding the Brown decision around Black teachers, Black students, and Black communities?
7. In other words, where should we (researchers, teachers, and policy makers) go from here in order to reverse the underachievement of Black students?

Finally, the experts were given the opportunity to add additional comments at the end of the interview.
Analysis of Interviews

Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Upon reviewing the interview transcripts, themes emerged from all three transcripts. In several instances, the themes overlapped, and we used them to guide much of our discussion in subsequent sections of this article. As themes emerged throughout the interviews, we developed coding categories to better understand the issues and to organize the data. These categories were named conceptually but were, in essence, themes that were stressed and pointed out by the participants to guide further inquiry. The posing of interview questions followed an inductive cycle, where a broad and general question was posed and experts were given the opportunity to expand upon those issues based on their specific perspectives and knowledge base.

The Participants

Participant one (hereafter referred to as Barbara) is an endowed professor at a research institution of higher education. She has been in the field of education for longer than 20 years. Participant two (hereafter referred to as Vince) is a lead researcher in a research institute. Vince has been in the field of education for seven years. Participant three (hereafter referred to as Peggy) is a professor at a research institution of higher education who has been in the field of education for longer than 20 years. All three participants have written articles, and/or book chapters, and two of the participants have written books that consider in sufficient depth the Brown decision. Pseudonyms were used to mask the identity of the participants, and their institutional affiliation.

BLACK TEACHERS AND BROWN

No doubt, the Brown decision resulted in some substantive changes for Black teachers. While it was likely difficult to predict the effects of Brown for Black teachers prior to the decision, it is hard to imagine that Black people would have supported the decision had they had a glimpse of what was to follow. Clearly, Black teachers endured emotional strain and hardship through experiences that were degrading and demoralizing.

Color Pigmentation, Demotion, and Loss of Voice

Desegregation, for some Black teachers, meant that their skin complexion was examined in order to decide whether they were “worthy” of being moved into all-White schools. When asked about what happened to Black teachers after the Brown decision, Vince stated:

Well it depends...very realistically on the complexion of the teacher, whether she was light or dark. And we are primarily talking about women in this regard...the lighter ones, what they’ve categorized as light skinned, were morphed and subsumed into what they would call integrated schools. The remaining population continued to be employed in what remained as de-facto non-segregated schools, those schools that were not closed or subsumed. The remainder of them [darker skinned Black teachers] had to seek or find employment in other areas, other parts of the community or country.

The idea was that the lighter skinned or the lighter complexioned Black teachers were supposedly more closely connected to the White students and teachers, and consequently there was less of a threat for other White teachers, White community members, and White students in the ‘all White’ segregated schools. Thus, darker skinned teachers were considered “too different,” and somehow the complexion of a Black teacher was likened to that teacher’s intellectual capacity and/or his or her ability to teach effectively.

Moreover, after color pigmentation was considered, the “best” Black teachers (where skills were concerned) were forced to move into integrated schools. Not only were the best teachers moved from predominately Black schools, but Vince stressed that
...if you are talking about the best teachers...division heads or department heads, they were moved and were often
demoted to the base level positions. Those with full time administrative responsibilities, assistant principals or
principals returned to classroom instruction in those other settings [for instance].

Barbara also discussed how the “better” teachers in the Black schools were transferred into
the White schools:

Its [Black schools] most competent and stellar teachers were sent to White schools so that they basically took the best
of what the Black community had and sent them to newly desegregated schools. Then they took our best principals
and leaders in our [the Black] communities and put them into these newly desegregated schools and called them
assistant principals. And they were usually in charge of discipline for Black kids, particularly Black boys. So it was a
devastating blow.

Among the key points explained by Barbara above is the notion that Black principals were
placed in charge of discipline for Black males. Psychologically and implicitly, it seems that Black
males were forced to see their Black leaders as disciplinarians whom they feared as opposed to
Black leaders in whom they could admire and look to for mentorship. The notion is that there is a
disconnect between the Black principal and the Black male student, which in many cases could
have enhanced the learning opportunities for Black male students. Barbara believed that these new
structural implementations were a “devastating blow” for the Black community. In essence,
Barbara explained that it appeared that desegregation “took the best of what the Black community
had, and we really lost what I consider to be the center of Black community leadership” [emphasis
added].

Peggy explained that Black teachers seemed to have lost a “voice” in the schooling of Black
children after desegregation. She stressed that not only was there a diminishing presence of Black
teachers in predominantly Black schools, but, “It’s not just loss of presence. I think there’s a lot of
loss in voice...Black teachers really lost voice in desegregation because nobody assumed that they
were capable of really being good teachers...”

In addition to the loss of voice, Black teachers seemed to have lost a sense of power and
integrity. Barbara explained that

...the White superintendent and the White school board, you know, they paid very little attention to what was going
on in Black communities, in Black schools. They threw meager crumbs [money] here and there, but basically as long
as nobody was raising any hell, the White people just came in for obligatory programs once a year, and they showed
up at graduation. That was it. And so [Black] teachers became very powerful people in the Black community. They
really could do what they needed.

Therefore, the Black community perceived Black teachers in high esteem before
desegregation. Consequently, teaching was seen as a respectable profession, one that the
community would support and encourage. The teachers had what Peggy explained as a “powerful
voice,” and what Barbara explained as a great “sense of power and integrity” prior to
desegregation. And their morale was high as was the case for their commitment to the education of
Black students. Barbara further explained “…they [Black teachers] were held in very high esteem
in the Black community. So these Black principals and these Black teachers—they did what they
thought was best for Black children.” After desegregation, however, Barbara described the ways
that White students and White parents treated Black teachers as a form of “assault.” That is,
Barbara stressed that “White parents could come into the school, and they could just say anything
to Black teachers about their kids. ‘You gave my child a B?’ Who do you think you are? That
didn’t happen in the Black community.”

Barbara summed up how many Black teachers may have felt as a result of the “disrespect”
and “assaults” that they received from White students and parents:

...and I can’t imagine how they must have felt to all of a sudden have little White children talking back at them,
saying things to them that was just inconceivable in the Black community...So their professional and their personal
sense of self was diminished [emphasis added]. And once that happens in any kind of organization you can see it just
trickle down to the kids and you don’t feel like getting up and coming to work in the morning. So the Brown decision
had a tremendous impact [on Black teachers].

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And what is pertinent is the notion that the *Brown* decision, in light of the exodus of Black teachers and leaders in the Black community, resulted in “an impact on all parts of the Black community,” Barbara explained. Thus, we cannot consider the impact of *Brown* on Black teachers without thinking seriously about the impact of the decision on the Black community in general.

**An Imbalance in the Community**

Both Barbara and Vince stressed what Barbara referred to as a “dis-centering” in the Black community after the *Brown* decision. To illuminate, it seemed that the restructuring of the schools brought about an imbalance in the Black community. Thus, the enormous impact of *Brown* and the connection between the school and the Black community both must be considered because so much of the Black community’s inspiration was fueled through education. After the *Brown* decision, however, Barbara and Vince pointed to the reality that there seemed to be negative influences on the entire community. Vince stated, “There is a nexus between families, neighborhoods, and schools. And they interact, and they connect in interesting ways. A change in one disrupts the equilibrium of the system. So it has to find a new centering and rebalance itself.”

This imbalance seems to relate to the notion that Black children began to not see other Black teachers in the schools and in their classrooms. So, Black students went from schools where all of their teachers and principals were Black to schools where most, if not all, of their teachers were White. The magnitude of Black students now being taught by White teachers cannot be stressed enough. One can only imagine the quality of instruction that Black students received from White teachers, some of whom were opposed to the very notion of desegregation and teaching Black students from the very outset of the *Brown* decision. Moreover, Black students were now being taught by White teachers who were culturally unaware of Black students’ ways of life, norms, customs, family and community values (Dempsey & Noblit, 1996). Consequently, Black teachers, in large measure, started to select alternative fields. Whereas, historically, teaching, in the Black community was perceived as one of the most prestigious professions for Blacks, the perception of the teaching profession changes when this ‘equilibrium’ is imbalanced. In Vince’s words,

What people experience on a day-to-day effectuates how they view and vision the possibility of their lives...And so if students are growing up in schools that they don’t see Black teachers, that they don’t see Black principals or Black superintendents, how the hell are they going to imagine themselves being one?

Barbara also expressed concerns around this community imbalance that seemed to emerge after *Brown*. For instance, what she expressed links this imbalance to the self-esteem of a Black principal who found himself demoted back to the faculty or as an assistant principal of discipline:

All of a sudden you’re the principal of the high school; you’re a deacon in the church; everybody knows who you are. You walk down the street, in the Barber Shop, in the grocery store--everybody knows your name. And all of a sudden you’ve been relegated to White schools where you’re the assistant principal in charge of discipline. And it’s just a massive assault on their self-esteem...

Barbara explained that many of the Black teachers in the Black communities also participated in other community ways of life. They went to church in the community; they lived in the community. Thus, there was a level of care that seemed to permeate the walls of the schools, as there was a sense of balance and care that the teachers and students experienced both inside and outside of the school. In other words, teaching and learning extended beyond the walls of the school as teachers found themselves sitting next to the parents of their students in church. The level of care and concern was one that fostered relationship building and provided spaces for teachers and students to interact. In Barbara’s words,

Many of the Black teachers were also Sunday school teachers at church. They lived in the community. And so they lived in the community and went to church with these kids; these things all connected in some interesting kinds of ways...it’s not the building, necessarily. It’s not the supplies, but it’s the relationship between a teacher and a student that is the critical piece for Black kids [emphasis added]. When you take that out of the equation, everything else
fails. It doesn’t matter how fine of a building, or how nice the books are; you’ve got to have a confident teacher that your kids all trust and care for. And if the teacher doesn’t like the kids, it all falls apart.

So, after desegregation, Barbara suggested that there was an imbalance in the routines and norms that often framed Black teachers’ and Black students’ experiences both inside and outside of school.

**ON SECRET LEARNING IN WHITE SCHOOLS**

It is important to note that not all Blacks conceived the desegregation decision as a negative for Black children. In fact, much of the support for integration was steeped in the notion that there was some “special” or “secret” learning that was taking place in the White schools that the Black students would somehow have access to as a result of being in the same company as White students. In Vince’s words,

[Brown] was certainly celebrated by those who believed or adhered to the mental construction that White schools were better than Black schools and that there was somehow some secret learning taking place over there that their [Black] children would now have access to...so you find Black children being bused into White schools. But you did not see White students being bused into Black schools, or what were predominately Black schools.

In essence, Vince stressed that “…for everything good that happened on one side, something bad happened on the other side.” Moreover, Peggy used a “rescue” analogy in explaining the mentality around the push for integration among some supporters:

...desegregation happened primarily from the rescue model. Basically everything these poor little [Black] children had was bad, and so we need to go rescue them. And so we’re going to rescue children and then bring them into desegregated schools so we can save them [emphasis added]. Well, the model rests upon certain assumptions. One of the assumptions is that the teachers are bad, the curriculum was bad, the parents were bad. Everything was bad.

However, Peggy made it clear that

...the resources were bad, but the commitment of the people, their level of professionalism, the kinds of things they tried to do for children, the way in which they cared about children, the networks that they had, those things were not necessarily bad. But if you operate from the rescue model...then you assume that everything was bad, and so let’s go rescue them.

According to Vince, even President Nixon, who changed the “spirit” of desegregation, in Vince’s view, thought that the way to enhance the educational opportunities for Black children was to have them attend schools with and “sit next to” White students. Vince explains that

Basically, [Nixon] says the only way for Blacks to truly get the same education, or to benefit and make educational progress, will be for them to sit next to White children in school while they’re learning, and hopefully some of it will rub off on them. And so that is when we get this whole notion of moving the bodies from where they are to some other location...Richard Nixon says, ‘no, they don’t need money; they don’t need newer books; they don’t need new facilities; they don’t need infrastructure. What they need is to sit next to little White children and then they will have—they’ll be using the same books and they [Black students] can benefit from being in class with them [White students].’

This was, in Vince’s perspective, inconsistent with the mission of the NAACP and many of the Black leaders around desegregation. The primary goal of these groups was that of economic access and resource, not that of mandated integration where Black students were being bused into White schools. In Vince’s words, “They [Black families and Black leadership] wanted equal resources. That’s what they asked for, equal access to resources. They wanted people to have the option of going where they wanted to go to school and not be restricted,” not necessarily to have Black students moved into White schools in mass numbers.

**MORE BLACK FACES BUT NO MEANINGFUL EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

While many Blacks celebrated the Brown ruling of 1954, it was met with widespread resistance on the part of many White schools. With no clear outlines, means of implementation, or timetable to
desegregate schools, many White schools refused to implement the Supreme Court's ruling. Even the Supreme Court recognized the ambiguity of the Brown ruling, which resulted in Brown II, and its call for school desegregation "with all deliberate speed." However, even Brown II offered no clearer interpretation of how schools were to transform the curriculum and milieu to meet the needs of the significant changes. Thus, in many cities, schools were slow to respond to desegregation mandates, and significant changes were not made until years, and in some cases decades after the initial ruling.

With desegregation came more Black faces in White schools, but unfortunately, it became clear through the interviews that the fundamental essence of how schooling was carried out was never really addressed. In Vince's words,

> There were, despite the mandates from the court master, never any significant changes to the fundamental ways in which public schools operate. Public schools remain, by and large, clustered around a coagulation of neighborhood children. Neighborhoods remain primarily segregated by racial populations. Neighborhoods remain segregated by financial and fiscal capacity. Neighborhoods remain segregated by type and structure of families.

Clearly, Vince believed that student composition was influenced significantly by the racial background of the community, family type, and income level. Vince explains,

> So, despite whatever we talk about integration, these neighborhoods are clustering by race, by family type, and by income. And so the schools in those areas are therefore reflections of the neighborhoods in which they sit. We still, by and large, do property taxes the same way we did them before desegregation. Depending on the value of the home, we assess a mileage tax, you pay taxes—it [money] resides in a district, a school district. That district uses those tax dollars, you know, how they see fit. So, certainly there were a lot of activities that happened around desegregation, but I'm not sure that the fundamental nature and truths that were the problems and the strengths of schooling were ever addressed.

In essence, desegregation resulted, in large measure, to "just [Black] bodies being moved around." However, one change (that of course was not meaningfully positive for Blacks) was that of tracking that emerged after desegregation. Black teachers found themselves teaching in White schools with two different missions: a mission for the White students and a mission for Black students. To illuminate the idea of tracking and these dual missions, Barbara declared:

> And so tracking really started...we're going to have to have them [Black students] in the school by legal mandate, [so] what we'll do is we'll create two schools within one building, a Black school and a White school. And actually that's what we still have, and that legacy continues where tracking was used as a so-called device—although they were in the same building, they were going to keep it as separate as they possibly could.

Clearly, it appears that the Brown decision never really addressed meaningful strategies to enhance the educational opportunities of all the students. Rather, Black students were labeled and tracked into the lowest academic areas, and Barbara explained that "all of a sudden the White students magically turned into gifted children." The point is that schools never addressed how to make the schools work for all students and teachers, with such dramatic change. Peggy pointed to the reality that "labels by and large reflect negativity...the fact that there are more Black kids in special education and fewer Black kids in gifted classes reflect general societal expectations of Black children."

**THE NEED FOR MORE BLACK TEACHERS**

All three experts reported the great need for an increase in the Black teaching force. Barbara and Vince stressed the importance of recruiting Black teachers, particularly for the benefit of Black students. It is also important to note that Barbara stressed that White teachers can be successful teachers with Black students. However, she made it clear that in order for more appropriate and meaningful learning to occur with Black students, "we're going to have to change dramatically the way we train teachers."

On one level, Vince stressed the necessity for Black students "to see other Black teachers." He stated that, "What people experience day-to-day effectuates how they view and vision the
possibility of their lives.” On another level, Barbara stressed that teacher education programs “are going to have to eliminate some of the barriers and road blocks that keep Black teachers out of the profession. And most of them [barriers and road blocks] come from the standardized tests of assessment that summarily declare that these Black candidates in teacher education aren’t worthy to be teachers.”

Importantly, the push to recruit and to retain talented Black teachers is framed by these teachers’ abilities to relate to and to connect to other Black students. Barbara explained:

And so Black teachers are important to have not because we want them as role models, but that’s important. But that’s not the only reason we want them. We want them because they have a way of teaching [Black] kids that leads to achievement. They know how to come up with examples in the kids’ lives that make the lessons come alive and they [Black students] retain the material.

In addition to Black teachers having the ability to construct meaningful examples with Black students, Peggy points to the connections between the hidden curriculum (or what students learn through the implicit nature of teaching and learning) and Black teachers. Peggy stressed the importance and benefits of Black teachers teaching Black students because there are inherent lessons that emerge through learning opportunities. For instance, Peggy points to “cultural connections” that are often prevalent between African American teachers and students:

It comes in subtly [or implicitly]; it comes in the talks that they [Black teachers] had with the students. It comes up in club activities...so the hidden curriculum was to explain what it means to be Black in American, to give role models...And I would add this deep understanding of culture. It’s not just that I have high expectations of you and to believe in your capacity to achieve and they’re [Black teachers] willing to push you [Black students]. The teachers also had an intuitive understanding of the culture because they lived it...I [the teacher] live in the community. I go to church in the community. You know, in this segregated world where my friends are Black.

Peggy discussed how Black teachers often expressed and demonstrated “high expectations, deep caring for Black children, belief in their capacity to succeed.” These issues were inherent in the implicit curriculum as Peggy explained.

Peggy goes on to explain what she refers to as the “bottom line”:

But the bottom line is that segregated teachers had the advantage of understanding the culture and being apart of it. They didn’t have to be taught it. We [Black teachers] understood it. They understood you don’t talk down to parents, okay? That you don’t treat people negatively. I mean they understood these things, wherein after desegregation we’re still trying to figure out how to understand it.

Thus, the idea is that Black teachers, by virtue of their out-of-school interactions and their deep understanding of the Black race and cultural connections, often brought a level of knowledge into the classroom that showed up through the implicit curriculum. Because Black teachers often interacted with Black students and parents outside of school, they had an insider’s perspective and were more equipped to bring that cultural understanding and connections into the classroom.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Several issues warrant discussion considering the findings in this study. For one, we must think about the connection between Black teachers, Black communities, and Black students, as they all seem to have important implications for each other. That is, based on the evidence in this study, it is difficult to understand the impact of Brown on Black teachers without considering and focusing on that of Black communities and of Black students. Many Black teachers were treated poorly after Brown. And their treatment resulted in a disconnection and imbalances in the Black community, and consequently, Black students seemed to suffer as a result of the treatment of Black teachers and the imbalances in the Black community. Irvine and Irvine (1983), in their examination of many Black communities post-Brown described the school desegregation process as iatrogenesis, a medical concept which means that the intervention which was used to supposedly cure or heal a particular ailment turns out to have a more detrimental impact than the
initial problem. In short, they argued that a comprehensive analysis of the Brown ruling cannot be merely limited to the condition of schooling for Black students, but must also entail the deterioration of many Black communities as a result of school closings. Particularly in light of the fact that Black schools, along with Black churches, were frequently considered to be hubs or center points of their respective communities.

Black teachers had their skin complexion examined, were demoted, and lost voice after the Brown decision. Prior to the decision, the teachers had meaningful influences in what happened in the schools and how Black students were educated. Moreover, the community held Black teachers in high regard. It became clear through Milner and Woolfolk’s (2003) research and through this study that Black teachers “had a way” with Black students because they deeply understood them and were willing to do what was necessary to help the students achieve and to succeed. The Black community held Black teachers in high esteem, and Black teachers had high expectations of the Black students because they believed in them.

Perhaps the effectiveness of predominantly Black public schools needs to be revisited as we think about the learning opportunities for Black students prior to desegregation. That is, as evident in this study, many believed that there was ‘some secret learning’ going on in White schools and that the only way for Black students to actually improve was to be educated in those predominantly White settings. However, we learn in this study that Black students fared well in segregated schools in spite of the poor resources, the meager accommodations, and the lack of bureaucratic support. To revisit predominantly Black schooling for Black students, however, does not mean that we can simply move Black bodies to different facilities. Rather, we must think seriously about what made those segregated Black schools work and why; these questions point to a great need for further research. Of course, at this point schools and the manners by which teachers, administrators, and policy makers conceive schooling is framed by what some would consider ‘corrupted’ images of what schooling should be. Thus, if we are to think seriously about predominantly Black schools for Black students, we must investigate the essence of what made the schools work in the past and use those insights as a foundation to structure schools presently. Of course, there are de facto segregated schools throughout the country presently, and for reasons beyond the scope of this article, some of those schools are not working well. We must return to the core of segregated Black schools in order to implement some of those insights into the schooling of Black students.

In addition, we must think about ways to make education work for all students by thinking about meaningful interventions and programs to address some of the problems in the nation’s public schools. As pointed out in this study, the urgency to integrate schools left behind one of the most important dimensions of educational change—that is, instead of focusing on moving bodies around to integrate schools, policy makers never really attended to strategies, infrastructure, and policies that might really meet the needs of all students in light of the significant changes that the schools would see. Attending to the changes in racial demographics, for instance, points to a great research need for students and for teachers (Milner, 2003a). Thus, addressing the fundamental issues around students and teachers’ racial and cultural identities in schooling must be attended to and quickly if positive change is to occur (Milner, 2003b).

Finally, Barbara and Peggy, in this study, both stressed the necessity to locate capable prospective Black teachers who were searching to gain an entrée into the middle class. Barbara explained that many of the students who are shunned away from the teaching profession could be great teachers. However, it seems that what Barbara classifies as “roadblocks” and “barriers” prevent these capable Black prospective candidates from becoming teachers. These barriers and roadblocks point to testing that many of the prospective teachers struggle to pass. Teacher education programs and policymakers in general must think seriously about the nature of these tests as we move into an increasingly diverse student population with Black students falling farther behind everyday. Perhaps a study concentrating on the effectiveness of these mandated tests should be implemented. For example, what are the connections (if any) between teachers’ effectiveness and success in the classroom and that of their scores on these tests? Similarly, paraprofessionals could be great teachers, as Peggy points out, if support programs were put into
place to help them make the transition from assistant to classroom teacher. Future research should attend to the aforementioned issues as well as investigate the experiences of Black teachers who were influenced most by Brown in order to grasp additional insight into the situation of Black teachers, Black students, and Black communities.

REFERENCES


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