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Sanitizing Segregation:
Social Science Expertise and the Limits of Liberal School Reform

By

Fithawee Tzeggai

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

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in

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in the

Graduate Division

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor G. Cristina Mora, Chair

Professor Armando Lara-Millan

Professor Kris D. Gutiérrez

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Abstract

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Fithawee Tzeggai

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor G. Cristina Mora, Chair

The landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed racial segregation in public education, but it left open-ended the question of how to dismantle the decades old institution of school segregation and remedy its educational and social harms. For more than a decade after *Brown*, efforts to desegregate local school districts stalled as lawyers and public officials questioned the scope and implications of the ruling, but by the early 1970s, law, policy, and public debate coalesced around a single interpretation of the policy instruments and guiding rationale of school desegregation reform. Since the post-civil rights period, leading progressive voices in school reform consistently invoke the premise, rooted in social science research, that sorting students to achieve the right mix of race and class groups in each school is the only effective solution to persisting racial disparities in academic achievement. Before the late 1960s, however, the causes of educational inequality and the inherent educational benefits of racial mixing were widely disputed among leading reformers and experts. A new dominant body of social science expertise on educational inequality developed during the civil rights era to influence scholarly debate and articulate what quickly became the dominant version of the school desegregation agenda.

To understand the history and limits of our contemporary discourse of school integration, this dissertation asks how politically influential knowledge about school segregation and inequality developed amidst the polarizing racial controversies and political crises of the 1960s. Mass movements in cities outside the South and persisting pressure for federal intervention raised urgent questions about the legal status and educational implications of school segregation across the country, and the federal government initiated a series of research initiatives intended to expose racial educational inequities and justify a bold national school desegregation agenda. The most important product of this government-sponsored research effort was the 1966 Coleman Report, a landmark study well-known for its lasting influence on school desegregation policy and scholarly research on educational inequality. Combining approaches in Science and Technology Studies with Critical Race Theory, my research investigates the historical conditions that made possible the creation and ascendance of the Coleman Report and its influential scholarly framework for analyzing racial educational inequity.

Moving between local and national scales, this dissertation draws on the archived files of federal government agencies and leading experts, the public hearings, administrative reports, and commissioned research of major urban school systems, and a case study of community-based protest and the local politics of knowledge in Chicago's public schools. It traces the circulation of ideas and information between local school districts and federal government agencies to demonstrate how the local repression of black activists' perspectives in official reporting on urban education combined with the circumstances of federal government-sponsored policy research to dictate the narrow purview of national research. Political constraints from above and below, thus, translated complex local controversies about the schooling process into a debate about school resources and student attributes, reproducing local relations of racial repression in the apparently neutral theories and methods of social science research. This sociological history of education expertise offers a new perspective on the outcomes of the civil rights movement and on the progressive orthodoxy in current school reform debates. I call for a re-examination of the relationship between the state, public policy, and social science research, and a new understanding of the problem school segregation and racial educational inequality that centers histories of racist violence and institutional sabotage. In short, this dissertation challenges expert discourses that sanitize the history of school segregation, and it elevates race-based demands to redevelop black community institutions.

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Introduction

The Evolution of Integration after *Brown*: Re-examining the Role of Social Science

According to historian John Cell, the term “segregation,” as a label for systems of racial rule in the U.S. South and South Africa, is deliberately ambiguous (Cell 1982). Although they now represent morally repugnant and transparently racist cultures and institutions, the concepts of “segregation” and “apartheid” were initially invented to put a modern, liberal gloss on the racial divide and acknowledge the nominally equal status of racial groups before the law. By defining regimes of racial terrorism and repression in terms of social and spatial separation, the term emphasized passive and immaterial division while suggesting the possibility for equal opportunity and separate development. In the late 19th century U.S., the Supreme Court invoked this meaning of “segregation” in its 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, which permitted separate public facilities for different racial groups. The Court argued that substantive equality could be provided in a context of enforced racial separation, yet its ruling codified in law a much more sinister system, in which separation was a tool for sabotaging black participation in American politics and prosperity (Cell 1982; Wacquant 2011).

As sociologist Charles Payne observes, the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the *Plessy* decision without contradicting its basic premise. Payne argues that the great expectations invested in the *Brown* ruling and the subsequent failure to fulfill them are the result of a hegemonic discourse of segregation, characterized by the premise, held by both passionate advocates and opponents of civil rights reform, that American racism resides in interpersonal race relations rather than structures of violence and dispossession (Payne 2004). The *Brown* ruling drew on the “modern authority” of social science to demonstrate that separate school facilities, however equal in their provisions, produce “feelings of inferiority” in the “hearts and minds” of black youth. It singled-out the issue of “separate but equal” schools and ignored the legacy of under-resourced black schools administered by bad faith white officials. Chief Justice Earl Warren’s famous ruling was immediately consecrated as a moral tenet of American political liberalism, and its condemnation of racial separation is still widely cited. This formulation of the violent and degrading racial regime known as “segregation,” however, arguably resulted in an inadequate program for undoing educational racism. Despite the important educational gains achieved since the 1970s, many black scholars and activists, including former leaders of the school integration movement, have criticized the *Brown* ruling for mystifying the true nature of American racism in the name of integration, assimilation, and diversity (Balkin 2002; Bell 1980, 2004; Carter 1980; Edmonds 1980; Guinier 2004; Harris 1993; Payne 2004).

Although the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling remains the focal point of this historical debate, the decision was initially open-ended. The events of the 1960s would dictate the ruling’s implications for school reform and antiracism discourse. *Brown* famously stopped short of defining desegregation, sparking a prolonged debate about the appropriate policy response to historically segregated schools. In the fifteen years between the *Brown* ruling and the nation’s first dramatic shift in the proportion of black students attending racially mixed schools, civil rights advocates and reformers often came together to support desegregation reforms, but these proposals varied widely and often lacked concrete details.

Conservative approaches avoided the term “integration” and called for minimal actions to end explicit, official discrimination. On the other end of the spectrum, many progressives supported radical integration plans that married the racial sorting of students with sweeping plans for building new facilities while redesigning school programs and governance structures. Through the 1960s, a wide range of policy plans, government regulations, and legal frameworks were proposed in the name of school desegregation, and even the most vocal desegregation advocates clashed over the appropriate methods and standards for achieving equal integrated education.

By the 1970s, however, judges, policymakers, and leading civil rights advocates largely settled on a single integration agenda based on a consensus definition of the segregation issue. Following the spirit of *Brown*, new laws and policies stressed the problem of racially separate schools and the inherent value of racial mixing, but, departing from *Brown*, they drew on a new theory of the educational benefits of integration, including statistical guidelines for achieving the educationally optimal racial and class mix in each school. Educators, activists, and members of the black public were reluctant to blame the dismal state of segregated black schools primarily on the purported “feelings of inferiority” induced by racial separation (Dougherty 2004; Payne 2004; Rickford 2016; Silberman 1964), and even Kenneth Clark, an ardent integrationist and leading architect of *Brown*’s psychological theory, insisted that successful school integration would require an aggressive plan to upgrade failing black schools, blaming the schools themselves as much as the composition of students attending them (Clark 1965). Clark, however, was unable to influence the course of school desegregation reform, and a new social scientific diagnosis emerged to guide the school integration agenda based on the educational benefits of exposure to a majority white middle-class peer group.

This dissertation investigates the roots of school integration law and policy in the post-*Brown* struggle over the definition of the school segregation issue and the appropriate framework for analyzing its educational effects. In particular, I ask how a new and politically influential body of expertise on the problem of racial educational inequity emerged around a seminal research project conducted by the U.S. Office of Education. Lacking any forceful mandate for school desegregation, the 1964 Civil Rights Act commissioned a national study of unequal educational opportunity to help build political support for government action, and the result of this statute was a 1966 government survey and report titled *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman, et. al. 1966). This massive survey study, popularly known as the Coleman Report after its lead author, sociologist James Coleman, inaugurated a new paradigm for the study of educational inequality that still informs academic and policy research today (Alexander and Morgan 2016; Kahlenberg 2001; Kilgore 2016; Lucas 2016; Wong and Nicotera 2004). The Coleman Report marked a turning point in policy as well as research. After his unprecedented analysis and expert testimony were used to support new laws enforcing school integration, the media dubbed James Coleman “the father of busing,” referencing the student transportation plans increasingly used to desegregate schools. Historical accounts of the Coleman Report portray this scholarly intervention as the triumph of objective social science within the policymaking process, lauding Coleman for an honest analysis that initially contradicted the interests and assumptions of the government officials who oversaw his research (Grant 1973; Jencks 1969; Kahlenberg 2001; Moynihan 1968; Wong and Nicotera 2004). Coleman’s analysis, we are told, developed out of innovative, scientific, and empirically grounded analysis, and

its comprehensive evidence and rigorous methods ostensibly helped it to withstand scholarly scrutiny and establish a new policy consensus.

The influential report, however, was a product of its historical moment. More than an empirical discovery by objective researchers, the Coleman Report was an intellectual innovation, establishing a new analytic lens for viewing the problem of educational inequity. By examining the politics of knowledge surrounding debates over school desegregation and the urban education crisis, this dissertation investigates the history of social science research as a window into the struggle to define segregation and desegregation in the 1960s. During this period, new education data and research sparked new questions about the appropriate standards and metrics for determining the equality of educational opportunity. Coleman's answer was initially disputed on the left and the right, reflecting the ongoing struggle over the meaning and implications of *Brown v. Board*. I analyze the political and institutional forces that allowed Coleman's research team to reach its bold conclusions and eventually establish a consensus. Drawing on approaches in critical race theory and science and technology studies (Eyal 2013; Eyal and Buchholz 2010; Latour 1987, 1999; Law 2009), my project follows the data and arguments that emerge from racial contestation and subjugation during the 1960s, identifying the arrangements for local school research and federal government intervention that supported some acts of research while precluding others. By situating the new science of educational inequality in local struggles over racial educational justice, this project reveals how social science expertise operates as an unwitting conduit for political forces, articulating a racial equity agenda that surreptitiously accommodated the interests of local school officials and delegitimized the voices of black activists.

The central argument of this dissertation is that the analytic framework of federal government research was shaped by political constraints from above and below. From above, the political standards of neutrality and the short time horizon of policy research provided both unprecedented capacity and very specific limitations on the Equality of Educational Opportunity research project. From below, clashes between urban movements for racial educational justice and local elites conditioned the possibilities for local data collection and early research preceding the 1966 Coleman Report. As the “*de facto* segregation” of urban schools outside the South became politically and economically infeasible, local school officials in the North and West abandoned their traditional colorblind stance and confronted the race problem, commissioning new research to shed light on this previously understudied and politically taboo issue. I argue that, during the early 1960s, school officials in several major cities were engaged in a local politics of knowledge with different factions of their respective local civil rights movements. To counter bold racial demands, they restricting the scope of research and public debate, maintaining a discursive separation between the issue of school segregation and popular black concerns about the quality of schooling serving black students. In turn, scientific and legal investigations led by the federal government were initially suspicious of local school officials yet constrained in their capacity probe beneath existing official sources to recognize the educational controversies animating local protest. The Coleman Report, in particular, uncritically adopted the narrow analytic framework elaborated in the official studies commissioned by local school districts, thus legitimizing locally contested arguments as the basis for new social science expertise.

This introductory chapter sets the stage for this analysis. First, I describe the postwar climate of liberal antiracist politics and the race relations experts empowered to guide public solutions to racism and inequality. Black activism against educational injustice evolved in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, moving beyond sanctioned liberal arguments about the psychological effects of racial separation. The Coleman Report eventually laid the foundation for a new rationale for reforming segregated schools, refuting popular concerns with material inequities and refocusing the agenda on racial mixing. Below, I review the pivotal role of the Coleman Report and social science expertise in the seminal court rulings and policy decisions at the end of the 1960s, and I describe the initial making of the Coleman Report as part of a contested and contingent historical moment when alternative intellectual and policy frameworks were still viable. Finally, this introduction describes my theoretical and methodological approach to studying this historical juncture before outlining the argument and four substantive chapters.

Social Science and the Postwar Politics of Race

A new race liberalism emerged during the postwar period, paving the way for an official discourse of antiracism that would be inscribed in state policy and political debate after the 1960s (Melamed 2006, 2011; Singh 2005). Social scientists, primarily sociologists and social psychologists, led the way in articulating this new political philosophy. Most prominently, Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal was tapped by the Carnegie Foundation to direct a comprehensive study of “the Negro problem” in American life. He collaborated with a cadre of leading American race scholars, black and white, to produce the famous 1944 monograph *An American Dilemma* (Myrdal 2017). A decade later, the Supreme Court’s *Brown* ruling added another doctrinal text in the history of race liberalism. These two documents each elevated the idea of racial integration to a fundamental principle of democratic inclusion. For Myrdal, racial equality required that black people integrate into American life and leave behind any trace of black culture, which he described as a pathological distortion of mainstream American culture and a symptom of caste-like oppression. Echoing a common view among American sociologists, he contrasted the Negro plight with that of European ethnic groups who, in previous generations, retained authentic cultural traditions and benefited from living in separate ethnic enclaves (Myrdal, 2017: 928-930).

Outside the South, state agencies maintained a colorblind approach to racial issues, openly rejecting all forms of racial discrimination while avoiding involvement in racial controversies. The postwar period witnessed the rapid rise of race relations commissions, which were quasi-governmental entities led by small groups of experts, statesmen, and other prominent figures. Local and state governments routinely commissioned these ad hoc panels and more permanent organizations to arbitrate public racial conflicts, advising officials on how to quell unrest and diffuse growing tensions. When a 1943 uprising in Detroit’s black community engulfed the city’s racial ghetto in a destructive property riot, the municipal government established its first race relations commission, sparking the formation of similar committees across U.S. cities. Operating at all levels of government, these commissions intervened in episodes of disruptive racial unrest—including ghetto riots, white mob violence, and civil rights protests—conducting studies and proposing policies on behalf of purportedly colorblind and innocent state officials. Social scientists had created subfields for the study of race relations, and these academic disciplines supplied a new cohort of race

relations professionals who regularly served on official race commissions (Gordon 2015; McKee 1993).

The standard liberal response to racial prejudice and conflict involved formal investigation, special education programs promoting intergroup understanding (Gordon 2015), or simply suppressing public awareness of incendiary racist acts (Hirsch 2009). Progressive social scientists, however, supported affirmative action against racial inequality in the form of targeted social policies and racial quotas for inclusion in jobs, business contracts, or educational opportunities. Echoing Myrdal's views on integration and assimilation, scholarly arguments for racial reform drew on theories of black psychological damage, blaming the history of slavery and other historic regimes of racial oppression for creating the pathological social and cultural condition of black Americans. Exemplified by Kenneth and Mamie Clark's research on the psychological effects of school segregation, this postwar school of thought called for government action not only to remove historic barriers to equal opportunity but also to help black people take advantage of their newfound freedom and overcome the self-destructive tendencies of their pathological condition (Gordon 2015; Scott 1997). In 1965, a chief policy aide in the Department of Labor with a social science background authored a controversial memo supporting jobs programs for black men, arguing that consistent employment was the necessary antidote to a pathological black family structure. While Daniel Patrick Moynihan's rhetoric informed President Lyndon B. Johnson's lauded civil rights agenda, his memo faced harsh criticism from prominent black voices once it was publicly leaked, marking the impending decline of postwar race liberalism and its theory of the damaged black psyche (Patterson 2010; Rainwater and Yancey 1967).

The liberal imperative to promote integration and positive race relations was strategically useful for the African American movements that gained momentum in the 1960s, but this liberal discourse remained in tension with the animating critiques and demands of many black activists. Even the famous condemnation of racial separation in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—the notion that separation engenders “feelings of inferiority” among its black victims—reflected a political compromise that blunted more radical critique of separate and unequal education. As Historian Daryl Scott demonstrates, the Supreme Court turned to social science to help craft a ruling that would unequivocally reject segregation without making the scandalous accusation that Southern elites deliberately disadvantaged African Americans for generations (Balkin 2002; Scott 1997). Drawing on the “modern authority” of social science to condemn segregation, Chief Justice Earl Warren's decision avoided a fundamental reinterpretation of the 14th Amendment, and it avoided explicit acknowledgment of the institution of school segregation as a “massive intentional disadvantage of the Negro race” (Black 1960: 421). By locating the moral and legal violation of school segregation in its invisible effects, as revealed by new social scientific research, on the hearts and minds of black youth, the Supreme Court crafted a ruling that “conveyed the plight of the victim without censuring the guilty” (Scott, 1997: 136).

This line of argument subtly distracted from accusations of unequal schooling, but by suggesting the inherent harms of racial separation, it provided a weapon to fight all versions of school segregation. Liberal elites outside the South cited the Supreme Court to condemn “*de facto* segregation”—a term used to describe racial separation occurring without official sanction. Kenneth Clark, who, alongside his wife Mamie Clark, produced the psychological

theory and primary evidence cited in the 1954 decision, led the post-*Brown* movement to integrate public schools outside the American South. If the unlawfulness of segregation lay in the psychological impairment of segregated children, then even in the Clarks' home state of New York the existence of predominantly black schools constituted an unconstitutional impediment to equal opportunity. Ironically, the Clarks' famous doll experiment, presented as evidence of the effects of segregation, relied on a comparison of Southern and Northern black children under the premise that Southern children, unlike their Northern counterpart, were exposed to the condition of "segregation" (Matlin 2013; Scott 1997). Rather than comparing the experience of segregated and integrated schooling within a single regional context, the research design implicitly examined the effects of Southern segregation—a pervasive system of racial violence and caste-like subordination—in general. Nonetheless, Kenneth Clark used this research to conclude that even Northern "segregation" could cause these Southern symptoms. This semantically flexible notion of segregation travelled well, allowing civil rights advocates like Clark to accuse very different racial regimes for committing the same crime, but its all-encompassing definition had the unfortunate side-effect of obscuring the regionally specific institutional manifestations of "school segregation" as a system for producing material inequities and organizational deterioration.

While *Brown*'s social scientific argument provided the popular mantra supporting school desegregation initiatives, the notion that segregation caused "feelings of inferiority" in black youth did not resonate with many of the key actors advancing the cause of integration during the 1960s. Legal scholars who supported integration argued that Chief Justice Warren's social scientific reasoning was unnecessary if not counter-productive, and even Warren himself downplayed the significance of social psychological arguments once they came under academic and legal critique (Balkin 2002; Bell 1980; Black 1960; Doyle 1976). While civil rights leaders invoked the Supreme Court's logic to appeal to school authorities, historians have shown that rank-and-file black activists, most of whom supported school integration in the early 1960s, were resistant to any liberal rhetoric of integration that evaded issues of power and institutional racism (Dougherty 2004; Gregory 1998; Rickford 2016; Todd-Breland 2018). *Brown* confirmed the widely held view among African Americans that school segregation was a degrading insult and a symbol of racist oppression, yet few people familiar with the problems of public education in the North or the South viewed the psychological effects of racism as the primary barrier to black academic achievement. Particularly in the urban North, most activists addressed the fundamental failure of public schooling and other basic community institutions, leaving even the most resilient and talented black student with limited prospects for educational success (e.g. Clark 1965; Silberman 1964).

During the first half of the 1960s, activists' concerns with the deterioration of black public schools were echoed by progressive voices in government and academia, but by the late 1960s, many advocates had subtly shifted their stance. They adopted a new rationale and approach to school desegregation that stressed sorting students by race and class, only recommending school spending and programmatic reforms to support the singular goal of racial mixing. This position marked an important shift among national progressive reformers at a time when urban black activists, already frustrated by the limited desegregation plans drawn up by local school officials, were turning to the community control of public education as an alternative to integration (Rickford 2016). As I will show, the leading instrument for articulating and justifying this narrow focus on racial mixing was

a new kind of social science expertise on educational inequality. The political backlash against Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report on the pathological black family had signaled the demise of postwar social scientific theories of the damaged Negro psyche and other culturalist approaches to the study of race and poverty, but social scientific experts, and Moynihan in particular, found immediate vindication in the more technical and apparently objective statistical analysis of the Coleman Report (Hodgson 1975; Moynihan 1968). As historian Alice O'Connor argues, the "new, more 'scientific' poverty knowledge" emerging in the late 1960s "shared more in common with the cultural tradition than its practitioners cared to admit" (O'Connor, 2009: 210). By analyzing the political and institutional conditions that enabled the ascendance of the 1966 Coleman Report, my project interrogates the operative alliances and silences that constitute our contemporary discourse of racial educational inequality.

Social Science and the Consolidation of a School Desegregation Agenda

The authoritative body of expertise emerging from the Coleman Report is recognized for its role in supporting the fight for school integration in courtroom debates and Congressional hearings of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Grant 1973; Kahlenberg 2001; Wong and Nicotera 2004). The political impact of this new research, however, went beyond supporting an established reform agenda. The Coleman Report figured in a national struggle over the meaning and purpose of school integration just as this struggle was becoming a focal point of the civil rights movement. It was published during the summer of 1966 when New York's influential movement for community control waged its first major battle over a newly built public school in Harlem. In response to the report, some black activists—including Floyd McKissick, the national director of the Congress of Racial Equality—publicly denounced it, arguing that its rationale for integration was demeaning and that it misrepresented the movement (Burkholder 2017; McKissick 1966). Coleman's conclusions were also viewed as a threat to the Johnson Administration, which had already dramatically expanded federal government funding for struggling low-income schools and pushed for more funds to support ambitious school desegregation initiatives (Grant 1973; Moynihan 1968). By becoming the authoritative source of reference on the issue of school desegregation, the Coleman Report helped to disassociate the school integration agenda from related initiatives involving resource redistribution as well as administrative and programmatic reforms.

The Coleman Report settled on two general conclusions. First, it argued that students' level of academic achievement is influenced primarily by their family background and only marginally by the quality of schools they attend. In particular, it found that most school resources—including the quality of school facilities, the courses offered, and the general level of funding—do not affect student test scores. It argued that black and white schools feature, on the whole, similar resources, yet they yield drastically different student outcomes, primarily because black students are far more likely to come from culturally deprived low-income households (Coleman, et. al. 1966). Second, the Coleman Report argued for school integration as an important means for promoting educational equity. For Coleman, the value of integration had little to do with the quality of black versus white schools or with the psychological effects of segregation on students' racial identities. Instead, the integration of black and white students was recast as a means for enhancing the social environment of each school, leveraging the positive influence of majority middle class

peer groups to improve the school outcomes of disadvantaged students. In most all-black schools, the argument goes, high rates of student poverty compounded by the relatively low socio-economic status of the teaching faculty undermines the learning of all students in attendance, regardless of his or her own family's class background. School integration could, thus, be justified as a vehicle for optimizing the socio-economic composition of individual schools in order to benefit the least advantaged without harming more well-off students (Coleman 1966; Coleman, et. al. 1966).

When federal judges invoked this evidence-based approach to remedying the harms of segregation, plaintiff demands for school resources and programming were easily dismissed as ineffectual and irrelevant. In San Francisco, for instance, the local NAACP's major school segregation lawsuit against the urban school system reopened after the city's educationally informed desegregation initiative was derailed by a conservative mayor. The result of the 1971 *Johnson v. San Francisco Board of Education* ruling was a formulaic desegregation plan hastily developed to meet legal requirements for statistical integration. Scholars and local educators criticized this approach as insensitive to the organizational challenges of the already crisis-ridden school system. Rather than directly addressing acute educational concerns, court-mandated integration entailed the massive, haphazard reassignment of students to schools, adding to the disorganization and demoralization of school staff (Fine 1986; Kirp 1982).

This integration plan reflected the social scientific rationale cited by the district court judge. According to Doris Fine, the plaintiff's case in *Johnson v. San Francisco* "relied heavily on the findings of the Coleman Report as evidence that racial imbalance was the prima facie cause of the educational harm declared heinous by the Supreme Court" (1986: 124). At least one of the NAACP lawyers for the plaintiff challenged this narrow focus on demographic imbalance, attempting to introduce tangible deficiencies in black schools as additional harms to be remedied by the court, but the judge dismissed this line of argument, adhering, instead, to the specific diagnosis of the problem articulated in the Coleman Report. The frustrated black lawyer who refused this narrow diagnosis resigned from the case in the protest (125, 130-131).

In multiple urban school desegregation cases, judges cited Coleman's research or courtroom testimony to dismiss concerns with under-resourced and mismanaged schools. Before *Keyes v. School District Number One* became the first Supreme Court case to rule on *de facto* segregation in 1973, a 1968 district court ruling on the Denver school segregation case cited the Coleman Report to exclude evidence of resource disparities and reject proposals for targeted education programs for disadvantaged students (Grant, 1973: 53). In Norfolk, Virginia the district court ruled against the city's local NAACP branch in favor of the local school board's alternative desegregation proposal, which limited integration to selective transfers of black students to preserve white majorities in newly integrated schools. The judge made the unusual step of visiting Cambridge, Massachusetts to hold a special hearing with Harvard professor Thomas Pettigrew, who warned against the NAACP's more radical proposal for integrating every school in the majority black and low-income city. The judge ruled in favor of the school board's plan for the selective integration of white schools, explicitly invoking Pettigrew's Coleman-style argument regarding the educationally optimal socio-economic mix of students in a school. Academic expertise, backed by the Coleman Report, trumped the NAACP's policy expert, who called for ending racially isolated inner

city schools with cross-city busing and new, well-resourced school campuses serving large regions of the city (Grant, 1973: 51-53; Littlejohn & Ford, 2012: Chapter 5).

Critics of this narrow legal focus on racial mixing have attributed these court decisions to the general limitations of the law as a vehicle for educational policy reform (Fine 1986; Halpern 1995; Kirp 1982; Rosenberg 2008). They argue that the courts lack the capacity and power to intervene at the level of school governance and administration, and that they rely, instead, on superficial formulaic changes in the distribution of students, staff, and funding. Legal scholars, however, single out school segregation litigation as a seminal example of the capacity of interventionist courts to bring about complex social policy reforms without new legislation. In several cases involving schools, prisons, police departments, and mental health facilities, the implementation of decisive court rulings has led to a more expansive, and arguably more effective, role for the courts in public policy and administration (Feeley and Rubin 2000; Sabel and Simon 2004). In these cases, judges often appoint special masters of the court to oversee the implementation of complex reforms. The master's role is marked by constant tension between the need to assert control and the question of his or her legitimate authority; it is subject to ongoing negotiation as the master develops working relationships with administrators and policymakers on the ground (Berger 1978; Dentler and Scott 1981; Kirp and Babcock 1980).

The appointment of special masters to implement school desegregation rulings is exemplary of this relatively recent development in public law litigation. In a book-length analysis of their experience as court masters in the Boston school desegregation case, Robert Dentler and Marvin Scott (1981) claim that judicial orders from above clearly delimited the scope of their powers, removing core aspects of the educational program from the realm of legal consideration and intervention. Although Dentler and Scott faced daunting challenges working with a hostile and disorganized school system, they argue that it was the court's framing of the issue, rather than any inherent limitation in their institutional role, that impeded their ability to enact more educationally impactful reform through the court-ordered desegregation of Boston's public schools.

Despite their limitations, court-ordered urban school desegregation initiatives represent the pinnacle of the school integration movement, and proponents of school integration today, such as political scientist Gary Orfield and journalist Nikki Hannah-Jones, continue to cite these interventions as the model for effective racial education reform. For these proponents, integration was successful to the extent it was implemented, yet public officials lacked the political will to see it through and realize integration's true promise. A recent and more fine-grained study of the effects of court-ordered desegregation confirms its positive educational impact but reveals that these black educational gains hinged on the existence of overlapping school finance and early childhood education reforms that were prevalent during this period (Johnson 2019). Black educational progress during the post-civil rights era resulted from student integration alongside the redistribution of school resources and programming. In some cases, however, integration orders aligned with the more cynical reform agendas of local school officials, supporting racist urban planning agendas or efforts to undermine black educators and communities (Cecelski 1994; Erickson 2016; Monti 1985; Walker 2000). Many desegregation court orders included special funds and programming for black and brown schools that remained segregated, but these provisions were often left underfunded and unenforced (Eaton, Feldman, and Kirby 1996). If school desegregation law had included requirements for decent school conditions,

new educational programs, and mechanisms for public accountability, then such initiatives may have demonstrated a more politically viable and educationally promising solution to entrenched racial inequities. Instead, the progressive agenda focused increasingly on politically and logistically ambitious multi-district student busing plans. When these ambitions failed, liberal advocates and policy experts lost all grounds for hope, succumbing to the persisting neglect of segregated communities of color.

The Coleman Report and the Politics of School Data

To present day observers, the research undertaken in the federal government's Equality of Educational Opportunity project is familiar and expected. In an attempt to answer Congress's query about the existence of racially unequal educational opportunity, Coleman compared the effect of school-level variables and individual student attributes on achievement test scores, using new computer technology and techniques for multivariate regression analysis. Racial inequity was attributed to the effects of race and school characteristics, including a school's material and human resources as reported by school administrators. The socio-economic and attitudinal attributes of students, as reported in extensive student surveys, represented out-of-school factors that the study controlled in order to isolate the true relationship between schools and academic outcomes. The Coleman Report surveyed a national sample of over 3,000 schools, to document, school resources and it administered surveys and academic achievement tests to about 600,000 students and 60,000 teachers, providing especially detailed descriptions of student home life and teachers' educational background and professional qualifications. While this research revealed a large gap in academic achievement between racial groups and racially segregated schools, this gap was primarily attributed to the low socio-economic background of black and brown students. Coleman concluded that schools have little impact on differences in student achievement. To the extent that, all other factors being equal, schools did contribute to different levels of achievement, Coleman attributed this effect primarily to the schools' composition of students and teachers rather than to its resources or curricular offerings. The quality of a student's social environment—both family and neighborhood environment as well as the profile of peers and adults in school—was determined to be the overwhelming factor driving differences in student test scores (Coleman 1966; Coleman, et. al. 1966).

This line of argument established now familiar scholarly theories and debates about educational inequality. Bodies of literature studying "school effects" and the effects of school finance reform emerged during the 1970s (Heckman and Neal 2005), and social scientists continue to debate whether school resources can improve educational outcomes for poor students and high-poverty schools (Burtless 2011; Downes and Figlio 2007; Jackson, Johnson, and Persico 2016; Morgan and Jung 2016). A parallel literature on "peer effects," evaluating the impact of student composition on an individual's educational achievement, similarly began in the 1970s (Hanushek et al. 2003; Heckman and Neal 2005; Hoxby 2000; Reardon 2016). Several social scientific subfields and widely used research methods in sociology and economics are direct descendants of Coleman's landmark study for the U.S. Office of Education (Alexander and Morgan 2016; Kahlenberg 2001; Lucas 2016).

During the 1960s, however, Coleman's basic method and analysis was controversial. His research contradicted prevailing liberal views about the persisting inequities and future possibilities of public education. While preparing for the major study, Coleman took for

granted that black and white schools were unequal and publicly assumed that the data would demonstrate this institutionalized inequity, but the relative equality of black and white schools and weak association between schools and student outcomes struck Coleman as a profound empirical discovery, disabusing him of his old assumptions (Grant 1973; Kahlenberg 2001). A small contingent of influential researchers agreed, portraying Coleman's analysis as a turning point for education research (e.g. Jencks 1969; Moynihan 1968; Nichols 1966). Key figures in president Lyndon Johnson's administration, meanwhile, downplayed Coleman's provocative conclusions, calling into question the adequacy of his data and validity of his analysis (Grant 1973; Hodgson 1975; Moynihan 1968). The Coleman Report, however, gained traction in policy debate and academic research, and subsequent analyses of Coleman's survey data reaffirmed his central claims and bolstered the report's scientific legitimacy.

During the late 1960s, a parallel groundswell of smaller scale, local studies on race and the urban education crisis suggested that alternative approaches to the scientific study of school inequality were possible. Exposés of disorganized and demeaning public schools like Jonathan Kozol's classic *Death at an Early Age* (Kozol 2008) provided scandalous accounts of the treatment of poor black school children and analyzed the teacher-student relationship as an important driver of student outcomes (Kohl 1967; Rist 1973; Rosenthal and Jacobson 2003). Other critics targeted urban school bureaucracies, using field research to demonstrate the recalcitrance of school administrators, from principals to system superintendents, in blocking racial equity reforms and perpetuating patterns of neglect and dysfunction (Gittell and Hollander 1968; Rogers 2006; Schrag 1968). In isolated cases, early studies outlined competing frameworks for the systematic study of student test score disparities. Most notably, Kenneth Clark's community service organization Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. studied educational inequality in New York City, drawing on unusual access to citywide achievement test data to demonstrate the progressive decline of black students' scores relative to their white peers. The study combined this quantitative analysis of tests scores with in-depth interviews and field research, diagnosing racist attitudes and low student expectations prevalent among teachers in ineffective Harlem schools (Clark 1965; HARYOU 1964). In theory, this study's analytic approach and specific findings could have informed survey research such as the research conducted for Coleman's report, but the Office of Education's massive research project and lengthy report did not devote careful scrutiny to educators' racial attitudes or the differential rate of academic progress across racial groups.

Coleman's data and analysis, nonetheless, became the locus of leading academic debates about race, segregation, and the equality of educational opportunity. Scholarly critics and proponents alike conducted their own analyses of the public data set, using more sophisticated methods primarily to test Coleman's key claims (Bowles and Levin 1968; Cain and Watts 1970; Jencks et al. 1972; Mosteller and Moynihan 1972). This research largely confirmed Coleman's most important conclusions about the significance of out-of-school factors on educational fortunes. Henry Aaron, a leading policy analyst in the federal government at the time, blamed this dominant trend in education research on the hegemonic influence of the EEO survey data, arguing that even critics of the Coleman Report

were forced into the procrustean bed formed by the categories and characteristics of the data collected. Like the drunk in the old vaudeville routine who looked for his lost wallet under the lamp post though he had lost it elsewhere, those who denied the acceptability of the report's conclusions were forced to use data whose characteristics and shortcomings very nearly precluded interpretations other than those the report had reached. (Aaron, 2010: 77)

This data set reflected an analytic approach to studying educational inequality that placed special emphasis on student attributes and potential out-of-school factors, relegating the process of operating schools and instructing students to a black box. The success of the Coleman Report required sealing shut this black box, permitting a causal analysis of school “inputs” and “outputs” that rendered invisible the mechanisms through schools and teachers educate their students.

The Equality of Educational Opportunity had a profound gravitational pull on the social scientific study of educational inequality, and its analytical framework quickly became the foundation for leading academic and policy expertise on school desegregation. The federal government, leveraging its unique resources and political capacity, was uniquely positioned to produce this influential research, but why did state-commissioned researchers settle on this analytic approach in the first place? Despite the political dispositions and prevailing assumptions of government officials and experts, the Coleman study and other major federal government investigations into school segregation and inequality during the mid-1960s failed to produce evidence-based arguments for opening up the black box and pursuing an alternative framework for analyzing racial educational inequity.

To account for the making of the Coleman Report, my study revisits the existing debates about race, segregation, and educational inequality already taking place in cities during the early 1960s. Before the sixties, the issue of race and racism was largely taboo among school administrators, and urban school superintendents regularly resisted demands for public scrutiny, reserving student test scores and other school data for internal analysis by professional educators. Urban movements against school segregation compelled local authorities outside the South to affirm their opposition to racial segregation and confront public accusations with new data and research. Increasingly, these city school districts embraced school integration in principal and adopted some racial reforms, yet the nature of the *de facto* school segregation issue and its relationship to broader racial educational disparities remained unsettled. New research prompted the proliferation of more technical controversies about how to evaluate the quality and equality of education, and these disagreements corresponded to local disputes about the appropriate means and ends of urban school desegregation reform.

Eager to enforce school desegregation nationwide, the federal government intervened into this local politics of knowledge by initiating a series of major investigations into the problem of racial educational inequity. The Equality of Educational Opportunity project successfully translated local disputes and politicized research into a framework for the scientific evaluation of educational equity. I argue that its success depended on the invisibility of the accusations and demands of black grassroots activists and the adoption of political circumscribed empirical and theoretical questions to represent local racial controversies. This dissertation analyzes the political forces of racial repression and reform that dictated the circulation of local ideas and evidence among influential researchers and public officials in the federal government and, thus, created the conditions for assembling a new form of expertise on educational inequality.

The Sociology of Social Science in Unsettled Times

In particular, this study asks how Coleman and his research team settled on their data and analysis of unequal educational opportunity, and how this analysis garnered scientific legitimacy and lasting political influence. Traditional approaches to the sociology of intellectuals, focusing on the social scientific field or the biographies of key researchers, cannot resolve this historical puzzle. While the postwar sociology of education, including its emphasis on socio-economic background and student attitudes, did inform Coleman's approach, Coleman's intellectual stance relative to his adversaries does not reflect any established struggles in the academic field. Sociologists and psychologists who, like Kenneth Clark and Thomas Pettigrew, rejected Coleman's claim that black schools were generally equal with white schools actually shared Coleman's professional interest in privileging social and psychological factors in the study of educational inequality. Compared to experts more actively engaged in race politics, Coleman was more easily persuaded that schools were not to blame for racial educational inequality, but he embarked on his study with motivations and assumptions largely overlapping with his progressive colleagues. Outside of his academic career, he was an open advocate of school integration who decried the separate and unequal status of black education (Kilgore 2016). As a scholar, he valued mixed method inquiries into the micro-level relationships and social processes that created macro-level patterns, and his later writings betrayed his own skepticism regarding the Coleman Report's quantitative methodology and bold conclusions (Coleman 1996; Coleman and Hoffer 1987). Neither his academic field position nor his own political and intellectual background suggest that Coleman was uniquely disposed to underplay concerns with the deficiencies of black schools.

The tendency to view disputes over Coleman's research as clashes between opposing factions of the academic or political field may be anachronistic. It risks imputing onto this pivotal intellectual battles the very social structures that only took shape after these battles were fought. During the unsettled time of the 1960s, the postwar academic field gave way to a more racially integrated field with new lines of exclusion and hierarchy, and the ascendance of Coleman-style education research—alongside less influential subfields of education research led by scholars of color who rejected Coleman's perspective (e.g. Edmonds 1980; Sizemore 2008)—is indicative of this shift. The volatile period between 1965-1969 also involved seismic shifts in the political and state fields around issues of race. By this time, the liberal-black coalitions that characterized early instantiations of the civil rights movement had broken down, giving way to new policy initiatives and political alignments representing racial reform in the post-civil rights era. In the arena of public education, the Coleman Report was at the center of these changes.

To understand the political antecedents and effects of the post-civil rights consensus on school integration, my research descends below the prominent political and intellectual debates of this era to investigate more technical local disputes over data and research methods. Drawing on approaches in science studies and the sociology of expertise, I follow the production and circulation of data, tracing the networks and institutional arrangements that sustain certain kinds of research while precluding others (Eyal 2013; Latour 1999, 2005). Existing literature on the intersection of science and political movements examine scientists' activist commitments or entanglements, asking how movements infiltrate or transform established fields of scientific research (Epstein 1995; Eyal 2013; Frickel 2004).

The study of emerging social science during the 1960s, however, presents the inverse scenario. Researchers responded to political directives, and when a legitimate science emerged out of the political debate on school desegregation, its ultimate success depended, at least in part, on its consolidation in law, policy, and new bodies of applied policy research. In short, science infiltrated the political process. On the surface, this new science was the result of objective research. The production of objectivity, however, always draws on non-scientific materials, techniques, and concepts that are embedded in political and institutional arrangements. The Coleman Report helped carve out a potent political compromise with its precise and narrowly circumscribed integration agenda. By analyzing its political and institutional antecedents, I will argue that this compromise was years in the making. It was the product of political forces that, by conditioning the possibilities for neutral social science, insidiously laid claim to the mantle of the civil rights movement while sidelining black activists.

My theoretical framework combines approaches in science studies with insights from critical race theory on the marginalization of black perspectives within public discourse on race and racism. My analysis of the limits of school integration builds on the seminal work of critical race scholars who exposed the ways that the law encodes and preserves white privileges, protecting the material inequities and structural disadvantages at the heart of historical systems of school segregation (Bell 1980, 2004; Harris 1993). I will show that, even after *Brown* sidestepped basic questions of school inequity, black-led movements for school integration and racial educational justice articulated a more robust critique of the harms of segregation and the causes of separate and unequal education. Debates over school segregation, particularly in the urban North and West, gave way to not only legal disputes but also intellectual controversies over the purpose of integration and the meaning of school quality and equality. Although the 1960s marked a watershed moment in the visibility and power of black social movements, critical race theorists contend that emerging spaces for liberal race discourse continue to suppress black and brown voices and reinforce white supremacy through circumscribed formulations of equity and reform (Crenshaw 2019; Melamed 2011). By tracing the persisting subjugation and selective legitimation of racial claims, my analysis shows how the production of social scientific knowledge about educational inequality was fundamentally structured by forces of racial domination. Influenced by this expertise, post-civil rights era school reform debates centered the educational benefits of racial mixing, displacing black demands to upgrade their neighborhood schools and hold school systems accountable for racial inequalities.

My research examines a wide range of archival documents, from the meeting minutes of black community organizations to the internal documents of federal government agencies. I draw upon the voices of various movement actors, academic researchers, and state officials to reconstruct the popular understandings and expert discourses articulated to make sense of the social transformations of the 1960s. Starting with local urban struggles over race and education in the early 1960s, I conduct a case study of Chicago, which was the primary target of federal government intervention against *de facto* segregation and a focal point for research and national debate. I conduct a fine-grained analysis of emerging political discourses and the production of knowledge in Chicago alongside a comparative analysis of contested research across U.S. cities during the early to mid-1960s. I then turn to the high-level policy debates developing in and around the federal government. Experts in race and education regularly contributed to conferences and committees to guide the

Johnson Administration's reform agenda as well as the research efforts of the Office of Education and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

At the heart of the national school desegregation issue was the problem of *de facto* segregation, which was quickly becoming a national problem as the South shed its official commitment to *de jure* segregation. Focusing on the major research projects and civil rights investigations targeting this issue, I track the circulation of data and research questions between local urban struggles and federal government debates. My research asks how local struggles dictated the early production of data and how the strategies of activists and government officials influenced the dissemination and uptake of new research among D.C. bureaucrats and their expert consultants. By interrogating the political concerns and intellectual controversies that federal government researchers engaged with and attempted to resolve, and by investigating the possibilities and impediments to producing new data, I account for the political constraints that enabled the production of authoritative expertise on race and education. This dissertation concludes by discussing the political implications of this new expertise and the broader theoretical implications of my historical argument.

Political Constraints Forge a New Science of School Reform

My research, ultimately, identifies political constraints from above and below that enabled the production of new education expertise and, thereby, channeled the consolidation of a post-civil rights era school integration agenda. The Office of Education leveraged immense resources and a Congressional mandate to collect large amounts of unprecedented data and conduct a relatively sophisticated quantitative analysis, but this power came with specific constraints imposed from above. Policy research operates on a short time horizon, and political standards for scientific neutrality required that the director of the Equality of Educational Opportunity project approach this study from a detached position, lacking the familiarity of progressive educators and race relations experts already involved in this debate. Under these constraints, researchers were more likely to rely on official sources and center empirical concerns already validated by past research.

In the context of political turmoil and tense racial controversy, the availability of research on race and education when Coleman began was already constrained from below. Researchers in the federal government intervened in local disputes by collecting data from local school district officials, and their indirect access to both existing information and new data collection presented political constraints on the purview and short-term capabilities of their research. I argue that the politics of knowledge surrounding racial disputes in urban school districts resulted in a common framing of the racial equity issue across several major cities, embodied in the official studies frequently commissioned by local school boards during this period. Because local elites successfully marginalized black community voices in local school integration movements and restricted the scope and analysis of local race and education research, the underlying accusations of racism and inadequate schooling that motivated local protest movements were, ultimately, invisible to federal government investigators. James Coleman and other researchers in the Johnson Administration did not uncritically accept the conclusions of defensive local officials and their commissioned policy reports, but they, ultimately, adopted the analytic framework that local studies used to evaluate the equality of opportunity in urban schools. Political constraints shaped the kind of evidence and ideas that national researchers used to understand local controversies and frame their own empirical and theoretical questions, and their reliance on official sources

from segregated urban school districts led to a process of knowledge formation that enrolled local administrators in the production of data and consolidated the racial marginalization of black grassroots activists.

To elaborate this argument, the following four chapters move between local and national scales, tracing the circulation of contested data and concepts that assembled a new framework for scholarly research. At the center of this story is the Chicago Public Schools, which was a focal point for expert scrutiny, national debate, and federal government intervention against *de facto* segregation. On the one hand, Chicago was an extreme case of racial conflict, characterized by a large, well-organized black movement confronting an authoritarian city school superintendent and conservative-leaning school board appointed by the city's powerful mayor. It epitomized the problem of separate and unequal urban schools for expert analysts and federal government reformers. On the other hand, Chicago was indicative of major cities outside the Deep South where, in most cases, conservative school officials reluctantly recognized racial demands and gradually conceded to narrowly circumscribed desegregation initiatives. The city, thus, offers both a window into the unfolding of local struggles for racial educational justice across the country and a central stage for the national effort, led by progressives in the federal government, to intervene against *de facto* school segregation.

I begin with the tidal wave of black protest against separate and unequal schooling across Northern and Western cities in the early 1960s, analyzing the Chicago case to understand how various political actors within the city's civil rights movement interpreted the school segregation issue and strategically articulated both shared and competing political claims. Turning to the national debate surrounding separate and unequal schooling, I review the political circumstances and views prompting leading experts and reformers to intervene in local race and education controversies and to craft an empirical justification for federal action. The political pressures within the federal government to produce policy expertise converged with political clashes over education research in cities to create the conditions for the making of the Coleman Report. This convergence begins with the local production, in cities across the country, of official reports on race and education by purportedly independent school study commissions. Bureaucrats and scholars working in the federal government faced pressure to quickly produce more rigorous and objective research to justify intervention against *de facto* segregation, and I show how they compiled survey data, official reports, civil rights hearings, formal complaints, and the work of contracted investigators to ascertain important research questions and produce influential findings.

Chapter 1 argues that, during the early 1960s, the issue of school segregation was unsettled, encompassing distinct interpretations of the problem as well as distinct ideas about the methods and purpose of school integration. These multiple interpretations of the problem often coexisted within urban civil rights movements during the early 1960s, but they gave way to both distinct policy demands and a politics of knowledge, in which activists challenged the school system to produce data and research to expose educational inequities. Drawing on a case study of Chicago's movement against school segregation, this chapter identifies three factions of the movement and their respective interpretations of the segregation issue. I argue that fundamental controversies about the causes of white flight and racial disparities in student achievement scores prompted new research and anticipated later disputes over the design and merits of the school system's desegregation proposals.

Chapter 2 argues that progressive reformers in the federal government, similar to grassroots black activists in cities like Chicago, associated school segregation with basic inequities in the quality of schooling across racial groups. Rather than simply responding to psychological arguments about the effects of racial separation, government officials and experts in the mid-1960s pursued a broad school desegregation agenda that included restructuring urban schools to upgrade the quality of newly integrated schools. Like their local counterparts, these national reformers hoped new research would substantiate their concerns with racial educational inequality and provide legal and political justification to mobilize resources and reform local public schools. These elite policy actors, however, lacked the experience and political insight of activists on the ground and faced a dearth of existing scholarship on the quality of schooling in segregated school districts. In the wake of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, federal agencies pursued multiple major investigations into *de facto* segregation and the inequality of educational opportunity to marshal support for school desegregation, but these research efforts faced political constraints both from the local politics of knowledge within urban school districts and from the internal political pressures on policy research in the context of this polarizing racial issue.

Chapter 3 turns to the local constraints on race and education research within urban school districts outside the South. I investigate the creation and content of official reports on race and education commissioned by big city school boards between 1961 and 1965. Before the Coleman Report, local school boards commissioned citizens committees and expert panels to help arbitrate local racial disputes and produce research and recommendations regarding local charges of racial educational inequity. This chapter compares nine commissioned reports and returns to the case of Chicago to investigate the political forces that shaped the production and reception of this new research. I argue that, on the surface, local study commissions typically addressed popular black accusations of inferior black schools, but they consistently adopted a narrow analytic framework that obscured many of the educational problems and administrative practices that activists hoped to expose. The Chicago case reveals the vulnerability of purportedly independent study commissions to political interference in the design and execution of their research. In local activist circles, Chicago's new research sparked new and more technical controversies about the quality of education and the appropriate methods for evaluating educational equity, but in mainstream policy debate, these study commissions at once endorsed school integration and restricted the scope of the issue, establishing a discursive separation between school segregation and the problem of racial disparities in educational outcomes. Beginning in 1965, when new federal government investigations examined the issue of racial educational inequity, controversies about urban school segregation, particularly in Chicago, loomed large, and the official reports recently commissioned by local school boards helped fill the void in existing education research.

Chapter 4 examines the uptake of local controversies among researchers in the federal government, asking how the political conditions in local school districts and within the federal government dictated the circulation of ideas and evidence among national experts. The decisive 1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity study adopted a more sophisticated version of the same analytic framework employed by local race and education study commissions, and I argue that political constraints from above and below made this framework possible by elevating official ideas and evidence and obscuring complex controversies on the ground. The Coleman Report faced constraints from above, including a

strict time limit and political standards for neutrality, as well as constraints from below, in the form of politically circumscribed official reporting and local barriers to research access impeding federal investigators. Although federal officials benefited from unique opportunities to compel local cooperation with outside research, these constraints led the Coleman study and parallel investigations to bypass more intrusive methods or concede to local resistance. In the end, many progressive officials experts embraced Coleman's data and elements of his analysis to justify school integration, even as they disagreed with his conclusions about the causes of racial educational inequality. The Coleman Report was a sincere effort to provide a scientific resolution to a controversial public issue, and its success depending on a narrow purview on the scope and dimensions of this controversy. Once the study was completed, its data and analysis triggered the development of a new body of expertise, both among policy elites advocating integration and among social scientists intrigued by this novel research.

The theory, methods, and central findings of the Coleman Report are easily taken for granted today, but during a period when the science of educational inequality and the underlying issue of school segregation was unsettled, a different expert lens for diagnosing racial educational inequity was possible. Without the emergence of Coleman's analytic framework, the policy response to school segregation may have stressed improved school conditions and elevated academic standards over ambitious plans to bus students to and from the majority white suburbs in order to achieve the optimal composition of race and class groups in each school. Instead, the Coleman Report garnered scientific legitimacy and consolidated the leading expert rationale guiding school desegregation reform for the past fifty years. By the mid-1970s, the educational faith in racial mixing was ensconced in major court rulings, policy initiatives, and a new body of policy research on school desegregation. Urban black communities continued to call for more resources and control in their neighborhood public schools, but these grassroots voices were increasingly marginalized as experts delineated the issue of racial educational equity around a narrowly defined school desegregation agenda (Danns 2014; Dougherty 2004; Dumas 2007; Erickson 2016; Todd-Breland 2018).

For many Americans, major racial equity policy initiatives like school integration and affirmative action have come to represent the legacy of the civil rights movement. This study argues that these policies were shaped by political negotiations and compromise that ultimately excluded popular movements and suppressed their guiding experiences and insights. A central tenet of Critical Race Theory—first articulated by former NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyer turned school integration critic, Derrick Bell—states that the courts sanction racial justice reforms only when they converge with established white interests (Bell 1980, 2004). Building on this core insight, this project goes further to investigate how the form and limitations of racial reform were determined by the simultaneous construction of white interests. By following the maneuvering of local elites within the politics of educational knowledge, I demonstrate how they managed representations of race and racial reform to counteract black uprisings and develop new ways of governing urban ghettos in the post-industrial city. In the transition, marked by the upheavals of the 1960s, from a raceless state to an antiracist state (Goldberg 2002), the rationale and methods of school desegregation reform were as much a stake for urban planners and local school administrators as they were for civil rights activists and reformers (Erickson 2016; Monti 1985). The failures of post-civil rights reform initiatives are typically attributed to

conservative reactionaries, but sociologists of race must examine the inherent limits of antiracist discourse and policy, if only because official antiracism, like racism, can be a tool for mystifying the social relations that produce race and other structures of domination (Gilroy 1990; Melamed 2011; Payne 2004; Singh 2005).

This dissertation argues that the politics of school desegregation was, at its core, a politics of knowledge, and the outcomes of this knowledge politics were consolidated in a dominant social scientific paradigm for education research. Leading social scientists studying educational inequality continue to treat race and class variables as indicators of static forms of “disadvantage” that cause academic outcomes (Zuberi 2001; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). As in Coleman’s seminal study, contemporary scholars regularly turn to the socio-ecological analysis of segregation and concentrated poverty to explain the lowly status of black and brown schools or neighborhoods, but this research risks reifying the relations of ghettoization that produce these demographic patterns as if they were attributes of the victims. Without detracting from Coleman’s productive scholarly paradigm or the merits of past school integration reforms, scholars and advocates must adopt a critical stance toward this scientific and liberal orthodoxy, keeping in mind the ongoing history of racial violence and repression that sustains the demeaning and destructive reality of racial segregation.

Segregation operates not just through the physical boundaries that separate black and white schools but also through the symbolic boundaries, inscribed in the schooling process, that police blackness out of educational spaces and deprive black spaces of their educational potential (Lee 2007; Perry and Steele 2012; Sojoyner 2016). Studying school inputs and outputs obscures the various ways that the administration and operation of public schools creates racially disparate educational experiences for students (Lewis-McCoy 2014; Payne 1984), but when we probe these processes, we can develop smarter, well-targeted policy interventions and establish more useful standards for school effectiveness. The common narrative of poor, ghetto schools suggests that the social and structural challenges they face render educational improvements ineffective and useless, yet this historical study, by reflecting on the origins of this narrative, points us to the fundamental relations that underlie and sustain structures of racial inequality so that we might envision schools as instruments for transformative change.

Chapter 1

The Semantics of Segregation: Controversies over Separate and Unequal Schooling in the Urban North

The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling famously formulated the problem of school segregation in terms of the effects of racially separating students on the hearts and minds of black youth. The Court's argument that separation breeds psychological damage was cited across the country, including in states where racially segregated schooling had long since been illegal, to condemn any concentrations of black students in the same school. This preoccupation with racial separation and demand for racial diversity resonates with our contemporary notions of the 1960s civil rights movement and its demand for school integration, but historical scholarship on urban black movements during the early 1960s complicate our understanding of why segregation mattered and what integration meant to its black supporters. In the fight against *de facto* school segregation, many leading black activists and rank-and-file black protesters fought for a decent quality education for themselves and their children, and most did not view the mere social interaction between black and white youth as a vehicle for racial healing or societal transformation (Danns 2003; Delmont 2016; Dougherty 2004; Gregory 1998; Taylor and Galamison 2001; Todd-Breland 2018).

This chapter argues that, for urban movements during this period, the issue of *de facto* school segregation was unsettled, encompassing distinct interpretations of the problem as well as distinct ideas about the methods and purpose of school integration. These multiple interpretations of the problem often coexisted within urban civil rights movements during the early 1960s, but they led to competing visions for school desegregation reform and a contentious politics of knowledge, including struggles over public access to data and the production of independent research to evaluate school problems. To investigate this discursive landscape of school politics, I focus on the case of Chicago, where one of the country's largest urban black populations clashed with one of the most powerful city school chiefs in the nation. Chicago's movement against school segregation mirrored the rise and fall of similar movements in New York, San Francisco, Cleveland, Detroit, and several other cities, and the school superintendent's response to race-based demands reflected the standard arguments and tactics employed by urban school administrators across the country. The Chicago case was particularly important for the national debate on urban school reform because it was a primary target for federal government scrutiny and intervention in the mid-1960s.

My analysis of Chicago's movement reveals three distinct factions, each articulating three main interpretations of the segregation issue. Largely white liberal elites and progressive religious leaders embraced the Supreme Court's critique of racial separation and the liberal belief in the societal benefits of integration. Grassroots black activists and community organizations articulated a grassroots critique of educational ghettoization that identified practices of racial containment as driving or reinforcing the deterioration of black schools and overall neglect of black students. Established civil rights leaders, particularly leadership of the Chicago Urban League but also including local chapters of the NAACP and CORE, expressed a position between these two interpretations. They viewed the fact of racial separation as a problem in itself but they also argued that separate black schools were under-resourced and generally inferior. These factions, nonetheless, agreed that school

integration—meaning some version of school desegregation reform that moved the city toward substantially fewer racially homogenous schools—held promise to correct the harms of segregation and promote racial educational equity. I analyze private correspondence, press statements, public testimonies, protest pamphlets and flyers, and other documents to synthesize the distinct ways that different political actors within Chicago’s civil rights movement articulated their respective interpretations of the problem, both internally and to a broader audience.

While these factions formed a common movement for school integration, underlying differences in their respective definitions of the segregation issue suggested distinct political strategies and goals. School officials recognized the social psychological argument for school integration cited in the *Brown* ruling, and movement demands on local policymakers often invoked this official rationale, but the movement, nonetheless, fought to shed light on broader educational problems by informally investigating the schools, demanding public access to data, and calling for new research by independent experts. I argue that this struggle prompted a politics of knowledge through which school officials and different factions of the school integration movement fought over the legitimate definition of the segregation issue. In particular, they clashed over two central controversies about the causes of racial disparities in academic achievement and the causes of ongoing school segregation. Different factions of the movement articulated distinct explanations of the educational problems affecting black public schools, and they articulated different theories of white flight and the growing pattern of school segregation. Grassroots groups, in particular, clashed with school officials over the scope of racial educational problems and the need for transparency and expert scrutiny to adjudicate controversies over separate and unequal education.

Activists in Chicago and across the country struggled to impose their empirical claims and conceptual concerns on officially sanctioned school research, and school officials successfully achieved a discursive separation between school segregation and substantive educational issues in official debate. Mainstream discussions of school reform in Chicago largely excluded race-based arguments for upgrading education in schools serving black students. School officials successfully displaced the concerns of black community activists as they prepared school desegregation proposals in the late 1960s, but, their reform plans, which focused on avoiding white flight and lacked a clear educational rationale, often faced backlash from otherwise pro-integration constituencies (Danns 2014; Todd-Breland 2018). The local politics of knowledge surrounding these issues had lasting, if less apparent, consequences for the development of social scientific expertise and the subsequent consolidation of a national school desegregation reform agenda. As I show in later chapters, official discourses of urban school segregation helped filter out black grassroots perspectives in the formation of a post-civil rights era school integration consensus, narrowing the scope of racial equity reform and insidiously displacing black voices in future race and education policy debates.

The Movement Against De Facto School Segregation

Once the Supreme Court ruled against school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*, supporters of the decision insisted that the spirit, if not the letter, of the ruling applied to the North as well as the South. At a 1954 National Urban League Conference, Kenneth Clark stunned the audience of progressive civic leaders and liberal public officials when he argued that the Supreme Court’s recent ruling required radical reforms to remedy

de facto segregation outside the Jim Crow South (Ravitch 1988: 251, 252). The argument that racially homogenous schools in diverse city school districts were tantamount to Southern segregation resonated with liberal elites and many civil rights advocates across the country. Given that a prevailing pattern of residential segregation locked black people into urban ghettos, it was perhaps unsurprising that urban school districts commonly reinforced these racial boundary lines by zoning city schools to correspond to the racial geography of neighborhoods. At the close of the 1950s, however, state agencies still refused to collect data on race in the name of remaining race neutral, and school officials largely downplayed the extent and significance of racial segregation.

Despite the moral salience of this line of argument for Northern opponents of Southern segregation, leveraging the *Brown* ruling in litigation against *de facto* segregation proved difficult. Before the late 1960s, district courts in the North and West rarely convicted local school systems of segregation. Plaintiffs struggled to muster meaningful evidence and convince skeptical judges that authorities had orchestrated segregation secretly without officially enacting a segregation policy. One important exception was the 1962 ruling against New Rochelle's public schools, outside New York City. The early 1960s witnessed a series of school segregation court cases across the North and West hoping to replicate the result in New Rochelle, but the evidentiary standard for proving deliberate segregation was murky and remained too high to hold most Northern school districts accountable. While regional NAACP chapters and other established civil rights leaders were at the forefront of these litigation efforts, pressure from grassroots activists accelerated these efforts and applied important political pressure to compliment losing legal battles and help force some concessions from local school boards (Danns 2003; Dougherty 2004; Kirp 1982; Mirel 1999; Taylor and Galamison 2001).

For popular black movements outside the South, the issue of separate and unequal schooling was central. In general, the Northern parallel to the Southern civil rights movement mobilized around more bread and butter issues in contrast to seminal Southern attacks on segregated facilities and voter disenfranchisement. Northern movements targeted equal employment and equal access to public goods and services such as policing, decent housing conditions, and public aid for poor mothers (Jackson 1993). School segregation, while popularly associated with the Southern fight against segregated facilities, also fit in the latter category, insofar as it represented the denial of equal access to crucial public resources. Movements against school segregation simultaneously resonated with the Southern injustice of enforced racial separation and the Northern fight against the deteriorating quality of public institutions in the ghetto.

Urban movements targeted "*de facto* segregation" during a time when local school authorities implemented increasingly onerous plans to physically contain their growing black student populations and reinforce patterns of racial segregation. In the early 1960s, grassroots organizations formed coalitions in several major cities to fight for school integration, joining together alongside local chapters of the major civil rights organizations and liberal white voices for racial acceptance and inclusion. In addition to court room battles, community organizations staged neighborhood and citywide protest actions and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), a national civil rights group advocating direct action protest, spread across the country to support anti-school segregation movements (Meier and Rudwick 1975). In several major cities, citywide umbrella organization formed to lead diverse coalitions for school integration, and new grassroots activists—like Rev. Milton

Galamison in New York, Rev. Albert Cleage Jr. in Detroit, and Al Raby in Chicago—emerged as leaders in the fight against separate and unequal schools (Anderson and Pickering 1986; Delmont 2016; Kirp 1982; Mirel 1999; Taylor and Galamison 2001). The influx of black migrants into Northern and Western urban centers and the displacement of existing black residents due to urban renewal projects changed the racial geography of cities, and protesters accused school officials of creating new attendance boundaries and makeshift facilities to maintain segregation amidst this change and reinforce the borders of residential segregation (Crain 1968; Delmont 2016; Dougherty 2004; Gregory 1998; Kirp 1982). By the fall of 1963, a wave of citywide school boycotts in major cities from Boston to San Francisco revealed popular frustration with separate and unequal schooling, bringing national attention to the Northern fight for integration.

A case study of Chicago's school integration movement reveals distinct discourses of school segregation articulated by different factions of the city's movement coalition. In Chicago, as in several other big cities, this coalition was led by established civil rights organizations and community organizations, and it brought together small student and parent groups, religious coalitions, labor organizations, liberal school reform advocates, and other black and white proponents of racial inclusion and equality. While official arguments about the inherent value of school integration and racial togetherness dominate our historical memory of this period, the leaders of this movement viewed integration, primarily, as a means to access a valuable public good rather than a vehicle to promote interaction and understanding across racial groups (Danns 2003; Todd-Breland 2018). Below I show how these community-based activists and other school integration advocates elaborated their respective criticisms of school segregation. Together, they placed significant pressure on city school leadership and won small concessions, but different factions drew attention to different sets of concerns that implied different priorities for policy reform. While none of these groups were internally homogenous in their interpretation of this issue or their support for school integration, distinct discourses reflect the unique circumstances and experiences that led different actors to join this common struggle in Chicago and across the country.

Mobilizing against School Segregation in Chicago

Before the late 1950s, black Chicagoans did not rally around the issue of school segregation. Advocates decried the gross underfunding of Chicago's black schools, the lack of black educators, and the blatant corruption that exacerbated these inequities, but protests against segregation were rare and localized events, targeting specific schools and administrative decisions (Danns 2003; Homel 1984; Neckerman 2008). Michael Wallace Homel's study of the early politics of race and education in Chicago covers the origins of Chicago's unofficial policy of racial segregation after the race riots of 1919. In several instances between the 1920s and early 1940s, black community groups organized against individual acts of gerrymandering and other policy decisions clearly designed to contain black students and maintain school segregation. In some cases black students were secluded in an old school or mobile classroom units while other cases saw black students transferred out of their majority white neighborhood schools to attend overcrowded black schools. Protesters did not always demand integration, but the insult of racist exclusion combined with the scarcity of resources to outrage black students and parents and spark several public clashes over segregation (Homel 1984).

The issue of racial segregation became more salient by the late 1950s. Throughout the postwar period, the influx of black residents into Chicago made conflicts over residential segregation increasingly frequent and violent. In a series of cases across the city, white mobs terrorized black residents who dared to move into historically all-white neighborhoods (Hirsch 2009; Seligman 2005). Overcrowding in black and white communities exacerbated these turf wars, and even as the expansion of the suburbs alleviated some residential overcrowding, the problem of school overcrowding grew more severe. During the 25 years following World War II, the city's public school student population rose from 400,000 to about 575,000, and the school system's aggressive construction program could not keep pace (Herrick 1971). This increase was largely driven by the city's growing population of black and Latino youth. Overcrowding was particularly severe in neighborhoods on the edge of the black ghetto that were more recently settled by black residents and, thus, did not feature the dilapidated housing stock of the historic black ghetto. These growing black residential areas on the far South and West sides of the city threatened the geography of both residential and school segregation, and they became frequent targets of the school system's exclusionary zoning and transfer policies (Anderson and Pickering 1986; Danns 2014; Seligman 2005).

The first citywide protest against segregated schooling in Chicago was organized by the city's local NAACP chapter at a 1957 school board hearing. The complaints of multiple parent groups were compiled and researched by NAACP staff within a statement challenging the school board's handling of racial issues. The statement condemned the school system's actions in numerous cases involving overcrowding and racially changing neighborhoods, criticizing both the maintenance of racially separate schooling and the exacerbation of race-related problems in integrated schools (Chicago Branch 1958). While the complaint, subsequently published in the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, brought new attention to the issue of *de facto* segregation, a sustained, citywide mobilization against the school system was not ignited until several years later. During the 1961-1962 school year, a group of black parents staged a sit-in at Burnside Elementary School on the city's far South Side, protesting school overcrowding and the board's proposed remedy, which would transfer students to another overcrowded all-black school miles away (Burnside Parents 1962; Coons 1962). During that same school year, a separate group of black parents coordinated to simultaneously apply for student transfers, requesting that their children be sent to nearby white schools. The move was designed to illustrate racial bias in the transfer program, and it became the basis of a major legal battle against the city's schools (Anderson and Pickering 1986; Danns 2003).

Chicago's movement against school segregation escalated quickly after 1962, in large part because of the organizing and protest actions of black community organizations on the edge of the ghetto. When NAACP members began organizing around school issues on the far Southside in April 1961, they were surprised to find that local parents were already organized, driven by their outrage over the poor quality of education in their neighborhood schools (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 81). Protest actions eventually began to spread in response to racial gerrymandering, biased transfer programs, and overcrowded or inadequate facilities. In the Westside neighborhood of North Lawndale, a community organization protested extreme overcrowding in all-black schools while nearby all-white schools had vacant seats (Schools Committee 1960). Another protest challenged the school system's decision to convert an abandoned public housing unit into a makeshift classroom

(Welch 1963). During August and September 1963, a series of actions by community activists on the far Southside made national headlines by blocking the installment of mobile classroom units, which were introduced to accommodate overflowing numbers of black students (“Seated Children Protest” 1963a; “Seek Boycott of Schools” 1963b). Protesters insisted that mobile classrooms were only necessary to avoid the more obvious and effective solution of transferring students into underutilized white schools.

Community organizations on the far Southside helped found the citywide umbrella organization that would orchestrate this movement and lead the charge against the city’s schools. Chicago’s Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO) initially comprised the Englewood Council for Community Action, the Chatham and Avalon Park Community Council, and The Woodlawn Organization alongside local chapters of CORE, the NAACP, and the Urban League (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 90). The three community organizations represented the Southern perimeter of the black ghetto in the 1950s, and they each experienced the transition to increasingly all-black schools during this postwar period. By the fall of 1963, when the growing confrontation with city school superintendent Benjamin Willis came to a head, the CCCCO’s membership had grown to include progressive religious organizations like the Catholic Interracial Council and established liberal advocacy groups like the Citizens Schools Committee. The CCCCO, like similar ad hoc umbrella organizations in New York, Detroit, and San Francisco, represented the city’s integration advocates, and its core members organized a massive citywide boycott of the city’s schools involving about 225,000 students (Kirp 1982; Meier and Rudwick 1975; Mirel 1999; Taylor and Galamison 2001).

On the surface, the CCCCO’s diverse coalition came together around an abstract commitment to fight racial prejudice and support school integration. The Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision provided the mainstream critique of school segregation that public officials outside the South were obliged to accept, and its emphasis on the psychological and social benefits of racial mixing resonated with white liberal elites as well as some established civil rights leaders. Black community organizations mobilized in response to first-hand experiences at the edge of the ghetto and what they believed were inferior public schools throughout black Chicago, but these accusations provoked forceful denials from school authorities and an ongoing demand for more research. In theory, the racial inequities that motivated black communities to protest warranted a disruptive and redistributive desegregation program designed to correct these inequities and make all schools more responsive to community needs. In practice, local school districts were unlikely to adopt such a sweeping and controversial reform agenda, and black activists struggled to convince many of their fellow integration supporters of the educational implications of the segregation issue.

Fissures in Chicago's School Integration Movement

Early on, political differences among CCCCO coalition members did not disturb their common cause. While liberal elites did not endorse popular black critiques of inferior schooling and established civil rights organizations could not participate in direct action protest, movement actors shared a common aim and common enemy. A program for integrating Chicago’s schools was the presumed answer for a wide range of racial injustices—an antidote to racial prejudice, a remedy for social and economic marginality, and a means for redistributing school resources while stimulating educational reform.

Eventually, progressive voices would clash over competing goals for school integration and strategies for implementing this ambitious agenda. During the early 1960s, however, these differences remained implicit, articulated separately in three distinct interpretations of the nature of the segregation issue and the problem of racial educational inequity. Liberal elites framed the issue in terms of psychological damage, grassroots activists adopted what I label the “ghettoization” frame, and established civil rights organizations added a racial inequality frame.

Liberal Integrationists and the Psychological Damage Frame

For racially liberal elites supportive of the growing protest movement, the object of their protest was racially separate schools and white racial prejudice. In official discussions, the issue of segregation was commonly framed as “racial imbalance,” meaning the statistically uneven distribution of students of color across public schools. Following the Supreme Court’s *Brown* ruling, school officials commonly acknowledged the negative implications of racial imbalance for the psychological health and educational development of black youth. Separate schools breed a sense of inferiority in black students and a false sense of superiority in white students. Integration, or racial balancing, was therefore a social intervention designed to change hearts and minds and only indirectly related to school administration and classroom instruction.

When the Chicago Board of Education was first compelled to address the issue of school integration in August of 1963, it immediately invoked this psychological diagnosis of the problem. As part of its settlement of a year-old school segregation lawsuit, the board resolved to study the problem, recognizing that some level of racial imbalance exists in the city’s schools and that many experts agree that racial separation causes some “sociological, psychological, and emotional” harm to black students. Upon passing this resolution, Willis shared a statement concurring with the decision yet downplaying the significance of the integration issue in light of more pressing educational problems plaguing lower income black communities. For Willis, the school district’s remedial educational programs targeting low-income areas represented a more meaningful educational solution to the challenges facing ghetto schools. Racial integration, he argued, should not detract from this primary obligation of the city’s school system to provide quality education regardless of race (Board of Education 1963).

This framing of the segregation problem as a matter of hostility and prejudice between racial groups was already prominent among white liberal members of the city’s civil rights coalition. Public discussions of “civil rights,” in schools and in general, were typically couched in the language of race relations—or, alternatively, “human relations” or “intergroup relations.” Mainstream confrontations with racism and discrimination, whether led by the city’s race relations commission, leading civil rights organizations, or religious groups like the Catholic Interracial Council, focused on diffusing conflict and fostering interracial acceptance. For instance, the Chicago Urban League joined with an interdenominational group of faith leaders to create a petition and publish a declaration condemning racial violence across the city (Chicago Urban League 1961). The major instances of mob violence cited in the statement included attacks against black individuals seen as trespassing in white neighborhoods—like buying a home on the wrong block or venturing into wrong section of beach—yet the declaration accused both sides of succumbing to racial violence and blamed the “atmosphere of the community,” addressing

Chicagoans' "spirit of decency" rather than the white public's fierce commitment to neighborhood segregation (2). In the context of public education, the Citizens Schools Committee, a citywide umbrella organization for hundreds of liberal civic organizations supporting good government and liberal school reform, called for a new "human relations" policy (Chicago Urban League 1961). By training teachers to be racially sensitive and arbitrating racial disputes on the ground, liberal elites hoped that the schools could quell growing tensions between school principals and local black communities.

In spring of 1962, the Chicago Urban League hosted a large conference featuring a range of race relations experts and civil rights advocates on the subject of "Quality and Equality of Education in Chicago Public Schools," and conference participants united around the shared mission of promoting racial acceptance and the psychological well-being of black youth. Bringing together local race relations commissions, national rights activists, and various community and civic organizations, the conference concluded by issuing a collective statement that reinforced the mainstream definition of the issue. "Racially separate schools, no matter the cause," the statement asserted, "have a harmful effect on the developing personality of all children and impede the ability of minority group children to learn" (quoted in Anderson & Pickering 1986: 90). Liberal elites and established civil rights leaders shared a vision of racial integration that promised to cure individual prejudice and usher in a new culture of interracial acceptance among the younger generation. This narrative, which fit well with the broader discourse of postwar racial liberalism, provided a mainstream rationale for condemning and reforming *de facto* school segregation.

One important corollary of this view was the common dichotomy between racial integration and resource equalization. In response to his civil rights critics, Superintendent Willis pointed to his massive investment in school construction and summer school for disadvantaged students, and while his efforts could be criticized on their own terms for failing to adequately address the scope and legacy of past racial disparities, civil rights leaders often countered Willis' proposals with the presumably distinct demand for racial integration. Integration, defined as a *social* intervention, could not be replaced by improvements in the quality of separate schools, no matter how profound or costly the investment. Thus, when Warren Bacon, a progressive black school board member on the board's committee for school desegregation, expressed his opposition to a limited student integration proposal, he complained that the primary consideration that the plan gave to overcrowding implied an abandonment of the plan's stated purpose—to promote racial integration. The board members agreed that "educational advantage" and racial integration were two separate objectives to be balanced in any proposal (Special Committee 1964).

This dichotomy contradicted the driving assumption about segregation and educational inequality that motivated grassroots black activists in Chicago, but all activist groups were known to invoke the same rhetorical argument against the school system's selective investment in building ghetto schools. New school construction and mobile classroom units did partially alleviate overcrowding and improve school facilities, but protesters cast these actions as part of a larger unspoken policy of racial segregation, criticizing the net effect of this ongoing refusal to disperse overcrowded black student populations. The difference between liberal elites and grassroots activists, however, was that activists in black communities were motivated solely by the demand for quality education, and they dismissed segregationist solutions because they believed that real solutions to the dysfunction, racism, and resource deficiencies in their schools would be difficult to attain

amidst persisting segregation. For these activists, segregation did not merely represent social separation. It was a process of ghettoization, entailing stigmatization and dispossession, that actively undermined the effectiveness of public schooling for black students in order to hoard resources and racial advantages for white students (Harris 1993; Lipsitz 2009).

Black Grassroots Organizations and the Ghettoization Frame

Black community groups mobilized against school segregation in response to specific policy decisions that they viewed as harming black youth in the name of preserving homogenous white schools. As the population of black students in the city's large school system steadily grew, cumbersome student transfer plans, changes to school attendance districts, makeshift classrooms, and the installment of mobile classroom units angered black families who argued that school authorities refused to take advantage of unused classroom space in white neighborhoods. Black students and parents staged protests and voiced demands regarding the conditions in their neighborhood schools, and the issue of segregation and integration was routinely raised alongside basic educational demands for decent schooling and fair treatment. The grassroots critique of school segregation connected these issues by framing segregation as ghettoization—and active process of racial containment that overburdens schools, fostering ineffective teaching, organizational dysfunction, and racial stigmatization.

In official venues for educational policy debate, black activists often invoked the mainstream discourse of integration. After Chicago's second citywide boycott in 1964, CCCO convener Lawrence Landry delivered a statement to the board of education articulating what he saw as the incontrovertible fact of segregation. The existence of *de facto* segregation, he argued, has been acknowledged by the school board, "except you call it 'racial imbalance'" (Landry 1963: 4). Citing the school board's own position, he went on to reference legal and academic sources on the psychological effects of segregation, again establishing common ground between civil rights activists and school officials. In the opening to his statement, however, Landry initially addressed the "well documented grievances" of the CCCO's member organizations and argued that integration "is essential for the redress of these grievances" (Landry 1963: 1, 2). In contrast with the board's exclusive focus on "racial imbalance," the CCCO recognized a broader set of educational problems and viewed integration not as a symbolic or social good but as a necessary means to remedy these educational problems. "*De facto* segregation," for the black community organizations and grassroots leadership that led this campaign, meant more than the lack of social contact between the races. It denoted a series of segregationist policies that perpetuated the educational inferiority of ghetto schools.

Protest pamphlets and press statements in the lead up to the first major boycott articulated the broader set of grievances that angered black students and parents. One flyer publicizing the October boycott treats segregation and "2nd rate education" as a single issue, blaming Superintendent Willis for maintaining both separate and unequal black public schools ("Fight School Segregation!" 1963). Another pamphlet circulating before the boycott described "Benjamin Willis' Report Card," detailing a number of deficiencies in Chicago's black schools from the lack of support staff in high need schools to low academic standards and chronic overcrowding. Racial prejudice and the failure to pursue school integration were last in a long list of complaints ("Willis Must Go!" 1963). A CCCO press release on the upcoming October boycott explained that the action was taken, first, to

protest inferior education and, second, to protest growing segregation, which leads to inferior education (CCCO 1963). As Landry argued, the rallying cry of school integration, which dominated mainstream discussion and official demands to the school board, was viewed by rank-and-file protesters as a means to address the substandard quality of segregated black schools.

Early accusations of racial segregation in Chicago's schools were rooted in the experiences of black students and parents and referenced specific instances of racial containment and the deterioration of black public schools. The Chicago NAACP's detailed 1957 complaint complicated the idea of "integration" by describing the potential problems that accompany racial mixing when it is mismanaged by school officials. The school system's policy of the "denial of difference," the NAACP's term for the standard colorblind stance of public officials, led to haphazard attendance boundary changes that exposed black students to "riots," "teacher hostility and prejudice," and a familiar pattern of teacher flight and understaffing (Chicago NAACP 1958: 93, 126). The complaint also described the unchecked rise of overcrowding in ghetto schools and the school system's impractical efforts to address it (89, 90). These problems were typical in areas experiencing the "racial transition" from white to black residents, and while school administrators could blame residential segregation for the creation of more all-black schools, both their officially colorblind policy and their unofficial segregationist approach were blamed for the decline and undesirability of schools absorbing growing numbers of black students.

From this perspective, segregation was not a static pattern or statistic. It was an active process producing separate and inferior ghetto schools. When the parents at Burnside Elementary staged their sit-in against what they viewed as a discriminatory transfer policy, they were responding more broadly to the deteriorating school conditions caused by neighborhood and school segregation. In a statement justifying their decision to protest, the Parents Association leader Alma Coggs described the ripple effects of extreme overcrowding on teacher morale and the quality of instruction, and she accused the school board for ignoring the Parents Association's complaints over the previous two years (Coggs 1961). For these parents, integration was a necessary component of a larger educational solution that enlisted white neighborhood schools surrounding the black ghetto to help "spread out and absorb the overflow of students from adjacent areas in a *fair* and equitable manner" (Burnside Parents 1962). While recently settled black neighborhoods on the edge of the ghetto featured a higher quality housing stock and more well off families relative to the blighted areas in the core of the ghetto, residents saw racial conflict, overcrowding, and administrative neglect in their neighborhood schools as the familiar catalysts that would repeat the cycle of black institutional decline and concentrated poverty. Black Chicagoans escaped the historic ghetto only to find white flight and political disinvestment fostering the same downward spiral of ghettoization in their new schools and neighborhoods (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 86).

Thus, while grassroots leaders often invoked the language of racial imbalance in official settings and rallied behind the demand for citywide integration, they were motivated by a critique of ghettoization that was unfamiliar to most elite advocates and school policymakers. Ghettoization refers to a process of active segregation that fosters and reinforces the deterioration of black community institutions and protects the status of white neighborhood institutions. These arguments motivated community protest and helped organize citywide support, and they increasingly became the subject of public controversies

over the quality of public schooling and the details of new school desegregation proposals.

Civil Rights Leaders and the Racial Inequality Frame

Established black civil rights leaders in Chicago operated as middle men between the city's liberal elites and local black communities, and they articulated a middle ground between the ghettoization frame and the race relations perspective. Local chapters of prominent civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League were instrumental in the city's movement against school segregation, organizing campaigns and providing crucial resources and expertise to grassroots initiatives. Through research and advocacy, they helped promote the issue of integration and outline mainstream arguments about the necessity of addressing racial imbalance. At the same time, some of these black leaders stressed the fundamental problem of unequal educational opportunity and were sensitive to popular critiques of inferior black schools. While civil rights leaders agreed that Chicago's black schools were materially inferior and educationally inadequate, they expressed a belief in the inherent educational and social benefits of exposing marginalized black students to the mainstream school experience of white youth.

By the 1960s, the Chicago Urban League (CUL) had become the most prominent civil rights organization in the city, and education was central to its mission of promoting social welfare and economic opportunity among African American Chicagoans. Like the NAACP, CUL relied on support from its largely white wealthy donors, and it often drew on its networks and resources to lobby city officials on behalf of powerless poor black migrants. The problem of school segregation elicited a series of reports and public statements detailing the extent and implications of racial imbalance (e.g. Cook 1965), but CUL leadership simultaneously stressed the underfunding and overall inadequacy of black schools as an organizational priority. Before the integration movement gained steam, CUL President H.B. Law wrote a newspaper op-ed that acknowledged the significance of integration while highlighting the urgent need for more resources and higher standards in black schools (Law 1962). Law reinforced this emphasis on school quality in an internal CUL document two years later on CUL's position on public education (Law 1964). For the following two decades, CUL would pursue parallel efforts to compel school integration and promote resource equalization across race and class lines.

A 1962 CUL analysis of the race and education issue argued that the challenge of providing truly equal education cannot be addressed without confronting the broader context of segregation and racial inequality. According to CUL head researcher Harold Baron, equalization required a race-specific policy of integration and targeted educational supports. Baron's report, titled "An Equal Chance for Education," began with a review of legal arguments against segregation, including expert opinions on the psychological effects of racial separation, but it also reminded the reader that "segregation is only part of the problem" (Baron 1962: 3). Just like myriad forms of racial discrimination contribute to and compound the low socio-economic status of black families, public schools exacerbate the marginalized position of black youth through racial separation, deteriorating facilities, and an ineffective teaching program (3, 4). Nationwide, the mantra of "quality integrated education" invoked this demand for racial mixing combined with necessary school improvements to incorporate black students into the mainstream experience of public schooling and avoid compounding the socio-economic disadvantages fostered by racial discrimination outside the school. The Chicago Urban League's position, like much of the

rhetoric from civil rights leaders across the country, insisted that integration would restore educational quality and equality in struggling urban school districts, and this belief was rooted in the general assertion that racially separate schools tend to mirror and reproduce the social and material inequalities of African American life.

From Latent Fissures to Public Controversies

While these different factions joined together to fight for the shared goal of school integration, the bold accusations of institutional racism that animated popular protest did not garner widespread legitimacy among integration advocates. The race relations frame was not inconsistent with the critique of ghettoization, but some integrationists were reluctant to blame the schools for the dismal learning outcomes of black students. Liberal elites were often sympathetic of educators serving disadvantaged black students, many of whom were recent arrivals from underdeveloped rural areas of the Deep South. If black schools were not to blame for academic failure, then reformers might agree to adopt school integration reforms without disrupting the existing instructional program. If segregation was contributing to systemic educational failure, then the goal of school integration would precisely be the disruption of existing school operations and radical reform of the educational program. The question of the nature of the segregation issue and the causes of educational inequality, thus, had important implications for the course of urban school reform. While the primary political clashes in school politics during the early 1960s focused on winning official support for the idea of integration, the emergence of two core controversies over the causes and effects of segregation became the basis for an underlying politics of knowledge that would eventually undermine the early sixties coalition.

The Controversy over Racial Disparities in Educational Achievement

For black activists organizing around the school segregation issue, the inferior quality of schooling in their communities was apparent. Black students' slow academic progress and weak reading and arithmetic skills after graduating high school was scandalous. Depending on the school and neighborhood context, students and parents might blame inferior facilities and supplies, racist principals or teachers, teacher flight and chronic absences, extreme overcrowding, or some combination of these and other factors. In many cases, black communities mobilized around these issues and openly accused the school system of prioritizing the interests of white neighborhood schools at their expense. Superintendent Willis, of course, contradicted these accusations, blaming students' low-income background and disciplinary problems for poor school outcomes. The city's integration coalition called for independent research to examine the quality of the schools and adjudicate this debate about racial educational inequity.

Leading white liberal voices advocated for outside research alongside black activists, but they were far less likely to make public accusations of educational racism, incompetence, or neglect. Chicago's Citizens Schools Committee (CSC) was established in the 1930s as a corruption watchdog and leading critic of the public schools, but during the 1950s, the school system recovered from its past reputation for corruption and administrative dysfunction, and CSC affiliates gained more voice in selecting school board members, who were ultimately appointed by the city's mayor. In a 1961 letter to the school board, the CSC president praised the school superintendent and offered to endorse Willis' reappointment if the board adopted a few policy changes. These policy proposals included a

race relations program, additional social workers in the schools, and plans for an independent survey of the schools (Levin 1961). Complaints about the misappropriation of resources or failure to maintain academic standards were no longer a part of the committee's platform. Some CSC affiliates, such as the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), were more critical. Around the same time, it issued reports on teacher and principal staffing, and rather than blaming students' cultural background for chronic disciplinary problems, the CTU cited high principal turnover and school mismanagement for fostering a climate of disorder (Chicago Teachers Union 1961). The CTU continued to comment on specific problems with the management and staffing of public schools during this period, but it was a white-dominated organization that withheld support for racial justice issues. Those predominantly white organizations that did support the integration movement, conversely, did not tend to scrutinize school administration and instruction.

Civil rights groups and community organizations conducted their own investigative studies on race and education, and although most focused on documenting racial imbalance, other research efforts addressed school conditions, particularly the overcrowding issue. Activists led the way, demanding data on student test scores and disputing official claims about the availability of classroom space in white schools. The school district's reporting on overcrowded and underutilized classrooms were disputed by teachers, parents, and movement leaders, and some community groups responded by forming "truth squads" that made unwelcome visits to public schools in white neighborhoods, risking arrest to document the number of students per classroom (Danns 2003; Ralph 1993). The "empty desk imbroglio" fueled mistrust among black Chicagoans and reaffirmed the belief that independent research would expose shocking disparities in the schools (Coons 1962).

During the early 1960s, however, these issues remained obscure. Heavy investments in school construction and mobile classroom installments alleviated the most extreme instances of overcrowded and under-resourced schools by 1963, leading the chair of the board's independent survey committee to argue that the main concerns initially justifying an independent study of the schools had since been resolved (Cone 1963). Editorials in the CSC's newsletter *Chicago's Schools* defended the superintendent's response to overcrowding and other concerns. One editorial argued that the problems facing black neighborhood schools were "not the dramatic crisis kind we expect to mobilize action" (quoted in Shipp 2006: 66). Commenting on a protest pamphlet by a local group called the African American Heritage Association, one CSC staff member referenced the administration's school spending effort to refute the group's claims of understaffed and poorly maintained black schools, insisting that "such misstatements of fact do not help solve the really big problem of how to motivate our children to learn" (African-American Heritage Association 1962).

This ongoing dispute over the quality of schooling in black communities complicated discussions about the causes of school segregation and the appropriate ways to address it. From the perspective of the ghettoization frame, ineffective schools were both a cause and an effect of segregation, and investing in quality, race-conscious educational programs was necessary to maintain integrated education. Not all integration advocates viewed the desegregation process in these terms, and theories about white flight and the factors that reproduce racial segregation triggered another important controversy within Chicago's school integration movement.

The Controversy over the Causes of White Flight

A key factor in the persistence and spread of *de facto* school segregation was the phenomenon of white flight from the city's schools and neighborhoods. In a familiar dynamic, black families moved into a formerly all-white residential area and their school-aged children enrolled in a formerly all-white neighborhood school, starting a trend that quickly led to a preponderance of black students in the neighborhood public schools and a corresponding decrease in the desirability of that neighborhood for its white residents. Everyone agreed that white prejudice played a role in this pattern, but few believed the issue was that simple. Like in the general argument about racial disparities in educational achievement, most policymakers attributed this problem to the characteristics of the new students enrolling in the school while black community activists blamed the school itself. Identifying the primary cause driving this pattern of white flight was necessary to devise a strategy for achieving stably integrated schools and neighborhoods. The problem of "destabilization"—the process that leads an integrated community or school to experience social and institutional decline and become a segregated black community or school—was widely discussed, but competing theories about what this process entailed often remained implicit. The controversy over the destabilization of public schools and the causes of ongoing segregation first emerged as integration advocates began crafting proposals for reform and clashing with each other over competing approaches.

The notion of "destabilization" was inherently ambiguous, often serving as a convenient racial euphemism for white community leaders attempting to manage unwanted black arrivals. In his mid-1960s study of integration efforts in the white upper-middle class South Shore community on Chicago's Southeast side, sociologist Harvey Molotch observed this ambiguity firsthand. The South Shore Commission (SSC), the neighborhood's influential and racially liberal community organization, confronted the problem of "community stability" as a growing number of black residents began moving into South Shore. At an SSC meeting on the topic, Molotch reported that the discussion, led by the Commission's white leadership, included a string of racial euphemisms, referencing concerns with maintaining a good community but ultimately focusing on how to maintain a *white* community. Thus, when the lone black SSC member in attendance referenced the progress made in his all-black Parkside neighborhood in the Northwest corner of South Shore, the comment was met with confusion and disregard by his white peers (Molotch 1972: 73, 74). According to Molotch, the black resident mistakenly took the discussion of maintaining neighborhood norms and standards literally, when, in practice, the group's primary criterion for preserving community stability was the ratio of white to black residents, and even where well-off black Chicagoans moved into South Shore, they were frequently viewed as part of the problem.

For both black and white residents, destabilization connoted urban blight and dysfunctional schools, but for many white onlookers, these problems were direct effects of racial demographic change. An internal SSC memo in February of 1963 explicitly articulated this theory, warning the SSC Steering Committee about the "very great" impact of new black families moving into the Northwestern corner of South Shore. The memo describes the "psychology of this small four block deep section" as a looming contagion that has "permeated the entire area," arguing that "the effect upon our community will be cumulative and may well be disastrous" ("For your consideration" 1963). The memo blamed this pattern of racial change on the city's high school attendance boundaries, which

assign young people in this section of South Shore to attend school in the adjacent all-black Woodlawn community, thus compelling white residents to move out of the area. It endorsed a school desegregation plan for South Shore designed to limit the number of black students attending South Shore schools even as more black families move into the community. South Shore would quickly become a leading advocate and primary target school for desegregation efforts in Chicago, and these efforts consistently revolved around dispersing the community's black student population to maintain a more favorable ratio of white to black students.

Black community leaders in the Southside neighborhoods surrounding South Shore also confronted the problem of destabilization, but they attributed institutional decline and white flight to a different set of factors. The Chatham-Avalon Park Community Council (CAPCC), representing a largely attractive and middle class black residential area to the west of South Shore, proposed its Regional High School Plan as a solution to both black and white middle class flight. In a July 1963 CCCO subcommittee meeting, CAPCC leader Herbert Fisher prefaced his proposal by asserting that "the problems of community stabilization and the character of its high school and educational quality are closely interrelated" ("Report of Subcommittee of CCCO" 1963). CAPCC leadership articulated this philosophy early on, arguing that a school that "is doing its job of education effectively" can be an anchor for middle class families. They did not deny the significance of a growing black student population for spurring white flight and contributing to school problems, but they distinguished the early effects of the appearance of black students—causing initial "panic" among whites—from the "all too frequent" decline in educational quality which ensues and sparks an "exodus of middle and upper class Negro families" as well as white flight (Reed & Drigot 1961). The CAPCC plan called for each high school in the Southeast region to adopt its own academic specialization and enroll students from throughout the region based on academic interest rather than residential location. A competing Regional High School Plan, endorsed by the South Shore Commission and the CSC, left neighborhood attendance boundaries intact to preserve the all-black schools while permitting transfers within the region, thus allowing a controlled number of black students to integrate the predominantly white high schools in the area (CSC 1963; Schools Committee 1962).

CAPCC's institutional theory of destabilization was rooted in black Chicagoans' experience with segregationist policies and its negative impact on black public schools. This ghettoization frame was not widely shared outside of these black communities during the early 1960s, but, over time, a growing number of liberal white community voices articulated a similar understanding of destabilization and school segregation. White community groups on the city's far Westside, for instance, adopted a pro-desegregation stance once they witnessed the concentration of school overcrowding that accompanied the arrival of black residents in their residential area (Seligman 2005). Not only did they support integration, but local white leaders were outspoken about the culpability of school officials for exacerbating overcrowding and undermining practical solutions that involved increased integration. At a public school board hearing on desegregation in 1967, Westside community leader Gayle Cincotta pointedly blamed the city school administration for destabilizing its schools, arguing that bureaucrats "start with their minds made up that [stabilizing integrated schools] will not work!" (Cincotta 1967). The Chicago Region of the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers published a "Study on Stabilization in Integrated

Schools,” that attributed destabilization to the failure of school officials to address racial tensions, maintain high academic standards, and accommodate the unique challenges facing newly diverse schools (Chicago Region 1967). Eventually, the South Shore Commission’s involvement in the politics of school desegregation complicated its analysis of destabilization. In the late 1960s, white community leaders in the area joined black activists in criticizing the new superintendent’s desegregation proposals for failing to address the basic educational problems associated with racial demographic change (Committee on Transferring 1968a; 1968b).

Debates about the causes of segregation were mired in complex questions of education policy and the quality of public schools. The destabilization of racially changing schools on the edge of the ghetto was a matter of sincere public concern for conservative city leaders and black community activists alike, but beneath the surface of this shared concern were controversial theories of what destabilization entails. Like the broader controversy about the causes of racial achievement, this debate became the subject of a politics of knowledge as a diverse spectrum of political actors struggled to justify their respective visions for school desegregation. Some political players in this debate, including liberal white community groups and black leaders of established civil rights organizations, grappled with these controversies as they witnessed persisting educational decline and adapted to changing political circumstances. The issues of segregation, destabilization, and educational inequity remained unsettled in the mid-1960s as a new wave of research attempted to resolve these controversies and redirect the momentum for urban school reform.

Conclusion

For commentators of that era and subsequent historical observers, the critical role of black community-based organizations and grassroots activists in urban school integration campaigns was often overlooked. A young sociologist named Robert Crain published his first book in 1968 on the politics of urban school integration, reporting on an ambitious comparative study across numerous metropolitan areas in all parts of the country, and he concluded that popular black protest played no significant role in local policy outcomes. Crain’s analysis, which compared specific policy responses among urban school boards, viewed school integration as a symbolic issue about inclusion and formal equality rather than a material issue that could energize real popular support (Crain 1968). Consistent with Crain’s analysis, today’s popular historical accounts of the late 1960s Black Power movement typically depict an abrupt ideological shift away from the symbolic goal of integration toward the pursuit of self-determination and community development, but the evolution of black educational activism during this decade was, in fact, much more continuous and pragmatic (Danns 2003; Dougherty 2004; Rickford 2016). Our present day public memory and education policy discourse reflects the outcomes of past political struggles over the definition of the segregation issue rather than the actual evolution of black radical thought and activism. I will show how these civil rights era struggles over the meaning of segregation helped produce a dominant framework for analyzing racial educational inequity, narrowing the scope of race-based school reform to exclude the political claims of local black communities. The national development of a new body of authoritative education expertise corresponded to the sanitization of the segregation issue, stripping it of its material implications for communities of color.

While local battles over the documentation and analysis of urban public schools intensified in cities like Chicago, a new national inquiry into race and school inequality, led by progressive reformers in the federal government, attempted to resolve these race and education controversies in favor of a broad desegregation agenda. Before returning to the local clashes and political constraints that suppressed activists' knowledge claims on the ground, the next chapter examines the political orientation and intellectual perspective of officials and experts in the federal government. These officials expected state-sponsored national research projects to demonstrate that segregated black schools provided an inferior quality of education, but in the decentralized U.S. education system, the production of education policy knowledge depended on political networks for accessing and interpreting the realities of public schooling on the ground. Tracing these networks for circulating ideas and information, I show how the ambitious plans of national reformers were tempered by the political constraints shaping the knowledge production process.

Chapter 2

Making the Case for Federal Intervention against School Segregation: The Impetus and Obstacles Facing National Race and Education Research

While the official discourse of segregation surrounding urban school districts largely excluded popular black accusations of inferior education, leading progressive voices in and around the federal government were more willing to expose racial inequities in local schools. In the mid-1960s, national reformers pushing for school segregation often accepted the premise that separate black schools were inferior and needed basic improvements. These state bureaucrats and elite academics did not typically reference or participate in local urban movements, but they pursued a similar line of critique of separate and unequal schooling and sought expertise and evidence supporting this argument. Trends in postwar education research, however, focused on the psychological effects of segregation or the educational disadvantages associated with students' home lives. In the years leading up to the completion of the Coleman Report in 1966, few studies empirically addressed accusations of neglectful teachers, mismanaged schools, and a generally inferior quality of education serving black communities. This gap in existing research presented a challenge for reformers, and, in the wake of 1964 Civil Rights Act, elected officials and state bureaucrats initiated multiple investigations into the question of racial educational inequity with the hope that they would reveal the true educational harms of segregation and build a case for sweeping school desegregation reforms.

This chapter examines this political impetus for federal government-sponsored research on race and education. The first section describes key arguments for school desegregation articulated by progressive voices in and around the federal government during the mid-1960s. While progressive officials were not typically familiar with the local experiences and accusations of black grassroots activists on the ground, they regularly invoked criticisms of not just separate but also unequal public schools and pursued a justification for more comprehensive desegregation reforms that stressed material changes to the operation of local schools. Title IV of the Civil Rights Act on public education provided federal funds to support local school desegregation initiatives, but it did not grant any new powers for federal government intervention against local school districts unwilling to address segregation. Instead, it mandated that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and its Office of Education conduct a national study on racial inequalities in educational opportunity, initiating the landmark study known as the Coleman Report. This and other new federal investigations were designed without the benefit of established theories and methods for studying group inequities in education, but they presented unique opportunities to intervene in the local politics of knowledge surrounding *de facto* segregation and the quality of public schooling in urban black communities.

The second section reviews the national field of expertise on school segregation and inequality during this period to show that, despite the growing chorus of expert commentaries on race and the urban education crisis, existing empirical research largely avoided questions of the quality and equality of education. Traditionally, education research provided inventories of school resources, and new research on the plight of ghetto schools focused on the "cultural deprivation" of students' upbringing more than the conditions and effectiveness classroom instruction. I highlight the case of Kenneth Clark, a black social psychologist who, in the 1950s, gained national prominence for his research on the

psychological effects of racial separation on black students, yet, in the 1960s, became a leading critic of school reforms that focused exclusively on the benefits of racial mixing (Clark 1965). Clark bridged his experience working with youth in Harlem, New York with his influential status among public officials and policymakers to help make the case for sweeping school desegregation reforms that upgrade the resources, management, and instructional quality of schools serving black neighborhoods. Clark's political influence aside, city school officials would take the lead in sponsoring new research on racial educational inequity, and federal government research efforts of the mid-1960s would face political constraints on their capacity to probe local black perspectives and uncover issues of racism and school failure in the ghetto. Chapters 3 and 4 elaborate how these local and national political forces constrained the development of research on race and education and marginalized Clark's perspective in the federal government's school desegregation reform agenda.

The Federal Government Confronts Persisting Segregation

Ten years after the *Brown* ruling, the persistence of racial segregation in the South outraged civil rights activists and preoccupied the Johnson Administration, but the 1964 Civil Rights Act avoided bold action on this controversial issue. Title IV of the Act, which addressed public education, provided federal aid for local school districts implementing desegregation reforms, but Congress stopped short of explicitly authorizing the federal government to sanction guilty school districts and dictate the terms of desegregation reform. Title VI of the Act, however, opened the door for precisely this kind of federal role. Title VI gave federal agencies the power to withhold funding from local state agencies found to be discriminating by race, and the Office of Education immediately applied this statute to Southern school districts with a history of official segregation. In 1964, hundreds of Southern school districts were still mired in protracted legal battles over the appropriate remedy for segregation, and local school officials avoided meaningful reform by adopting nominal policy changes to appease sympathetic district court judges. Across the region, plaintiffs appealed these weak remedies and federal appeals courts repeatedly issued new orders, sending these cases back to local districts and continuing the cycle (Read 1977). After the summer of 1964, the Office of Education began supporting the law enforcement effort by establishing desegregation guidelines based on the most aggressive appeals court decisions, and it threatened to withhold funds from intransigent school districts until they conformed with the guidelines, thus offering much needed support to an overwhelmed legal system (Halpern 1995; Orfield 1969; Radin 1977).

The fight to enforce school desegregation in the South required pushing the boundaries of this new and evolving body of law. Any overreach would risk backlash not only from Southern protest but, crucially, from Northern and Western cities and their representatives in Congress. Stipulating stringent requirements for maintaining integrated education could have profound impacts outside the South, where racial integration was not necessarily any more popular than in the Jim Crow South. Because the political coalition that passed the Civil Rights Act relied on consensus support from Northern Democrats, Title IV included a carefully circumscribed definition of school desegregation that explicitly excluded "the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance" (Title IV 1964). Echoing early district court rulings that prohibited race conscious student assignment schemes, the Civil Rights Act appeared to limit desegregation

to the reversal of explicitly segregationist policies, undermining the case for radical integration reform both within and beyond the South.

Nonetheless, the goal for progressives in the Johnson Administration was precisely to pressure ostensibly colorblind school districts to correct the harms of past segregation using aggressive, race-conscious reforms. This agenda applied equally in the North as well as the South, and pursuing it in racially segregated school districts outside the South quickly became an important priority for civil rights reformers. By the summer of 1965, racial unrest in Northern and Western cities demanded that the civil rights movement turn Northward, and the arrival Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Chicago that same year symbolized this geographic shift. Because Southern districts had adopted their own version of *de facto* segregation, nominally ending Jim Crow policies while preserving their effects in practice, civil rights leaders insisted that the fight against school segregation could not reasonably be limited to the South (Carter 1965). The Johnson Administration acknowledged these similarities and extended school desegregation aid to Northern cities despite Title IV's prohibition against racial balancing. In late 1964, John Gardner, president of the Carnegie Corporation and lead advisor on the president's major educational opportunity initiatives, was appointed as HEW Secretary, and under his leadership, the Office of Education would set its sights on enforcing school desegregation outside the South (Orfield 1969: 169-171).

Alongside this widening geographic scope of the school desegregation effort, reformers pursued a broader justification and purpose for this agenda, in some cases reframing it as an educational intervention against failing local school districts. In school segregation cases across the North and West, school officials were charged specifically with the deliberate separation of students by race, and the plaintiffs were required to prove racial motivations behind the location of schools and attendance boundaries. Until this charge of segregation was proven, other related educational issues were technically irrelevant. This evidentiary standard was difficult to meet (U.S. Commission 1967), but Title VI provided the federal government with a somewhat broader legal standard, permitting intervention in response to any local decisions involving the racially discriminatory provision of public goods and services. If a school district was deemed in "probable noncompliance" with this broad anti-discrimination clause, HEW could then withhold federal funding while it investigated suspected inequities, including both the district's history of assigning black and white students to schools and any racial differences in the provision of educational opportunities to different schools and communities. Alongside any Title VI investigations, Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act mandated that the Office of Education conduct a national research project on racial inequalities in educational opportunity. In Spring of 1965, the Johnson Administration successfully passed its major equal educational opportunity legislation—the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—but it continued to investigate the racial dimension of educational inequality in order to justify direct intervention against the legacy of racial segregation in public schools across the country.

Establishing clear evidence of racial inequity in public education would lend important credence and legitimacy to the bold approach to desegregation popular among leading progressive reformers. They envisioned the structural reform of local school administration and programming to ensure quality integrated educational for all students. For instance, a panel of education experts recruited to participate in a major White House civil rights conference produced a preliminary report, drafted by panel chair Kenneth Clark,

calling for “the total reorganization of school systems in terms of goals, curriculum, methods, building construction and location of facilities” (Holman, Bernard, & Fleming, 1965). The panel recommended the aggressive use of Title VI powers to compel compliance with this desegregation agenda across the country. Popular among progressive advocates and local activists, the “educational parks” concept, entailing the physical reconstruction and spatial reorganization of public schools, illustrated this holistic approach to school desegregation reform (Erickson 2016; Fischer 1968). Educational parks were large campuses designed to bring students together from distant neighborhoods and offer state-of-the-art facilities and specialized programs based on students’ academic and career interests. The goal was to racially integrate students across spatially segregated cities and sort them not by residence or ability but by academic specialization, ensuring diversity within individual classrooms. Multiple black-led community groups in Chicago advocated for an educational park or adopted similar principals in their own proposals to stabilize their local communities. Like black activists on the ground, national reformers started from the premise that each segregated school district was in need of costly structural reforms to its overall educational program.

Reformers supported this broader approach to school desegregation for political and practical reasons. Politically, progressives who supported radical integration initiatives knew that public support for racial mixing was limited, and they believed that attaching material educational improvements to desegregation plans would help win public support. Neil Sullivan, a progressive school administrator who consulted for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, explained that “large segments of our communities, unconvinced of the educational necessity for integration, must be shown that the new program is in the best interests of all children” (Sullivan 1967). The burden was on reformers to demonstrate that the educational advantages of desegregation plans outweighed potential costs, and the Supreme Court’s argument for integration, on its own, was rarely persuasive.

More practically, reformers believed that segregated school districts in cities and in the poor rural South lacked the capacity and the will to adequately serve black students, and they insisted that meaningful reform required federal intervention and largescale investments. According to the White House’s expert panel on civil rights and public education, “all the evidence indicates that Negro children receive an education deficient in quality by every standard of quality” (Holman, Bernard, & Fleming, 1965). While the actual availability of published research on this question was limited, Harvard professor and research director for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights David Cohen co-authored a piece that outlined these apparent educational deficiencies, citing existing research and sketching a desegregation agenda that included compensatory education and “community schools” to cultivate local engagement (Peck and Cohen 1964). In his popular 1965 book, Kenneth Clark argued that integration would be impractical if historically all-black schools continued to be educationally deficient (Clark 1965). For progressives committed to the promise of school desegregation, this agenda necessarily included plans to rebuild schools and redesign programs, not only because the logistics of integrating students could require such an effort but also because they came to understand integration and equalization as two parallel processes, neither of which could be sustained without the other.

The Johnson Administration, thus, worked to build its case for this ambitious desegregation agenda. HEW began making plans to sanction Northern school districts in order to compel their cooperation with thorough investigations and impose its guidelines for

school desegregation. At the same time, the Office of Education, in response to Section 402 of the Civil Rights Act, designed and conducted one of the largest social science projects in history, crafting a novel approach to the study of racial educational inequity. In late 1965, President Johnson called on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to conduct its own national race and education study, focusing on the problem of *de facto* segregation outside the South. The pressure to produce a justification for bold and expensive school desegregation reforms led the federal government to focus its enormous capacity on studying the issue of separate and unequal schooling, mobilizing seemingly unlimited resources and political clout.

While federal government research initiatives, and the Coleman Report in particular, were well positioned to produce novel findings and gain widespread attention and credibility, these investigations would struggle to produce the kind of insight into racial educational disparities that progressive policymakers anticipated. State-sponsored investigations were conducted under political pressures to deliverable legally and scientifically valid evidence justifying specific federal interventions in the decentralized governance of U.S. public schools. These political pressures did not necessarily compel researchers to avoid undesirable evidence or misconstrue their research findings, but they indirectly dictated the manner in which empowered investigators decided to approach a murky, controversial, and largely understudied set of issues. Below I show that existing research literature offered little evidence to influence existing assumptions about the quality of segregated schools, and it provided no established methods or theory to systematically investigate the new public controversy over group educational inequalities. Chapter 4 returns to the government investigations conducted in the wake of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and shows how the circumstances for producing usable policy research on this political charged issue imposed specific constraints from above, limiting the scope and depth of state-sponsored research.

The Paucity of Existing Research on Educational Inequity

Although most opponents of school segregation assumed that separate schools were also unequal, they still lacked an established group of experts to whom they could turn for persuasive evidence. At the start of the 1960s, academic and policy debate on school desegregation primarily addressed race relations, psychological damage, and white flight, while existing research in education and social science had not yet focused on the problem of group disparities in education and unequal educational opportunity. *Brown* had already made a connection between school segregation and educational opportunity, citing the loss of motivation among victims of segregation, but by highlighting the harm of racial educational inequality, it only raised more questions about the extent and underlying causes of this harm. During the early 1960s, clashes over racial segregation and the urban education crisis sparked a new national debate about failing schools and the racial achievement gap, but as late as 1965, published research on the topic was sparse and critics lacked any clear framework to determine what makes schools effective and equitable, particularly when serving a diverse student population.

In the 1950s, the school desegregation effort stimulated a growing body of academic literature that focused primarily on racial issues and offered little insight on educational matters. Sociologists approached the issue of desegregation, in schools and other institutions, as a problem of managing race relations and working toward interracial acceptance. For instance, sociologists Robin Williams and Margaret Ryan completed

Schools in Transition during the months prior to the 1954 *Brown* ruling, examining early cases of desegregating school districts (Williams 1954). The study was part of a larger Ford Foundation research project on “The Negro and the Schools” and its purpose was to evaluate the public response to different legal and policy approaches for transitioning to integration in historically segregated school districts. Social science research was marshalled to support government authorities managing explosive racial issues, and social scientists were frequently appointed to special race commissions as race relations professionals with expertise in these delicate policy matters (McKee 1993).

By the 1960s scholars focused more on macro-level trends of racial mixing and the problem of “racial imbalance.” In the case of urban sociology, racial segregation and the influx of black Southerners and other migrants of color into U.S. cities drew attention to the challenge of integrating schools and neighborhoods. Sociologists analyzed the process of “racial transition” and white flight in urban communities, contributing to popular theories about how to promote “stable” integration (Schietinger 1951; Taeuber and Taeuber 1965; Wolf 1963). Social psychologists, meanwhile, examined the psychological theory authored by Kenneth and Mamie Clark and invoked in the *Brown* ruling. The Clarks developed their argument about the psychological impact of racism on young school children in the 1940s, and although a survey of experts endorsed the Clarks’ general argument in the context of the *Brown* case, existing research offered limited evidence to support their claims about racially separate schooling (Scott 2000). Scholars like Thomas Pettigrew, a Harvard social psychologist and proponent of the “contact hypothesis” about the benefits of interracial association, were important advocates of school integration, but even they acknowledged the limited and mixed evidence linking school desegregation to positive psychological and educational gains (Katz 1964; Pettigrew 1964). In general, experts rhetorically associated integration with educational opportunity, but the evidence was limited and the argument was indirect, based on still provisional psychological theories of the self-concept and motivation of black youth.

The issue of the effectiveness and equality of public schooling across racial groups attracted more interest and scrutiny in the context of the urban education crisis. While the inadequacy of segregated black schools in the Deep South was a longstanding concern, this concern was historically discussed in terms of a lack of funding—low teacher salaries, dilapidated facilities, or simply the lack of access to schooling in reasonable proximity or at the appropriate grade level (Anderson 2010; Ashmore 1954). In the 1960s, racial conflict, political unrest, and financial problems in central city school districts outside the South sparked a new national debate over the causes of educational failure. In addition to concern and protest in local communities, nationally prominent educators and policymakers debated high drop-out rates and poor learning outcomes in cities. In 1961 James Conant, an accomplished statesman contracted by the Carnegie Corporation to study school reform, published *Slums and Suburbs*, attracting attention to the shocking disparities in urban schools. Despite dramatizing the failure of public schooling to prepare black youth for the urban economy, Conant defended teachers in ghetto schools and attributed the disorganized climate in these schools to students’ upbringing and difficult living conditions (Conant 1968). In contrast, Charles Silberman’s 1964 best seller *Crisis in Black and White* elevated the voices of black community groups like Chicago’s Woodlawn Organization who blamed public schools and other state agencies for ignoring the needs of black communities. Silberman rejected the notion that racial imbalance is the root cause of the educational

problems facing urban black communities, and he argued for black political empowerment as a means for improving public services in the ghetto (Silberman 1964).

As academic success at the secondary level and beyond became an expectation for the vast majority of Americans, urban schools seemed to fall short of their modern mission to serve all students regardless of their background and career aspirations. The growing field of research on the “culturally deprived child” located an important cause of achievement disparities in the culture and socio-economic background of low performing students. This field of psychological and sociological research examined cognitive impairments and a lack of motivation among students from poor rural families, often focusing on black migrants from the South, Appalachian whites, and immigrants from Eastern or Southern Europe (Bernstein 1960; Deutsch 1964; Riessman 1962). Highlighting the educational disadvantages hindering lower class youth, urban school officials responded to declining academic results with “compensatory education,” targeted programs designed to compensate for these disadvantages. The standard premise of compensatory education was that enhanced and specialized educational offerings would be added to the normal instructional program to help close the gap between lower and middle class students. In practice, a wide range of interventions was introduced under the banner of compensatory education, ranging from instructional gimmicks like installing televisions in the classroom to pursuing a comprehensive programmatic interventions including new instructional techniques, guidance services, and community engagement, alongside other reforms (Gordon and Jablonsky 1968; United States Commission on Civil Rights 1967).

Experts on cultural deprivation and compensatory education developed a credible scholarly foundation for their ideas, but critics of the role of public schools in fostering educational inequality lacked a parallel body of research regarding the conditions and academic supports that these students experience in school. Traditionally, education officials resolved public debates about the quality and equality of public schools by conducting a “school survey”—an inventory of school resources and programming across a state or local district. The school survey functioned more as a public relations tool than a method for systematic research, and the practice of surveying schools drew little from the emerging survey analysis methods developed by academic social scientists in the mid-20th century (Lagemann 2002; Tyack 1974). Critics wanted to account for disparate educational outcomes across schools and between social groups, particularly between racially segregated black and white schools, but the traditional school survey offered a descriptive accounting of facilities, supplies, and curriculum that did not necessarily yield a meaningful analysis of school performance. The debate over race and education raised questions about the factors driving group disparities in academic achievement and the specific aspects of schools most important to effective and equitable instruction. Even the best practices in education research offered little guidance for tackling these complex issues.

Answering these questions required, as a crucial starting point, school-level data on student race and test scores. At the outset of the 1960s, standard professional practice for school superintendents was to avoid collecting any racial data and to withhold student test scores from the public. Reporting on client or staff race was considered taboo among self-professed colorblind state agencies, and school officials used this claim to racial neutrality to deflect concerns about racial segregation and refuse demands to document the problem. Standardized achievement tests were commonly used internally to support school policy and practice, but administrators expressed concern that this information, if publicized,

would be dangerously misinterpreted. They feared that the public would use a school's low test scores to malign the teachers and academic standing of the school, disregarding the confounding factors that influence student achievement like social class and student ability. They also suggested that disparate test scores could be used to promote the belief in racial intellectual inferiority (Tyack and Hansot 1982).

Even among the experts, achievement tests were still a new and evolving tool subject to different interpretations. Traditionally, educators viewed student achievement as an effect of innate mental aptitude, measured by IQ tests, but research increasingly showed that IQ scores were similarly influenced by student environment and classroom learning. In the 1960s, school officials typically deflected blame for low test scores by pointing to student class background, attitudes, and behavioral problems. The premise that socio-economic background influences student outcomes, supported by new research on cultural deprivation, was used to preemptively dismiss public demands for school test score data, and the nation's leading school administrators—the big city school superintendents in cities like Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and Washington D.C.—aggressively guarded their professional jurisdiction by cautioning against the politicization of this expert matter (Cuban 1976; Katznelson and Weir 1985; Rury 1999; Schrag 1968).

During the postwar period, academic social science expressed little interest in technical and political questions of public education even when it examined educational achievement and personal development among school-aged youth. Social-psychological diagnoses of social problems became common as scholars developed psychological metrics to detect problematic personality traits associated with poverty and deviance. Harvard Professor David McClelland argued that the “achievement motivation” characterized enterprising individuals and developing economies, and this modernization theory complemented theories of the culture of poverty and black psychological damage (O'Connor 2009: 109-117). Theories of student achievement in the sociology of education similarly revolved around cultural dispositions and attitudinal variables posited as primary factors contributing to student behavior and learning. James Coleman's first book, *The Adolescent Society*, illustrates this focus. Based on field research in ten Illinois high schools, the study analyzes different peer groups and subcultures, or “social subsystems,” that shape the social lives of young people. The status hierarchies and shared commitments among these peer groups, according to Coleman, influence students' academic engagement and overall orientation to their future (Coleman 1962). This study, while resulting in some experimental recommendations for high school instruction, did not take as its object of analysis the relationship between schools and student learning, and Coleman's work did not attempt to offer insight into educational inequality or the quality of individual schools.

One exception to this approach in the sociology of education, however, was the work of Alan Wilson, whose dissertation research in Oakland, California demonstrated one important school-level variable driving disparities in student achievement. Anticipating the conclusion that Coleman would stumble upon five years later, Wilson argued that the socio-economic profile of students in a school influenced the individual student's learning outcomes (Wilson 1963). While Wilson's initial findings did not stimulate immediate interest in educational inequality among sociologists, it resonated with the common sense of educators who struggled with the disruptive effects of a few lagging or disengaged students on the entire classroom.

Outside of academia and the education profession, concern with institutional inequities in the public schools was widespread, but systematic research on the issue was rare, at least in part because school districts safely guarded data and restricted access to outside researchers. An early exception to this lack of independent research is Patricia Cayo Sexton's book-length study, *Education and Income: Inequalities of Opportunity in our Public Schools* (1961). The book focuses on disparities between socio-economic groups within the Detroit Public Schools, documenting environmental and schooling conditions across these groups to account for the strong correlation between class background and educational achievement. She argues that the school system is stratified due to the neglect and indifference of teachers to these students and the level of influence that upper-income groups wield on school policy and resources (7). Sexton insists that her project was "the first *study* of its kind," citing as the overwhelming barrier to this kind of research "the refusal of school administrators to give out information of the type included" in her book (xx). She credits the arrival of the city's new superintendent, former U.S. Commissioner of Education Samuel Brownell, for working to "open up the schools to public examination" and making research like hers possible (xxi). Brownell was hired to implement a bold reform agenda by Detroit's progressive school board, dominated by liberals and the city's influential union leadership. Sexton, an active UAW member herself, was married to UAW-CIO education director Brendon Sexton, who sat on the Detroit Board of Education during the time of this research and likely helped her overcome administrative resistance to the project (Mirel 1999). Detroit's powerful labor movement, alongside other local contingencies, thus created the unique conditions of possibility for this original study.

Another exception to this dearth of critical research was study completed under the direction of Kenneth Clark, one of the nation's most prominent advocates for school integration and the author of the forward to Patricia Sexton's 1961 book. Clark founded a community organization called Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU) during the early 1960s that supported and organized local youth to combat the harmful social, economic, and psychological effects of the ghetto. HARYOU's 1964 report, *Youth in the Ghetto*, included an investigation of "Education in Central Harlem" based on citywide school-level test score data, an analysis of school characteristics and socio-economic data, and qualitative research including interviews with teachers and principals (HARYOU 1964: 161-244, 407-448). Clark's public stature enabled HARYOU to tap leading figures in education, social science, and the civil rights movement to serve on the organization's various committees, and this helped the research team gain access to citywide school data as well as individual schools and staff. HARYOU's analysis spoke directly to the concerns of black activists in New York, Chicago, and across the country, and it concluded that Harlem's segregated black schools suffered from chronic ineffectiveness due, in large part, to the low expectations and contempt of public school teachers toward their poor black students.

At a time when the national debate about race and education still revolved around the fight for integration, Kenneth Clark complicated the singular focus on racial balancing and called attention to the question of educational inequity. In his widely read 1965 book *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*, Clark explained that "the educational crisis in the ghettos is not primarily, and certainly not exclusively, one of the inequitable racial balance in the schools. Equally serious is the inferior quality of the education in those schools" (111). He argued that integration required stemming white flight and that white families

cannot be expected to stay in integrated schools unless these schools can overcome the persisting trend of educational deterioration in schools serving black students. While Clark, a committed integrationist, believed that true equality would require racial mixing, his contention was that segregated black schools had substantial room for improvement, and progress toward improving schools would make integration more feasible. Drawing on findings of the HARYOU report, the *Dark Ghetto* depicts Harlem schools mired in a defeatist culture and spiral of decline, and it criticized the theory of “cultural deprivation” for excusing ineffective schooling, calling for decent academic standards even in contexts of serious educational disadvantage.

While this brand of critical research was rare, local critics of separate and unequal schooling pressured urban school districts to make more data available and allow more expert scrutiny. Academic scholarship largely ignored this educational debate, but new school data and informal analyses reached the public via activists’ investigative research and state-commissioned advisory reports. In particular, city school boards outside the South were the targets of investigative reporting and the independent research efforts of civil rights groups, and they conceded to political pressure by commissioning their own citizens committees and expert panels to conduct independent advisory reports. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights also sponsored local investigations of school segregation controversies in several Northern and Western cities, complementing its regular surveys of the Southern school desegregation effort (United States Commission on Civil Rights 1962). These local efforts to scrutinize urban schools and gain access for independent researchers set the stage for more formal legal and scientific investigations conducted by the federal government between 1965 and 1967. Federal government research like the Coleman Report promised to provide more critical scrutiny of educational inequalities, and government officials in charge of this research anticipated that it would fill the gaps in existing scholarship and provide expert justification for comprehensive school desegregation reforms. The failure of the Coleman Report and related federal investigations to deliver this desired result reflected both the state of the local politics of knowledge in cities and the internal political constraints associated with producing contentious policy expertise.

Conclusion: An Emerging Divide in Research and Reform

After the Coleman Report was released in 1966, new bodies of research on school inequality and the urban education crisis began to proliferate. On the one hand, the Coleman Report sparked a small debate among elite academics about the causes of educational inequality, laying the foundation for new bodies of social science literature. On the other hand, critical studies of urban schools, in stark contrast to the Coleman Report, exposed dysfunction and deterioration in public schooling, particularly in racial ghettos. Jonathan Kozol, for instance, began his career as a commentator on race and public schooling with his 1967 book on the culture of failure and contempt in an all-black Boston elementary school (Kozol 2008). Robert Rosenthal’s classic study, conducted in collaboration with an experienced public school teacher, lent new credibility to the theory that teachers’ biased views and expectations of different students dictate their academic fortunes (Rosenthal and Jacobson 2003). Around the same time, David Rogers published his scathing critique of New York’s public education system, detailing the disorganization, inertia, and resistance to racial reform among school administrators at all levels of the district (Rogers 2006). Scholar-activists, teachers unions, and the Ford Foundation

conducted research on ineffective schools and the problems of urban school systems, in many cases to support the new movement to decentralize urban school systems and empower local communities (Fantini and Weinstein 1968; Gittell and Hollander 1968).

The new movement for urban school decentralization, and the broader strategic shift in civil rights activism under the banner of Black Power, reflected, in part, popular frustration with the limits of the school integration agenda. For urban black activists and progressive reformers engaged in the fight for integration, the choice between continuing the fight for integration or adopting the new demand for decentralization and community control was initially tactical, responding to local schools officials' resistance to meaningful desegregation reform (Rickford 2016). The decentralization movement gained national attention in August of 1966 when a group of Harlem parent activists protested the opening of yet another segregated school despite the school board's promise that it would be integrated. The clash sparked a citywide movement for the community control of schools in black and Puerto Rican communities, and this new struggle resonated with a broader national debate among progressive reformers over the integration agenda. In October of 1966, a meeting hosted by the NAACP featuring leading progressive voices in the school desegregation movement debated a potential strategic shift away from integration and found itself divided. On one side, Kenneth Clark argued that the movement was stalled and that focusing on quality education would yield more immediate results and pave the way for subsequent integration. On the other side, Clark's academic colleague and ideological ally, Thomas Pettigrew, argued that relinquishing this core demand would only lead to the entrenchment of racial school segregation (Roberts 1966). While Pettigrew continued to push for any potential progress toward school integration, Clark spent the late 1960s advocating for and supporting the decentralization of New York's schools, placing him in an uncomfortable alliance with black nationalists who were ideologically opposed to racial integration.

The federal government's race and education research initiatives in 1965 and 1966 were undertaken prior to this political split with the expectation that they would both justify the need for integration and produce evidence demonstrating the deficiencies of segregated schools. The defining product of this government research effort, however, contributed to internal division on the left by asserting a narrow pro-integration argument that exonerated local school districts, blaming educational inequality on the upbringing and environment of black youth. The Coleman Report articulated a new argument for the educational benefits of integration that formulated the choice between student integration and school improvement as two divergent approaches to reform based on two distinct educational theories. The Report became a foil for black activists who rejected moderate desegregation proposals and viewed white liberal support for integration as an evasion of institutional racism in public education (Burkholder 2017). Progressive experts choosing to advocate integration suddenly found themselves at odds with local critiques of inferior ghetto schools and local demands for structural education reform.

This political effect of Coleman's research was unintended, but it was not unpredictable. In addition to constraints from above, imposed on this research by the conditions for producing federal government policy knowledge, the Coleman Report was constrained from below by local resistance to outside scrutiny and local efforts to dictate a narrow framing of the segregation issue. Before progressives adopted the Coleman Report's limited rationale for integration, local school officials and the independent studies that they

commissioned deflected demands for more sweeping school reforms by elaborating a circumscribed approach to analyzing racial educational inequity. Before returning to the role of the federal government in producing a lasting body of education expertise, the next chapter revisits the crisis in urban schools to analyze the local politics of knowledge that helped constrain federal research from below and indirectly influence the development of new social scientific expertise on race and educational inequality.

Chapter 3

The Politics of Knowledge about Race and Urban Schools: Local Constraints Shaping State-Commissioned Urban Education Research

During the first half of the 1960s, national debates about *de facto* segregation and urban educational inequality were mired in competing definitions of the issue and a lack of existing research. Urban movements for school integration fought for new research to expose discriminatory and deficient schools, often winning concessions in the form of publicly released school records and external study commissions investigating suspected racial inequities. Before the 1960s, education administrators resisted public involvement in school policy and refused to collect racial data, but the fight against school segregation prompted a new wave of public scrutiny and published data on student demographics, school characteristics, and student test scores. City school boards commissioned independent citizens councils, blue-ribbon committees, and expert panels to study racial issues and produce policy recommendations on school integration and equal educational opportunity. Alongside occasional hearings and investigations led by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and state-level agencies, these local study commissions constituted an early body of official research on the core controversies surrounding school segregation.

The wave of race and education study commissions across U.S. cities was only a partial victory for movement leaders. On the one hand, these studies provided some valuable data on schools and consistently produced policy recommendations promoting school integration. Study commissions reported on patterns of racial segregation in student enrollments and often examined inequalities between black and white schools before outlining a plan for integrating students and addressing race and class inequalities. On the other hand, the purportedly independent study commissions generally refrained from blaming local school systems for helping foster separate and unequal education, and the scope and methods of their research arguably precluded more damning evidence of inequity. Unlike the national study of *de facto* segregation commissioned by the National Association of Intergroup Relations Officers (1963), local reports typically avoided any conclusive claims connecting school policy decisions to the increasing isolation of black students in separate schools. While black parents and students viewed stark racial disparities in test scores and other student outcomes as evidence that their schools were inadequate, commissioned studies attributed achievement disparities to differences in student background and innate talent. These urban study commissions embraced integration and provided an important boost to local movements, but they, ultimately, denied or downplayed concerns about the inferior quality of education offered to black students.

This chapter investigates the creation, content, and consequences of this seminal body of urban education research, asking how local struggles over research and political recognition shaped official discourse on race and school inequality. I argue that urban school study commissions at once elevated the issue of racial educational inequity as a legitimate matter of public debate and supplanted the black grassroots framing of this issue by adopting a narrow analytic framework. This analytic framework included assumptions about the kind of data, conceptual categories, and theoretical problems relevant to this new research. In contrast to the specific accusations and empirical questions posed by activists, the framework adopted by state-commissioned study committees obscured relationships between racism, segregation, and student achievement. Despite their ostensible

independence and progressive purpose, these official studies reflected the balance of political forces at the local level, which marginalized the expressed concerns of local protesters and national reformers. I show how school officials imposed political constraints on new research and how this new research, despite its influence in official policy debate, fueled persisting local controversies about the nature of segregation and racial educational inequality.

This chapter, thus, analyzes the advisory reports produced by urban race and education study commissions and investigates the local politics of knowledge surrounding this new research. In the first section, I review advisory reports from nine commissioned studies across seven large cities to compare their respective themes and analytic approaches and to situate these reports within the range of questions and frames articulated by various activists, advocates, and experts locally and nationally. Although study commissions formed to shed light on the racial situation and offer critical insight into the performance of local school districts, they began without clear expectations as to which issues and what kind of evidence would be relevant. From the perspective of black activists, these studies were meant to look not just at racial imbalance and its inherent effects but also at racial disparities in educational outcomes and the potential forms of institutional and interpersonal racism that might contribute to these disparities. Study commissions appeared to take up this charge, but they did so partially and superficially, arguably ensuring that local school districts would not be found guilty of discriminating against black students or maintaining a lesser quality of education in black neighborhoods. In general, urban race and education commissions came out in favor of school integration while denying accusations of discriminatory or inadequate schooling.

In the second section, I return to the Chicago case to ask how political interests influenced two nationally prominent race and education study commissions. Chicago's large and well-organized movement forced the city's school board to commission two extensive studies, but board members and the school superintendent worked behind the scenes to ensure that this research would not dig too deep or directly pose sensitive questions about racial discrimination and the quality of education. I draw on the archival collections of key researchers and public school officials as well as activist organizations and community groups to investigate the making of these two advisory reports and the response from movement actors and other school critics, both publicly and in private correspondence. The Chicago case shows how special study commissions meant to provide an objective look at urban schools were susceptible to direct influence from school officials in their design, in the data collection process, and in their willingness to probe racial problems. Discontent with official race and education reports among activists in Chicago reflected a hardening dispute over the definition of the segregation issue that would undermine the city's civil rights coalition and black support for integration in the late 1960s.

I argue that urban race and education commissions, constrained by local political forces, collectively articulated a narrow analytic framework for studying racial educational inequity. This framework compared school characteristics using existing administrative records, analyzed student achievement disparities in terms of a race/class dichotomy, and theorized educational racism as a direct byproduct of racial imbalance. In doing so, it conflicted with arguments on the ground about racial prejudice, educational neglect, and mismanaged schools. Had researchers responded faithfully to the accusations of grassroots activists, they might have collected more data on the racial attitudes or the routine practices

of educators and administrators. They would have critically examined overlapping race and class achievement disparities by scrutinizing weak academic standards or low rates of student progress, and they would have investigated signs of acute educational inequities in all schools serving black students without presuming a singular experience of educational racism across predominantly black schools. During this historical moment, when education researchers lacked a paradigm for evaluating group inequities and when the issues of schools segregation and integration remained unsettled, state-commissioned studies could have posed a wide range of empirical questions and theoretical problems for immediate or future research. This opportunity, however, was missed. Although the rising tide of the national civil rights movement forced Northern and Western urban elites to acknowledge public complaints about racial educational injustice, the circumscribed analyses of racial educational inequity produced by early school study commissions established a clear dividing line between the demands of grassroots activists and the official discourse of segregation and inequality in urban education.

Urban Study Commissions Confront Race and Educational Inequality

Across the country, race and education study commissions provided guidance for urban school districts suddenly forced to confront *de facto* school segregation. Before the 1960s, urban school superintendents resisted outside involvement in school matters, and they often responded to civil rights demands for more transparency by warning against the misguided judgments of laypeople and the importance of protecting professional educators from political interference (Cuban 1976; Tyack and Hansot 1982). Special study commissions offered a process for arbitrating racial disputes that was rooted in educational expertise but led by an ostensibly independent third party committee, usually featuring outside educators, scholars, or prominent public officials and civic leaders. In numerous cities, school boards created an advisory committee to guide its approach to school integration. By late 1963, at least seventeen school districts outside the South had created a race and education commission for this purpose (NAIRO 1963: 52, 53).

At a time when notions of racial segregation and educational inequity were contested and difficult to define, study commissions produced some of the first official statements on racial disparities in urban schools, articulating a set of empirical indicators and conceptual questions on the topic of *de facto* school segregation. Given the range of perspectives on school segregation and inequality within the school integration movement, these commissions faced complex decisions about what to study and how to study it. While liberal school officials typically spoke about school integration as a social intervention and avoided racial concerns about the quality of education, most study commissions squarely confronted controversies about school quality and inequality. Beyond the obvious decision to measure the racial composition of schools and highlight racial imbalance, these studies developed strategies for investigating school inequalities and evaluating the relationship between race, segregation, and unequal educational opportunity. The result was a standard approach, similarly adopted in various major cities, for documenting relevant school characteristics, analyzing student test score disparities, and theorizing the mechanisms of racial discrimination and inequity. This approach treated racial educational inequity as reducible to inequalities in school resources, divorced from the problem of class inequality, and presumed to stem directly from racial imbalance.

To compare these local studies and identify common themes, I collected the final reports of nine study commissions from seven major cities. I focus on big city school districts because they had the resources and the size to conduct systematic research based on a large number of schools and neighborhoods featuring varying racial contexts. Four of the nine commissions were advisory committees created by local school boards in Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Portland. In New York and Massachusetts, reports were commissioned by state school boards but focused exclusively or primarily on their respective big cities, New York and Boston. Two more were traditional “school survey” projects, also commissioned by Chicago and Philadelphia school districts, and were intended to provide a more comprehensive accounting of the state of public schooling, complementing the work of prior study commissions in these two cities. The final case is an ad hoc committee of the San Francisco Board of Education, which initiated its own study committee to report on racial segregation when the school superintendent was resistant to produce relevant data. In general, these study commissions had access to extensive administrative records, hearings with experts and local community members, selected survey research, and in some cases field observations and interviews as well as an original standardized testing program.

While each of these studies were motivated entirely or in large part by a shared set of controversies, commission members lacked any existing blueprint or guidelines for adjudicating these disputes over educational discrimination and inequity. Potential subject matter included the age and quality of school buildings, the management of schools experiencing racial transition, the number of students per classroom or per teacher, the racial attitudes of teachers and administrators, and relations between schools and communities. Nearly every study gave special attention to school integration and stressed the social psychological well-being of black students, and they varied in the amount space devoted to the quality of education provided to different racial groups. By analyzing the kind of data these study commissions chose to highlight, the conceptual categories they used to explain test score disparities, and the general theory of educational racism underlying this analysis, I identify a shared analytic approach to studying racial educational inequity across urban race and education reports—a shared approach that effectively excluded the central concerns driving black communities to protest these city school systems.

Collecting Data to Document School Quality

Local advisory reports described variation in the conditions and “quality” of individual schools, relying heavily on existing administrative records—data compiled by school bureaucrats for internal purposes. Eight out of nine reports attempted some school-level comparison and five specifically compared schools based on their percentage of black students or other students of color. Only New York’s Advisory Committee on Human Relations focused exclusively on outlining school desegregation proposals and offered no new research on the relative quality of black public schools. Descriptions of schools based on administrative data offered much more information than normally publicly available but painted an arguably incomplete picture of relevant school differences. This data captured material resources, human resources, and curricular offerings at each school, but it could not describe how resources were allocated, how teachers taught, or whether administrators monitored academic progress and kept accurate records. Popular black concerns about racial tensions, educational neglect, and administrative mismanagement complicated officially documented problems with crowded classrooms and less qualified teachers, but

Table 3.1. Assessing the Quality and Equality of Local Schools:
Documented School Characteristics by Nine Urban Study Commissions

	Buildings/Space	Faculty/Staff	Instruction	Administration, Operations
San Francisco: Ad Hoc Committee to Study Ethnic Factors (1962)	Students per Classroom			
Detroit: Citizens Advisory Commission (1962)		Racial Attitudes; Teacher Vacancies, Substitutes	Public, Professional Opinions re: Academic Standards; Achievement, Intelligence Tests	Teacher Assignments by Race; Allocation of Student Support Staff; Allocation of Clerical Services
Philadelphia: Special Committee on Nondiscrimination (1963)	Students per Classroom; Age of Buildings	Teacher Qualifications; Teacher Vacancies	Achievement, Intelligence Tests; Curriculum Track Enrollments; Teaching Supplies	
Chicago: Advisory Panel on Integration (1964)	Students per Classroom; Age of Buildings; Special Facilities	Teacher Qualifications; Teacher Turnover; Teacher-Student Ratio	Achievement, Intelligence Tests; Teaching Supplies; Advanced Course Offerings	Attendance Boundary Decisions
New York: Advisory Committee on Human Relations (1964)				
Portland: Committee on Race and Education (1964)		Teacher Turnover	Advanced Course Offerings	
Chicago: Survey of the Public Schools (1964)		Teaching Experience; Teacher Satisfaction Survey; Pupil Support Staff	Achievement Tests; Curriculum Guides; Course Offerings; Site Visits, Interviews	
Philadelphia: Educational Survey Report (1965)	Overall School Conditions	Faculty Integration	Achievement, Intelligence Tests; Curriculum Materials; Site Visits, Interviews	Instructional Support Staff; Review of Curriculum Committees
Boston: Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance (1965)	Students per Classroom			

these concerns regarding the schooling process were unlikely to surface given the kind of data examined by most local study commissions.

The administrative data reported by local study commissions often described the characteristics of school buildings, available or overcrowded classroom space, teacher qualifications, instructional supplies, curricular offerings, and administrative policies. In a few cases these commissions documented administrative practices like the placement of teachers or guidance counselors to different schools or changes to school attendance boundaries, which determine where each household sends its children to school. Even relatively thorough advisory reports depended heavily on records documenting school resources and on-paper policies to assess differences in the quality of education provided in each school. Philadelphia's Special Committee on Nondiscrimination, for instance, relied primarily on data from the school system's Central Research Division as well as a new racial head count of each school in the district. Its analysis focused on public concerns with overcrowding and the difficulty in maintaining an experienced teaching faculty in many majority black schools (Special Committee on Nondiscrimination 1964: 7-9). Chicago's Advisory Panel on Integration similarly collected a range of administrative records on schools to describe levels of crowding, school facilities and supplies, curricular offerings, and the qualifications of teachers (Advisory Panel 1964). The Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance and Education reported exclusively on the age, condition, and level of crowding of school buildings serving different racial groups (Advisory Committee 1965), and Portland's Committee on Race and Education described "the characteristics of the disadvantaged school," focusing primarily on the attributes of students and neighborhoods while citing some data on course offerings and teacher turnover (Committee on Race and Education 1964: 81-86, 103-105).

Where researchers focused on school resources and official policies, they risked overlooking inequities related to teacher and staff attitudes, discriminatory administrative decisions, and mismatches between allocated resources and school or classroom needs. Activists, for instance, were arguably less concerned about the number or experience-level of teachers in a school and more concerned about teacher prejudice and chronic absences. The San Francisco Board of Education's Ad Hoc Committee to Study Ethnic Factors in the Public Schools held public hearings featuring multiple civil rights leaders and black community organizations voicing their complaints about administrative decisions exacerbating segregation and related school problems. One group representing a cluster of schools serving a large low-income black population focused on teachers' demeaning attitudes toward the intellectual ability of black students, arguing that low academic expectations and a preoccupation with student discipline turned their schools into custodial institutions (San Francisco Board of Education 1962: 74-81). The Ad Hoc Committee's research and formal reporting, however, ignored these concerns and, instead, devoted careful scrutiny to statistical patterns of racial imbalance and school overcrowding. Similarly, grassroots activists in Chicago challenged educationally harmful administrative decisions like the mismanagement of overcrowding and lack of teacher accountability. Research on teacher qualifications and course offerings could not address accusations that teachers were pressured to pass black students to the next grade even when they showed little to no academic progress ("Willis Must Go!" 1963).

Where race and education committees relied on administrative data to describe potential inequities, they left important aspects of school administration and instruction

unexamined, obscuring some of the fundamental concerns driving black protest. Table 3.1 shows the data presented or summarized by study commissions on four different topics, focusing on evidence used either to compare the quality of schooling across racial groups or to evaluate the minimum standard of instruction provided to all students. In some cases, urban study commissions did go beyond administrative data to investigate the management and delivery of schooling in practice. The Portland Committee, for example, acknowledges that teachers and administrators have a “lack of empathy and lack of expectation that [disadvantaged students] are capable of learning” (83, 84), but this singular observation, attributed to the testimony of two experts, was not reflected in the Committee’s empirical research. Instead, the report devotes multiple chapters to documenting the intellectual deficiencies and educational challenges associated with this same student population, seemingly justifying teachers’ low expectations. Two relatively comprehensive local reports included teams of experts conducting site visits and interviews, but these studies each deflect race-specific issues, offer little scrutiny of existing practice, and devote more attention to textbooks and curriculum guides than instructional practice (Havighurst 1964; Odell 1965). The one clear exception was Detroit’s Citizens Advisory Committee, which boldly asserted the problem of prejudicial attitudes toward black and low-income students among teachers and administrators (1962: 57). The Detroit report also examined racial bias in the school system’s policy for assigning teachers to schools as well as inequities in the allocation of clerical and student support staff, which did not reflect the special needs of disadvantaged schools (73, 84).

Study commissions, thus, presented their respective verdicts on racial educational inequity based on this partial accounting of the quality and equality of education. While none of these studies claimed to provide a rigorous scientific analysis, they presented administrative data as direct and complete evidence, ignoring the range and substance of racial controversies surrounding these urban school systems. Comparing segregated black and white schools based on this information, they produced inconsistent evidence of racial disparities and typically attributed inequalities in school resources to broader social problems and demographic changes unrelated to any supposed racial discrimination or neglect. Chicago’s Advisory Panel on Integration (1964), for instance, suggested that inequalities were circumstantial and sometimes favored schools serving black neighborhoods. It found that schools serving more than 90% black schools were more overcrowded and had less experienced teaching faculties (17-19) but also benefited from new buildings more commonly featuring lunch rooms and health clinics (22). Curricular offerings were, according to the Panel’s research, identical across black and white schools, and black schools were actually somewhat better equipped with textbooks and educational supplies (21, 22). During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Chicago invested in new school buildings, mobile classroom units, and compensatory education programs to ameliorate the city’s most scandalous educational inequities, but these investments generally reinforced the pattern of segregation and failed to solve problems of overcrowding, racial hostility, and inadequate staffing. Reducing the question of racial educational inequity to a study of school resources and curriculum merely complemented the district’s strategy of providing more classroom space in the ghetto to justify containing black students in separate schools serving overcrowded and exploited black neighborhoods. Black community leaders argued that building and expanded black schools in this manner would only perpetuate overcrowding, leading to the rapid deterioration of the buildings and the overall quality of

education.

Race, Class, and the Analysis of Student Test Scores

This lack of scrutiny of the quality of education corresponded to a prevailing explanation of unequal student achievement that dismissed race as a spurious variable. Study commissions consistently argued that the racial gap in educational achievement reflected class-based differences' in students' upbringing rather than race-based differences in school quality. Stark racial disparities in test scores and overall academic outcomes scandalized the black public and placed school authorities on the defensive, but commissioned reports rationalized these disparities and deflected racial explanations. While critics viewed dismal learning outcomes as confirming their accusations of dysfunctional schools and teachers' low expectations, official studies echoed educators' arguments that the public should expect low test scores among "culturally deprived" and "educationally disadvantaged" students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, particularly the children of Southern black migrants arriving in Northern and Western cities.

The official perspective articulated in these reports was that any academic disparities between class groups reflects normal, out-of-school influences while only racial disparities that do not correspond to socio-economic differences can be presented as evidence of ineffective black schools. By posing this problem as a question of racial versus class disparities, researchers attributed to these two categories two distinct theories of group differentiation and educational inequality, distinguishing them as two dichotomous factors. This approach implied that black students from lower-income families should be expected to lag behind national norms in academic achievement, even as critics of urban schools argued that precisely these students, vulnerable to compounding race and class prejudice, are the most vulnerable to bad schools and low academic standards. Local study commissions consistently offered class-based explanations of educational inequality and avoided the sustained analysis of race and achievement, relying on this race versus class framework to confirm their simple explanation of the racial test score gap.

Indicative of this approach was the book-length "school survey" study commissioned by the Chicago Board of Education. The early chapters describe recent demographic trends and the changing characteristics of city youth, ultimately arguing, in an implicit rebuttal of black activists, that the declining test scores and high dropout rates in segments of the city reflected the normal challenges of serving an economically and culturally disadvantaged population (Havighurst 1964a: 20-77). To deflect race-based arguments about school inequality, the report simply displayed descriptive statistics comparing the socio-economic status, race, and sixth grade achievement scores in 21 different sub-districts constituting the city school district. It noted the apparent correlation between class status and achievement (38-40). Referencing relatively high achievement among middle class black communities, the report dismissed accusations of racial inequity and proceeded with a race-neutral analysis based on theories of cultural deprivation and economic disadvantage. The study, completed in response to movement demands for a thorough and independent review of the quality of education, relied on student test scores from a small sample of the city's schools and offered no formal statistical analysis to support its claims.

Most study commissions settled on a race-neutral explanation of seemingly racial achievement disparities, stressing the problem of socio-economically disadvantaged schools as a separate but compounding issue to racial segregation. For both the Chicago survey

project and a similar study of Philadelphia's public schools, the existence of preceding advisory reports dealing exclusively with racial questions helped justify their own limited attention to racial explanations. The Chicago survey report explicitly deferred to its predecessor from the outset (Havighurst 1964a: 5) and the Philadelphia survey study consistently cited the city's preceding Committee on Nondiscrimination on all racial questions, providing no new data collection on these topics. For instance, when the Philadelphia survey team contracted with the Educational Testing Service to conduct an original standardized testing program and analysis of student achievement, the testing data did not include measures of race or racial segregation (Odell 1965: 61-63). Researchers in both cities adopted this race neutral approach despite the fact that racial issues provided an important impetus for each of the two studies (Cone 1963; Odell 1965: ii).

Four other study commissions, including the initial reports published in Chicago and Philadelphia, more directly confronted the racial achievement gap but settled on the same race-neutral analysis. Portland's Committee on Race and Education reported a consistent and stark pattern of racial disparities in achievement, graduation rates, and other indicators. After insisting that differences in achievement are attributable to a student's genetic traits and the environment of their upbringing (1964: 72), the Committee acknowledged that the lowest scoring elementary schools were majority black and that low-income black students performed worse than their white peers of similar socio-economic status (77, 78). Rather than probe race-based explanations of this pattern, the Committee asserted that black students suffered due to the inferior socio-economic status of their schools and neighborhoods. "It would appear," the report explained, "that the common denominator for low scoring, low achieving children whether white or Negro is a depressed socio-economic environment" (78). Although these depressed environments were often found in segregated black areas and led to distinctly low achievement scores in segregated black schools, the report effectively treats this context of race and segregation as incidental to the problem of class inequality. After offering this brief explanation, based primarily on the views of local school principals, the Committee's report discussed at length the features of socio-economically depressed areas and schools.

In general, these study commissions attributed racial disparities in student achievement to social class differences and also, in some cases, to differences in mental aptitude, measured by IQ tests (e.g. Advisory Panel 1964: 20), though two studies partially deviated from this line of argument and implied fundamental deficiencies in the schools serving low performing students. In its comparison of student test scores across black, white, and racially mixed schools, The Philadelphia Committee on Nondiscrimination initially withheld judgement about the causes of strikingly low achievement among majority black schools, arguing that it would need individual-level data on the socio-economic profile of students in these schools to analyze this relationship (17). To "underscore the close parallel between socio-economic levels and school achievement," the report provided more cursory data on test scores and household socio-economic status for a sample of six sub-districts within the Philadelphia school district (26). The report also cited multiple outside sources on the challenges of educating culturally deprived and economically disadvantaged students, further buttressing potential class-based explanations of academic achievement disparities. At one point during the Committee's research, however, it heard the testimony of a local group of black ministers who cited the dismal test scores in their neighborhood elementary schools to demonstrate that black students were not learning even basic skills of reading and

arithmetic (43). Whatever disadvantages these students faced due to their socio-economic status, the ministers argued that the failure to equip them with even a minimal level of academic competency implied a fundamental failure on the part of the public schools. Citing this testimony, the Committee called for an additional “program for basic improvement” of low-performing schools that, unlike supplementary compensatory programs meant to enhance the normal curriculum, would ensure the most basic conditions necessary for a productive learning environment and effective instruction.

The Subcommittee on School-Community Relations created by Detroit’s study commission similarly cited alternative community perspectives on the causes of racial achievement disparities. Some local parents noticed that, after transferring their children to different schools across the city, schools exhibited surprisingly divergent educational standards and levels of achievement. The Detroit Committee did not provide a systematic analysis of test scores in the text of the report, but the authors acknowledged that the test score data showed wide-ranging variation in achievement levels between schools, consistent with the parents’ claims. The report acknowledged the need for “reasonable standards of competence in core subjects” across schools (143). Study commissions could have approached the question of group disparities in educational achievement from multiple empirical vantage points, including the rate of students falling short of minimum levels of academic competency or the academic level of coursework and assessments in different classrooms or schools. They could have attempted a fine-grained analysis of the relationships between race, class, and schooling or estimated the rate of academic progress of for different schools and classrooms. Despite these and other options, urban study commissions centered the analysis of race versus class, arguing that racial inequity, if it exists at all, should manifest in some uniform and distinct pattern, apart from presumably legitimate social class disparities.

Theorizing Racial Inequality and the Preoccupation with Racial Imbalance

Implicit choices about how to evaluate the equality of educational opportunity reflected competing theories about the ways racism and segregation affect educational inequality. Most study commissions did not settle for simply echoing psychological arguments about the effects of racial separation, but in the effort to address controversies over the quality of public schooling for black students, they relied on a simplistic theory of educational racism. These race and education committees implicitly viewed accusations of racial inequity through the prism of “racial imbalance,” assuming the static and uniform association of school problems with the preponderance of black students in attendance. This theory implied that racial inequity would manifest in deficiencies shared among segregated black schools and exhibited in more mild form in racially mixed schools serving a large share of black students. Thus, local advisory reports repeatedly compared schools by ranking them in terms of the percentage of black or nonwhite students in attendance or by grouping them into categories based on their racial profile—segregated black schools compared to segregated white schools and “integrated” schools.

Given the varying social and historical context characterizing segregated black schools and communities, the manifestation of racism and segregation in schools rarely followed this simple pattern. For instance, aggregate levels of overcrowding in all-black schools understate the crisis level of crowding in specific areas experiencing an influx of black families. Historic black communities in the Midwest and Northeast were often

dilapidated and underpopulated as residents moved to newer and typically crowded areas of black settlement on the edge of the ghetto. Similarly, “integrated” schools were presented in official reports as either a direct contrast to segregated schools or a milder case, at risk of losing their white students and becoming segregated. With the exception of policy recommendations about how to combat white flight, study commissions did not discuss the widely recognized distinction between racially mixed schools that were “stabilized” and schools in the throes of racial change. In practice, many “integrated” schools exposed black students and families to antagonistic students and frustrated teachers, and black critics blamed urban school officials for avoiding the unique racial and administrative problems facing racially changing schools. In Chicago, the seminal NAACP protest presented to the school board in 1957 emphasized racial hostility in newly integrated schools, condemning the district’s colorblind approach to transferring students (Chicago Branch 1958: 93, 126, 127). A decade later, black parents and community leaders criticized the district’s school integration proposals for ignoring these same pitfalls, repeatedly demanding that desegregation plans make educational sense and avoid overburdening black students. Policymakers determined success using statistical measures of the racial composition of schools, but, as one Southside Parent Teacher Association leader told the Board of Education, integration should “deal with people and their children, not only figures and tables” (O’Keeffe School PTA 1967).

By comparing schools based on the percentage of black students in attendance, commissioned studies on race and urban education reduced the problem of racism and segregation in urban education to a symptom of racial imbalance. In doing so, they prompted ongoing policy debate about race and urban school reform based on this singular concern. Much like the characteristics of schools that do not show up in administrative data and the racial impediments on learning that exacerbate existing class disparities, the different forms of educational racism that impact different black communities remained invisible to researchers viewing these issues through the prism of this prevailing analytic framework. These official study commissions, thus, granted some nominal recognition to activists’ demands for racial reform but carefully circumscribed the limits of this recognition, undermining activists’ ability to make claims about underlying inequities and the appropriate approach to school desegregation reform. Federal government reformers, eager to prove discriminatory and inadequate schooling to justify intervening in urban school policy, were ultimately unable to articulate and substantiate these local criticisms of racist urban schools, and they eventually settled for reforms premised on racially mixing students and teachers.

The adoption of this narrow analytic framework was almost universal among the nine big city race and education commissions examined in this chapter. Detroit’s 1962 Citizens Advisory Committee diverged from this framework in some instances, gesturing toward a more holistic approach to local race and educational issues. Given Detroit’s more progressive school board leadership and school superintendent, the possibility for conducting more critical research is not surprising. The city’s relatively liberal stance on integration, however, made it less likely to be targeted by federal officials for desegregation enforcement, and the ensuing national debate would focus on other big city school districts characterized by official resistance to reform and commissioned research exhibiting this shared analytic framework. Unlike Samuel Brownell, the former U.S. Commissioner of Education hired by Detroit’s Board of Education to encourage transparency and improved

community relations, most urban school superintendents were openly resistant to outside research and political input, and the independent citizens committees and expert panels commissioned to scrutinize their performance apparently struggled to produce incisive and revealing research. To investigate the role that these and other local officials played in influencing the work of purportedly independent study commissions, the next section investigates the case of Chicago's two advisory reports and the role of Chicago's archetypal city school chief, Benjamin C. Willis. The Chicago case demonstrates the multiple ways political officials were able to constrain the work of commissioned experts at every stage of the process. These constraints led Chicago's study commissions to simultaneously articulate progressive policy demands and circumscribe official discourse on race and education, effectively marginalizing grassroots voices in subsequent local debates about school desegregation.

Political Constraints Shaping Race and Education Commissions in Chicago

The fight for racial educational justice in Chicago, as in several major cities, centered around the polarizing conflict between a powerful city school superintendent, resistant to outside interference in school matters, and a popular black movement demanding a more transparent and responsive school administration. Chicago's Superintendent Benjamin C. Willis was the archetype of the mid-twentieth century public school chief. He gained national stature and local popularity by efficiently managing Chicago's massive school construction program during the 1950s and early 1960s. In a city run by a notorious Democratic political machine, he avoided charges of corruption during this period of expansion and initially won support from liberal school watchdog groups. The rise of the city's school integration movement, however, undermined the superintendent's reputation and quickly turned him into a divisive figure. The Chicago Board of Education was compelled to confront race and make concessions to local demands, even as its chief administrator aggressively defended his record and frequently expressed his derision toward black activists. These early concessions included the creation of external race and education committees with unprecedented access to sensitive school data.

The Chicago case shows how, even amidst a massive black-led social movement and new expert scrutiny on segregation and inequality, political constraints prevented a sincere public reckoning with racial issues in urban education. Because Chicago's Board of Education was eager to deny charges of racial discrimination and because Superintendent Willis leveraged significant political and institutional power to deflect racial critique, certain critical questions and sensitive data were unlikely to appear in the work of purportedly independent study commissions. School officials applied pressure at every stage of the research process, influencing the design of these studies, their access to data, and the willingness of investigators to probe sensitive racial questions. The result was a narrow framework and superficial analysis that failed to resolve the public controversies animating black protest. I describe the response of local activists to the city's two commissioned reports, including both public backing of their proposals for school integration and private frustration with their empirical and analytical shortcomings.

Political Constraints Shaping the Hauser Panel and the Havighurst Survey

Chicago's study commissions were intended to arbitrate a polarizing racial debate from an outside, objective perspective, but both of them were swept up in local political

conflict from their inception. Political pressure influenced the people involved in these commissions, their objectives and subject matter, and the kinds of evidence they were able to consider. This politics of knowledge played out in the production of an 80 page advisory report on racial segregation in March of 1964 and a broader, book-length survey of the state of Chicago's schools in November of 1964. In public debate and in more recent historical commentary (Danns 2003; Shipps 2006), these studies have been credited with exposing inequalities and garnering support for integration, but they were also products of political jockeying and implicit negotiation that precluded a complete examination of racism and inequity. While commissioned studies represented a progressive challenge against *de facto* segregation, they also enshrined a framework for investigating segregated schools that obscured the primary concerns of black community activists.

As its first major concession to the school integration movement, the Chicago Board of Education established its Advisory Panel on School Integration, and the study committee quickly became the subject of political controversy. The Panel featured five prominent school administrators and academics, led by University of Chicago sociologist Philip Hauser. It was charged with analyzing problems regarding "schools attended entirely or predominantly by Negroes" and formulating a plan to eliminate inequities (Advisory Panel 1964: 2). The school board agreed to commission the panel in August of 1963, during the initial peak of citywide protest, as part of an agreement to settle the district's major school segregation lawsuit. By October, two of the panelists came under attack after taking public stances supporting the school superintendent. Willis had ignited a new firestorm when he resigned in protest of the school board's plan to transfer a group of high-achieving black students to majority white high schools, and the two panelists threatened to step down from the advisory committee if the board did not acquiesce to the superintendent's demands. Willis' success in partially blocking the board's transfer plan helped precipitate a massive citywide boycott of Chicago's schools later that month, and boycott leaders included in their list of demands a call to replace the two panelists who backed Willis in the dispute (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 118, 119; Danns 2003). They requested that they be replaced with Kenneth Clark and race and education scholar Dan Dodson, two experts who served as consultants for the Detroit Citizens Advisory Committee. The demand was ignored and the Hauser Panel completed its work in March of 1964 with the two controversial panelists still involved.

The panel was intended to bring an independent, objective perspective to the disputes over race and education in Chicago, but the circumstances of its creation appeared to preclude fair consideration of the activists' perspective. The board's resolution authorizing the panel began by asserting that "without design on the part of the Board of Education or the school administration, there are schools under the jurisdiction of the Board which are attended entirely or predominantly by Negroes" (Board of Education, 1963: 332). Black activists were precisely arguing that school segregation in the city was maintained by design and designed in a manner that privileged white neighborhood schools at the expense of black communities. Despite the board's prescribed conclusions, the text of the advisory report did consider some anecdotal evidence of racial gerrymandering, but, in every such case, it argued that the racial intent behind segregation-inducing administrative actions could be plausibly denied (Advisory Panel 1964: 55-69). Regardless of its suggestive evidence and inconclusive results, the Hauser Report begins and ends by affirming the board's position and asserting that administrative actions did not foster racial segregation.

The Panel states that, “In a fundamental sense, *de facto* segregation is not the result of the intent or design of the Board of Education of Chicago, nor of the board of education in most other metropolitan areas.” Instead, given “the widespread traditional neighborhood school policy,” *de facto* segregation results from segregated housing patterns (4).

Notwithstanding the study’s defensive posture and apparent reluctance to probe some evidence of racial discrimination, the Hauser Report served a valuable purpose for activists. Most importantly, the report’s school integration policy recommendations offered legitimacy and concrete benchmarks for movement demands. Activists also invoked the report’s suggestive evidence of racial inequity in complaints to the federal government, drawing divergent conclusions from the same data. The report summarized racial disparities in overcrowding and student test scores but did not examine the practices and policies that may have contributed these disparities, and its discussion of the causes of racial imbalance refused to reckon with some of the more damning examples of potential discrimination against black students. The Hauser Panel noted that, despite their size, the new Upper Grade Centers built across the city to manage overcrowding were just as segregated as the elementary schools, but it did not investigate accusations that these new schools and branches may have strategically placed to ensure this persisting segregation (64, 65). In contrast, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO), would cite this pattern to assert that segregation was “contrived” and to argue that documented disparities in classroom space and other school resources were “a direct result of school segregation” (Raby 1965: 7). In general, the Hauser Report echoed the administration’s claim that the correspondence between school segregation and residential segregation was likely not due to gerrymandering because both school attendance boundaries and the borderlines between black and white neighborhoods corresponded to natural physical boundaries—like major streets, bridges, or train tracks. It settled on this conclusion without considering the possibility that, in any given case, other “natural boundaries” might have offered practical alternatives (1964: 63).

Chicago’s second school study commission was the product of more explicit political jockeying and resistance. City civil rights organizations and parent teacher associations first demanded an outside study of the school system in 1961, and the school board responded by forming a special committee within the school board to plan a comprehensive evaluation of the quality and equality of the city schools—a version of the traditional “school survey” (Cone 1963). The survey committee, however, struggled to recruit a survey director, delaying the project for more than year. More than 30 leading voices in public education from across the country, including future U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel and prominent statesman James Conant, were asked to lead the survey project and declined. According to the committee chair, one or two were unavailable but most were “not up to it” (Cone 1963: 6). Candidates were likely deterred by Willis’ fierce opposition to an independent survey and by the broader political tensions surrounding race and school integration in Chicago. The school board failed to find a true outsider to take on the position, and in 1963, it turned to a University of Chicago education professor, Robert J. Havighurst, who was active in city school politics and had assisted the board in its failed search. Havighurst was a board member for the Citizens Schools Committee and public advocate of school desegregation, making his appointment particularly controversial for conservative whites and the school superintendent.

Willis immediately challenged the board's decision. He initially issued a long statement to the board arguing for the advantages of a self-directed study of the schools over an independent study by a commissioned outsider. He argued that the outsider's preformed opinions might conflict with existing school policy and cited as "merely an example" the conflict between Havighurst's pro-integration stance and the district's neighborhood school policy (Willis 1963). In the days prior to his appointment as survey director, Havighurst had made public statements in favor of a Southside school desegregation plan, inviting public controversy and accusations of communism in the conservative press (Cuban 1976: 23). Willis threatened to resign in protest, organizing a press conference to announce his resignation on live television. The school board rushed to preempt the press conference and negotiate an agreement with Willis to appoint a three person panel that included Willis alongside Havighurst and the dean of the school of education at a local university (Coons 1965 III-3, 4; Cuban 1976: 23, 24). The board's school survey would, thus, lose its claim to independence and objectivity in form and in function.

In addition to this public jockeying for influence, Willis worked behind the scenes to place enormous pressure on Havighurst. The same day that Havighurst was appointed, the University of Chicago professor received a call from his Provost, Edward Levi, who pleaded that he turn down the position (Havighurst 1963). Edward Levi's brother Julian was a prominent developer who had worked closely with local policymakers to maintain the racial and economic character of the University's Hyde Park neighborhood, and he was especially close with Benjamin Willis. "Hysterical" with anger, Willis called Julian Levi after learning that Havighurst had been selected to head the survey, and he apparently demanded that Julian's brother take action to reverse the decision. A distraught Edward Levi promptly met with Havighurst, warning him that Willis "had it in his power to make the situation much worse by putting Negroes in Hyde Park High School" (2). Angered by Willis's tactics, Havighurst refused to bow to his threats and Levi eventually conceded, allowing Havighurst to continue with his new post. Under the cloud of this credible threat, Havighurst began his tenuous collaboration with the school superintendent.

The book-length study of Chicago's schools ultimately published by the school board in November of 1964 was the product of Havighurst's labor, but Willis was able to influence the research process without actively participating in the study panel. After forcing the board to appoint him to the team, Willis never physically attended research meetings, at times sending an assistant but rarely contributing to the planning and decision-making process. In his absence, however, Willis interjected himself in the data collection process and obstructed decisions he disagreed with. All requests for information from an individual school and appointments for site visits were directed to and managed by an associate superintendent in downtown Chicago on behalf of each school ("Willis Controls All Operations" 1964). Much of the research was conducted through school district staff study committees, each designated to cover a specific area focus, and Willis ensured that Havighurst would have no direct oversight or involvement in their work, only receiving a finalized summary report of their findings upon completion. Deputy Superintendents reviewed and edited these study committee reports before they reached Havighurst's desk, deleting important critical information in at least one case (Coons 1965: III-5, 6).

While Havighurst conceded this behind-the-scenes influence and was eager to avoid any direct confrontation, he eventually found himself in a public dispute with Willis over his teacher questionnaire. The survey panel agreed to administer a 30 minute questionnaire to

all teachers in the district, but when it came time to distribute the surveys, the superintendent ordered his principals to withhold them and blocked any further action. This action was taken without any explanation or direct communication with the survey director. Havighurst, who eventually learned that Willis personally disapproved of the questionnaire but was unsure which questions caused his discomfort, wrote repeated letters to the superintendent's office offering to change any objectionable questions and pleading with him to take immediate action on the survey (e.g. Havighurst 1964d). The questionnaire dispute was leaked to the news media, and school staff finally articulated their complaints with the framing of specific questions deemed too critical of the schools, and with the collection of specific personal information about teachers, primarily teachers' race. They argued that collecting school personnel's race would be illegal, even as similar city school districts across the country increasingly reported the racial demographics of student and teachers. The Chicago Teacher Union president, meanwhile, saw nothing intrusive or biased about the survey and blamed Willis for being "much too sensitive to criticism" (Quoted in Banas 1964). While Havighurst initially insisted on the importance of documenting black teachers' views, he ultimately conceded to each of the administration's demands and administered the survey in its altered form. The questionnaire, thus, obscured the potentially distinct views of the minority of black teachers and contributed to a generally race-neutral research effort that avoided politically sensitive questions.

The result of this uneasy collaboration was an extensive study that withheld direct evaluation of the schools' performance and skirted the underlying question of racial inequity. Havighurst opened the book-length survey by relegating questions of race to the Advisory Panel's earlier study and deflecting the question of school quality as contextual and subjective (1964a: 5, 13-18). He addressed race only to rebut accusations of inferior black schools, relying on limited data and cursory analysis. The discussion of race, class, and student achievement drew on a descriptive comparison of the 21 sub-districts that constituted the city school district rather than a more granular analysis of individual schools. Casually reviewing the data presented in the report's tables reveals that, in addition to the obvious correlation between socio-economic status and test scores, race also seems to correlate with achievement, and when the survey compares individual schools in its study sample, the relatively low performance of segregated black schools is still apparent (39, 49-50). Better data and more sincere scrutiny of racial disparities might have validated many of the protesters' complaints, but political pressure and bureaucratic resistance made such critical scrutiny, particular on racial matters, unlikely.

The content and conclusions of the Havighurst Report were potentially shaped by these political constraints, but one might question whether, in the absence of political resistance, Havighurst would have taken advantage of the greater latitude to produce a different study. Havighurst's team may have resorted to the familiar methods of the traditional school survey, which normally provided an inventory of school resources and curricula and did not historically address the suddenly urgent issue of race and school equity. More importantly, Havighurst himself may have been inclined to avoid racial issues and frame urban education issues in terms of socio-economic status and cultural deprivation. His own scholarly work grappled with the problem of the culturally deprived student and corresponding issues facing urban school districts, and he used the Chicago school survey to promote his existing views on urban school reform. Facing personal threats and bureaucratic barriers, he was unlikely to tackle controversial racial topics in the body of

this report, but, in the absence of this political pressure, would Havighurst have chosen to conduct this research any differently?

The conversations and preliminary research with which Havighurst engaged as he prepared for the survey indicate that he was aware of and interested in conducting a more sincere analysis of racial controversies. Jerome Ziegler, Havighurst's personal research assistant and associate director of the survey project provided the university professor with up-to-date reporting on the major events and specific disputes surround the city's race and education movement (e.g. Ziegler 1963b), and in October 1963 he conducted a survey of public attitudes toward the schools in selected black communities (Ziegler 1963a). The respondents, mostly black community leaders and public school teachers, almost all agreed that standards were too low in black schools. A large majority believed that black schools suffered from poorly trained and unsympathetic teachers, school overcrowding, high faculty turnover, and, according to the teachers, autocratic school administrators. In short, they pointed to deficiencies in prevailing instructional and administrative practice—not just simply deficiencies in school resources or teacher qualifications. Without the ability to identify black teachers in the teacher questionnaire, such distinct concerns among black teachers would go unnoticed in Havighurst's study. More generally, the process of data collection, which was controlled by school officials, likely discouraged teachers from voicing their criticisms of administrators, especially if they believed that these administrators were autocratic. In the end, the Havighurst Report, by taking a race neutral approach, avoiding sensitive questions, and allowing the school administration to control the data collection process, fell short of the kind of investigation warranted by local school controversies.

In February 1964 Havighurst received another, unsolicited report on race and achievement in a Southside elementary school that, once again, proposed potential themes and empirical questions for Havighurst's study. Parents Against Segregated Classrooms, a Southside Chicago parent group led by white employees of the University of Chicago, acquired race and achievement data on the students in the group's racially diverse neighborhood elementary school, and it produced an original analysis of segregation and learning disparities across classrooms and grade levels. Their report showed a gap between students in segregated black and white classrooms that widened each year, suggesting that ineffective instruction in the black classrooms exacerbated whatever disadvantages these students faced upon entering the first grade (Van Cleve 1964). In his written correspondence with the group's leader, Havighurst stated that his survey would examine this kind of data and that the group's approach looked interesting. He promised to follow up with the parent group once the survey research was underway (Havighurst 1964b). The actual survey study, of course, did not include any discussion of classroom segregation, annual progress in student learning, or any careful, rigorous comparison of learning outcomes across racial groups. Beyond the official report, Havighurst did engage in a public debate about the tendency toward classroom segregation in racially mixed schools and the potential pitfalls of placing educationally disadvantaged black students in integrated classrooms with students at very different academic levels (Havighurst 1964c; Sengstacke 1964), and this debate had important implications for his policy recommendations regarding targeted compensatory education interventions. Despite the significance of these questions and Havighurst's personal interest in them, the Havighurst Report did not examine data or specific examples

on racial or socio-economic diversity in classrooms nor did it pose the question about potential inequities within racially mixed schools.

Public Reaction and Persisting Controversy

At first glance, the response of integration advocates to Chicago's two new race and education advisory reports was widespread support and celebration. The two documents legitimized the demand for school integration and outlined plans for substantial school desegregation reform. For this they were publicly endorsed by most movement leaders who leveraged the policy recommendations against school officials still resistant to desegregation reform. CCCO leaders were initially optimistic about the Hauser Panel's report, and even Al Raby, the confrontational teacher-activist who would soon become the face of the CCCO, told the press that he "agreed with 90% of it" (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 135). The movement's response to the Havighurst Report was more mixed, but critical reactions received little coverage in the city's mainstream press and were typically discussed privately among activists and educators. For white liberal organizations supporting school integration, these two studies helped articulate the integration agenda, and the Citizens Schools Committee actively lobbied the school board to implement Havighurst's recommendations.

Among several activists, black journalists, and local educators, however, the new research elicited frustration and caustic criticism. In written reviews and private discussion, these critics initiated a debate about how to study racial educational inequity, and they accused the Havighurst study, in particular, of being negligent and misleading. Their rebuttals articulated arguments about the appropriate questions and concerns worthy of study, the relevant topics and methods for data collection, and the relationship between race, class, and the causes of educational inequality. A brief review of this critical response reveals that on the ground, in the context of an unfolding grassroots movement for racial justice, controversies continued to proliferate about the nature and effects of racism and segregation in urban education. These controversies, however, existed in the shadow of state-commissioned research and policy proposals that appeared, from outside activist circles, to delineate a new liberal consensus on race and education.

The Hauser Report was initially less controversial, in part because the public awaited the Havighurst study for a more comprehensive research report conducted by a survey director that movement leaders approved. Much of the report displayed statistical findings comparing black and white schools without making explicit claims about the causes and significance of school differences, allowing the reader to draw their own conclusions from the data. Disagreements with the study, nonetheless, surfaced when the school district came under national scrutiny. *De facto* segregation in Chicago was the subject of a Congressional hearing in July 1965, over one year after the publication of the Hauser Report. Philip Hauser had become a hardened critic of Superintendent Willis, and he testified to Congress that Chicago's schools were not only racially separate but also unequal, offering inferior education to black students (Committee on Education and Labor 1965: 99). His harsh comments led one Congressperson to distinguish between Philip Hauser's views and the findings of the study that bore his name, which avoided making explicit inferences about racial inequity and suggested that the racial test score gap reflected the lower mental aptitude of black students. When Raby was pressed to share his views on the advisory report, he continued to insist that the CCCO agreed with 90% of the study, but added that it

“never delineated the 10% we don’t agree with.” The 10%, one Congressperson insisted, was the “kicker,” and Raby proceeded to challenge the Hauser Report’s assertions about the causes of racial inequality and segregation (Committee on Education and Labor 1965: 217-219).

The Havighurst Report elicited more direct and immediate criticism, sparking conceptual and methodological discussions about the study of race and educational inequality. Like the Hauser study, Havighurst’s survey enjoyed broad support in the liberal press, and its primary critic was the superintendent, who immediately disowned the study he nominally helped produce (Cuban 1976: 26). Like Hauser, Havighurst became an outspoken critic of Willis and a noted ally to the anti-Willis protests that continued into 1965, but the substance of his research made him an object of derision and critique in activist circles. CCCO leadership discussed their problems with the study in multiple meetings, and they drafted at least two critical reviews outlining the organization’s rebuttal to Havighurst’s survey (Anderson and Pickering 1986: 146).

The Chicago Defender, the city’s nationally known black newspaper, covered the survey project closely, voicing activists’ discontent and providing consistent critical commentary from the time the survey project began. Lillian Calhoun, the *Defender* reporter and columnist covering this story, anticipated a common criticism of the report early on in the research process. She wrote that herself and her colleagues

“keep hearing from intelligent, experienced teachers that some of the committees of the Havighurst-Willis-Grace survey are up in the clouds. Much discussion goes on ad infinitum about the glorious things that could be done with new curricula, new procedures, etc. But very little hard, precise, detailed examination of just what’s going on now in the schools is taking place.” (Calhoun 1964a)

After the survey report’s release in November, Calhoun raised questions about the methodological adequacy of the study, posing pointed questions to the survey director. Asked to explain his decision to use test score data from a small sample of schools rather than the entire district, Havighurst claimed that district-wide test score data was not centrally available, yet Calhoun, citing multiple elementary school principals, noted that many schools routinely reported test data to the district. Havighurst insisted that low-income schools could not be expected to accomplish even average levels of academic achievement, yet when asked about the performance of a renowned Chicago elementary school serving an all-black public housing project, Havighurst acknowledged that the study team had not collected the school’s test score data (Calhoun 1964b: 8).

Reactions to the study from movement leaders varied from somewhat positive to harsh rebuke, with several angrily criticizing the document as an apology for the school district’s failures. The president of the Chicago Urban League flatly accused the survey report of avoiding any straightforward evaluation of the quality of the city’s schools “to keep from spelling out deficiencies of the present administration” (Calhoun 1964c: 2). Others criticized the study’s defensive tone and reluctance to ask tough questions, insisting that Havighurst “call a spade a spade” when discussing school problems and dismal academic outcomes. Faith Rich, a researcher for the CCCO, rejected Havighurst’s focus on socio-economic status as an explanation for low achievement, arguing that “these children...can learn to read and do arithmetic.” According to Rich, “Neither Havighurst nor Hauser have separated out the influence of the school and the background factor on such children” (2).

In a lengthy letter to the school board, one local principal, Thomas Farrell, excoriated the Havighurst study for its lack of useful research and superficial methodological approach, revealing underlying disputes over how to define and study educational inequity (Farrell 1965). Though Havighurst's initial research design promised to cover topics like the tracking program, academic standards, school administration and operations, and school discipline, Farrell complained that the actual study offered superficial comment on these topics if any at all. For Farrell, the most important topic was classroom instruction, and yet the Havighurst Report's approach to this subject was woefully inadequate. Analyzing curriculum guides, the letter contended, was like evaluating the skill of carpenter by examining his tools (6). To the extent the survey examined teaching methods, researchers relied on extremely brief visits to schools, often lasting less than one day, and the teacher questionnaire. Achievement scores, Farrell argued, should have been obtained by conducting an original testing program and estimating the annual growth of students in a given school. Havighurst's small sample of school test data collected by the school system was, in his view, inadequate and unreliable because it was conducted by teachers and collected by school administrators who had a stake in the evaluation (4). Overall, Farrell viewed the focus on compensatory education as premature, suggesting that low-income and segregated schools could adopt additive measures to meet new challenges when, in fact, they suffered from basic deficiencies in staffing and organization that went unacknowledged in this purportedly comprehensive survey (3).

An unpublished review essay drafted for the CCCO issued a similarly harsh critique, condemning Havighurst's superficial study of schools and its misleading analysis of race and class (Cook 1965). Written by Chicago Urban League researcher Junerous Cook, the essay accused the Havighurst study of being a "politically expedient document" that lacked any "sound evaluation of the schools" or any "meaningful information on the schools themselves" (8, 16). Regarding its analysis of race, class, and achievement, Cook argued that Havighurst "often confuses the family background factor and social discrimination" (18). Citing recent sociological research on Chicago and other cities, Cook criticized Havighurst's reliance on occupational data, which likely understated the socio-economic status of well-educated black households that, due to racial discrimination, were less likely to attain occupations corresponding to their qualifications (19). Citing recent sociological research, the essay noted the high proportion of black migrants to Chicago who were middle-class and had already lived in an urban area. This fact contradicted the implication that Chicago's growing black population reflected a wave of "culturally deprived" poor and rural families (17). Havighurst's "gross class-achievement theory" permitted him to make vague claims about the academic success of select black middle class students while ignoring class heterogeneity among the vast majority black Chicagoans (19), and Cook's rebuttal demonstrated the necessity for a much more fine grained analysis of class, race, and student achievement that investigated distinct and overlapping effects of race, family educational background, and social and economic status more broadly. Upon finally reading Cook's draft, Meyer Weinberg, who chaired the CCCO's Schools Committee, decided the survey was no longer a priority, and advised that, if they do release a critical essay, this version was "too politic." He would support "telling people how bad the survey really is" (Weinberg 1965).

Nationwide, as the urban education crisis deepened in the late 1960s, a small wave of local investigations of racism and educational dysfunction added weight to black activists'

ongoing criticism of urban schools (e.g. Kozol 2008; Rogers 2006; Rosenthal and Jacobson 2003). The dominant trend in academic and policy research, however, echoed the blueprint put forward by urban race and education study commissions during the first half of the decade. Led by the Coleman Report, prominent scholars and policymakers, with federal government backing, would pursue the scientific analysis of school quality, achievement disparities, and racial segregation using macro-level administrative and survey data focusing on school resources and student socio-economic status. Nationally, the most influential experts did not engage with local debates about evaluating instructional practice, teacher attitudes, or the administrative decisions of principals and school bureaucrats. These local arguments suggested alternative possibilities for conducting a systematic study of educational inequity, but rapidly producing such an alternative to rival the growing trend in national academic and policy research would require vast resources and political will. Where the federal government marshalled its expansive capacity and political clout to study racial educational inequity, it confronted the local urban divide between popular controversies and official discourse, and this local state of affairs provided a powerful constraint from below, delineating possibilities for research and scholarly consensus.

Conclusion

The 1960s marked a pivotal moment in the history of modern public schooling. Efforts to face challenges of social inequality and poverty amidst affluence enlisted public education and its promise of equal opportunity while classic studies by scholars like Samuel Bowles and Pierre Bourdieu issued new left critiques of formal schooling as an engine of inequality. Racial justice movements made group disparities in education a pressing matter of public debate and policy reform, adding urgency to calls to promote greater educational opportunity across all segments of society. By the middle of the decade, urban unrest and the national disgrace of Jim Crow segregation compelled the nation's leading policymakers and experts to confront racial educational inequity, but observing and apprehending this complex set of problems would prove to be a challenging and politically contentious process. Before actors in the federal government leveraged the 1964 Civil Rights Act to intervene in these problems, local urban school districts outside the segregationist South initiated this public debate, releasing the first wave of data and commentary on race, test scores, and the performance of public schools. Race and education study commissions represented an important opening for racially marginalized groups, rapidly gaining traction in the national politics of public schooling, to raise their grievances in official venues for public policy debate, but this opportunity created a new politics of knowledge, in which new discursive barriers reproduced the exclusion of black voices.

State-commissioned urban education research managed to investigate the problem of separate and unequal schooling without officially recognizing the more concrete accusations of educational racism that inspired local social movements. As the Chicago case demonstrates, local school systems had multiple tools for constraining the work of otherwise independent study committees, including the power to dictate who led the committees, limit what data they could collect, and place political pressure on researchers. As a result, advisory reports were not entirely uncritical of urban schools, but they collectively adopted a narrow framework for analyzing racial inequity in education, helping school officials avoid more intrusive scrutiny into potential discrimination and neglect. Despite the often unsophisticated and unscientific character of these policy-oriented race and education

reports, their shared analytic framework provided a clear blueprint for subsequent academic research attempting to resolve the ongoing racial controversies surrounding *de facto* segregation. The Coleman Report would follow the basic framework adopted by these early study commissions, and regardless of the scope of its data collection or sophistication of its models, the ambitious study was ill-equipped to address the persisting controversies that initially animated urban movements against school segregation in the early 1960s.

Before nationally prominent academics like James Coleman were able to influence national law and policy on school desegregation, city study commissions contributed to local urban school desegregation initiatives, advanced by a new wave of more liberal urban school superintendents. In Chicago, Superintendent Willis was finally replaced in 1966 and the district's new leadership, without ever acknowledging concerns about inferior schooling in black communities, advanced desegregation plans that focused on managing the percentage of black students in targeted schools. These desegregation plans were designed to mitigate white flight by avoiding large concentrations of black students in white neighborhood schools, and black activists rejected this cautious approach because it left normal school operations intact and did not consider the potentially negative educational consequences of shuffling around students. The spirit of the criticisms that Chicago's activist community initially articulated in response to the Hauser and Havighurst Reports, thus, appeared in public hearings and official complaints about school desegregation initiatives. Black Chicagoans remained frustrated that their fundamental concerns with separate and unequal schooling were ignored, even in the official pursuit of school integration.

The local divide between official race and education discourse and the grassroots critique of separate and unequal schools widened in the late 1960s as activists rejected integration proposals, calling, instead, for black power and community control. Integration became divisive as soon as it became about sorting students to achieve optimal proportions of each racial group in a school. Leading experts and reformers in the federal government eventually enshrined this racial mixing agenda by elevating the data and conclusions of the Coleman Report, but before 1966, they had little connect to the local politics of knowledge in urban school districts, and they were predisposed to blame local school officials for depriving black students of equal educational opportunity. In the wake of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the issue of school segregation and integration remained unsettled, and elements in the Johnson Administration pursued a radical reform agenda to uproot the entrenched legacy of racially segregated education.

Chapter 4

The Political Roots of the Coleman Report: Local Suppression, Federal Intervention, and the Making of State-Sponsored Social Scientific Expertise

Urban clashes over separate and unequal schooling compelled city school officials to recognize racial concerns and endorse integration, but official reporting on the nature and extent of racial educational inequities obscured as much as it revealed. School board-commissioned research legitimized a narrow understanding of the segregation issue by focusing attention on racially imbalanced school enrollments while arguing that concern about low academic achievement was not a racial issue. In several cities, independent study commissions investigated accusations of discriminatory policies and inferior education for black students, but they approached these concerns with data, concepts, and theoretical assumptions that did not correspond to the concerns and accusations voiced by grassroots black activists. In Chicago and elsewhere, local movements turned to the federal government for support in their struggle for more a comprehensive policy response. Between 1965 and 1967, the federal government would attempt to investigate the problem of racial educational inequity, most notably by conducting a national survey project on the Equality of Educational Opportunity (EEO).

The EEO final report, commonly known as the Coleman Report, mirrored the analytic approach of urban race and education commissions, and it settled on a similarly narrow agenda for reforming segregated schools. The Coleman Report surveyed school administrators to collect data on school resources and curriculum, it distinguished student attributes like socio-economic status from school-related factors associated with racial inequity, and it theorized educational racism as a direct effect of racial imbalance. Coleman advocated school integration but narrowly defined this agenda in terms of the optimal distribution of race and class groupings in each school. This research was far more sophisticated and systematic than the policy-oriented reports produced by local citizens committees and expert panels, and it provided a social scientific assessment of the informal inferences and inconclusive findings found in earlier advisory reports. James Coleman was surprised to find that his research detected a weak relationship between school characteristics and student achievement as well as a general similarity in school characteristics between black and white schools. For him, the EEO research was compelling and all but conclusive, and it forced him to rethink his assumptions about race and educational inequality.

This chapter argues that the analytic framework and scientific credibility of the Coleman Report reflects the political constraints that shaped the production of this state-commissioned study. Unlike local study commissions, Coleman's research team did not operate under the direct political pressure of defensive school officials. In contrast, the federal government officials who hired Coleman were eager to produce evidence of wrongdoing by local school districts to confirm their beliefs about racial educational inequity and justify federal intervention against school segregation. Coleman's study derived legitimacy from the fact that Coleman embraced politically unwelcome findings and promoted these findings and recommendations despite internal government resistance (Grant 1973; Moynihan 1968; Nichols 1966). The appearance of scientific neutrality aside, the study was, nonetheless, produced by and for federal policymakers in a context of intense political controversy, and it depended on non-scientific institutions and concepts to help

articulate its object of study and mode of expertise (Epstein 2009; Eyal and Buchholz 2010; Law 2009). To account for the analytic framework adopted by the Coleman Report, this chapter investigates the political constraints that determined the circulation of ideas and information available to Coleman, dictating the purview and possibilities of federal government research.

These constraints operated from above and below. Constraints from above reflected the limits imposed by the federal government politics of race, education, and civil rights reform in this tense historical moment. Constraints from below operated through the resistance of local school systems to scrutiny and the restrictive discourse of racial educational inequity dominating local policy debate. I argue that the constraints impinging on the EEO project ensured that the study would reproduce the basic analytic framework already sanctioned in official debates surrounding urban school segregation. Similar constraints impeded parallel federal investigations into this issue, preventing competing findings and frameworks from surfacing in official policy debate and challenging the scientific legitimacy of the EEO study. In the end, Coleman settled on a limited set of empirical and theoretical questions because the controversies animating black protest were marginalized in local policy debate, and because federal investigations, despite their political objectives, repeatedly failed to penetrate beneath official urban education discourse and recognize suppressed black perspectives.

Drawing on the files of experts and agencies within the federal government, I track the arguments and evidence taken up by federal investigators and examine the political and institutional conditions that prompt researchers' decisions and circumscribe their capacities and perspectives. My analysis focuses on key documents, reports, and unpublished studies involved in three federal government investigations into *de facto* segregation as well as the files of the U.S. Office of Education, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' Race and Education project, and Kenneth Clark's archived papers. After elaborating my theoretical approach and then describing the Coleman Report's analytic framework and its opponents, this chapter shows how political constraints from above and below made the Coleman Report possible. The last section turns to two parallel federal government research efforts taking place around the same time as the EEO study to interrogate the political forces that impeded potential challenges to Coleman's conclusions from within the federal government. The result was the growing public embrace of Coleman's analysis and argument for school integration, including his prescription for racial mixing to promote the educationally optimal profile of students in each school.

Accounting for the Origins of a Social Scientific Paradigm

Contemporary approaches in science and technology studies analyze the production of scientific knowledge as the assembling of people and resources to sustain new acts of research and replicable research findings, which are mobilized to produce consensus and become consolidated as fact (Eyal 2013; Latour 1999; Law 2009). Tracing the elements that constitute expertise requires moving across sites and between scales to account for the various material and institutional devices that together enable the scientific process. In *Science in Action* (1987), Bruno Latour argues that every step of this process—such as the design of a new piece of lab equipment or the articulation of a new conceptual category—introduces new and more technical controversies, further complicating the original problem. The construction of scientific consensus, therefore, requires that some controversies are

ignored and that the inner-workings of key objects, theoretical concepts, and laboratory instruments are rendered invisible, hidden within a black box as these tools become taken for granted categories in the scientific discourse.

Increasingly, science studies scholarship has highlighted the role of public institutions and social movements as constitutive of the scientific process, shaping the assemblage of new expertise in biomedical, environmental, and other scientific fields directly implicated in state policy (Epstein 1995, 2009; Eyal 2013; Frickel 2004). In the context of scientific expertise developed and mobilized to guide public interventions, changing political circumstances can create new linkages between state actors, professional groups, or lay people with a stake in a given issue, leading them to forge new ties with groups of scientists or research institutions and assemble new modes of knowledge production. Expertise is diffuse, marshalling a wide range of heterogeneous elements to enable ways of constructing, controlling, and documenting objects of study, and this chapter looks beyond the intellectual history of the Coleman Report and the individual history of James Coleman to study the “interstitial domain” between science and politics where expert interventions take shape (Eyal and Buchholz 2010).

The dominant strand of academic expertise on educational inequality embodied in the Coleman Report enrolled local school administrators in the process of collecting data and constructing the object of study. From this administrative perspective, schools were viewed in terms of “administrative inputs” of material resources and teachers with varying levels of education and experience. The actual activities of classroom teaching and learning, in contrast, were considered largely hidden and outside the scope of direct administrative control, loosely coupled to the policies and daily decisions of school officials. This viewpoint treated schools as passively influenced by the personality traits of its students, essentially reflecting its surrounding neighborhood environment rather than dictating the culture of its internal school community. Before 1966, urban study commissions on race and education embodied this perspective, framing local controversies about the quality and equality of schools in terms of aggregate differences in school resources while controlling for student class to isolate out-of-school factors affecting student achievement. These local studies, however, were policy-oriented advisory reports that lacked rigorous analysis and scientific legitimacy. Investigating the history of the Coleman Report reveals the social forces that forged a new mode of social scientific expertise around the basic empirical and theoretical questions articulated in earlier, more informal reports on race and urban education. The urgency of the *de facto* segregation issue prompted a federal government-sponsored breakthrough in new education research, but this political impetus for more rigorous research included specific political constraints on the capacity to conduct in-depth investigation. These constraints narrowed the purview of federal government-sponsored research and restricted researchers’ access to activists’ experiences and arguments, thus impeding the production and circulation of evidence and ideas that would have problematized Coleman’s analytic framework and opened up the black box of the schooling process.

The Coleman Report’s Analysis and its Detractors

The Coleman Report came to be seen as an important theoretical innovation and empirical discovery. Coleman did not enter this project expecting to justify educational inequality, but the findings compelled him to rethink his perspective on racial disparities in

public education (Kahlenberg 2001). Before the research began, he publicly acknowledged his working assumption that the study would reveal racial inequities in the quality of public schools (Grant 1973: 22). After analyzing the data, however, Coleman could not square this assumption with his empirical findings. Not only did he find that, in the aggregate, black and white schools were generally similar, but he also concluded that differences among schools have little impact on differential student test scores. Coleman's analysis showed that student socio-economic background and attitudes each exhibit a stronger relationship with student achievement than any school-level factors. The most important school-level factor influencing a student's level of achievement, furthermore, was the aggregate socio-economic status of students in attendance—a finding that only reaffirmed Coleman's contention that a student's social environment has a much greater effect on her level of academic achievement than the quality of education offered in the student's school. This analysis enabled Coleman to estimate the ideal profile of students in a school that would optimize the educational benefits for lower income students without disadvantaging middle or upper class students. Based on these estimates, Coleman made the case for dispersing concentrations of black students and pursuing a racial mixing reform strategy driven by these statistical benchmarks (Coleman 1966; Coleman, et. al. 1966).

This central thread in the sprawling, 700-page Coleman Report resembled the analysis and conclusions of many local race and education study commissions. Coleman's statistical models and his countless tables and graphs presented similar kinds of data, conceptual categories, and theoretical mechanisms to frame its analysis. The primary difference was that, instead of cursory data and a lack of formal quantitative analysis, the national study benefitted from one of the largest surveys ever conducted and regression analyses completed with the assistance of the Education Testing Service. Its relative sophistication aside, the Coleman Report sparked methodological critique among progressives in the federal government disappointed with its findings, and it, nonetheless, received public backing—or at least acceptance—from many of these same progressive voices who welcomed any scientific justification for school integration. Reviewing the Coleman Report's analytic framework, I point to potential limitations of this approach before outlining current criticisms and existing alternatives, focusing on the 1964 analysis completed by Kenneth Clark's Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. on racial educational inequities in New York.

Coleman's Analytic Framework

The Coleman Report asked whether various school-level factors and individual-level student attributes could help explain stark racial disparities in academic achievement. White and Asian students' test scores were remarkably higher than those of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other racial groups, and Coleman's research attempted to discern which, if any, school characteristics were driving achievement disparities and could be manipulated to reduce the achievement gap. To answer this question, the study team conducted a massive survey based on a national sample of students, teachers, principals, and superintendents. The Office of Education also contracted local investigators to produce case studies of urban school districts, and Coleman included one chapter based on this more qualitative research. The heart of the analysis was a regression analysis that controlled for the effect of student-level factors, adding a range of individual student attribute variables into the model and then focusing on the remaining variation in student test scores. To assess

the effect of schools, the study collected data on school resources—including the age of the school buildings, the number of science labs, the number of students per classroom, and the level of course offerings—as well as data on teacher characteristics—including level of experience, educational credentials, and teachers' performance on an academic aptitude test (Coleman, et. al. 1966).

The weak relationship between school characteristics and the racial achievement gap surprised Coleman. He found that, on average, segregated black and white schools within the same region of the country had similar levels of resources. Where schools suffered from less resources, this disparity did not appear to have a major impact on student outcomes. Teacher quality showed some correlation with student test scores, but the relationship was small relative to the effects of family background, and it applied primarily to black students while white students were less affected by differences in teacher characteristics. A student's performance on an achievement test appeared to have much more to do with the students' social environment than with the quality of education provided by his school (Coleman, et. al. 1966).

This analysis relied on data about schools reported by principals and district superintendents in extensive questionnaires. Much like local study commissions relied on administrative records to describe school characteristics, the EEO survey asked local administrators to report on a variety of school characteristics based on their records and personal impressions. Principals responded to numerous multiple-choice questions about the availability of school facilities like a gym or cafeteria, the age and availability of textbooks, the characteristics of the teaching faculty, course offerings, and extracurricular activities. They also provided details about their personal background, opinions on desegregation measures, and their assessment of levels of disorder and violence in the school. The latter questions focused on student delinquency and included one question asking if there is "a problem of tension between racial or ethnic groups" (663). Superintendents were asked to describe district faculty and staff, teacher assignment policy, student assignment policy, district expenditures, and their personal information and opinions on desegregation measures.

This data, while detailed, suffered from similar deficiencies to the research conducted in cities. Absent independent investigation into administrative practices, researchers had little insight into the manner in which teachers and students were assigned to schools. The Coleman Report produced unprecedented racial data documenting widespread racial imbalance among students and teachers, but the factors contributing to this pattern of segregation remained unknown. Features of the instructional program, such as the supervision of teachers, prescribed instructional methods, or policies for dealing with low performing students, were not addressed, with the exception of a short list of questions about ability grouping into separate curricular tracks. One question addressed racial tensions, but school administrators might be unlikely to appreciate and honestly report racial problems in their school. While the questionnaires provided details on some specific school resources, overall school funding levels were only reported at the district level, preventing researchers from comparing the allocation of funds across segregated black and white schools within a single district.

The teacher questionnaire offered a more interesting opportunity to probe into school operations and effectiveness, but the survey devoted most of its focus to the qualifications and personal background of teachers. Teachers were asked to describe their family

background and upbringing, various aspects of their educational background and the college they attended, and their years of experience, professional affiliations, and ongoing training. They also described the type of courses and students they teach, and they were asked to take a standardized test evaluating their “verbal facility.” The questionnaire’s clear priority was to measure personal traits that might reflect over teaching ability, but it also included a small set of opinion questions about school conditions and teacher-student relations. Teachers were asked six questions about the kind of school they would prefer to teach in if given the choice. Another question asked respondents to identify issues they face in their school from a list of school problems. The long list primarily included issues regarding the attributes or behaviors of students and parents, but some of these yes-or-no questions asked teachers if they had problems with the school itself. These potential problems included discord among teachers, a lack of teacher influence in instructional decisions, high faculty and staff turnover, large class sizes, and “a lack of effective leadership from school administration” (681).

Based on Coleman’s analysis, the latter attitudinal and opinion questions did not reveal any impact on student achievement, with the exception of the slight negative effect of teachers’ preference to teach middle-class students. The overall data on teacher characteristics did reveal a significant impact on student learning, particularly for black students, though this effect, according to Coleman, was weaker than the impact of student socio-economic and attitudinal characteristics, and it even ranked below the effect of the socio-economic profile of peers with whom a student attends schools (316-319). This relationship between teachers and student achievement was largely attributed to teachers’ family and educational background and their performance on verbal ability tests.

Relative to the extensive and detailed data gathered on teacher and student background, the few survey questions asking teachers about their attitudes and impressions of their school were broad and arguably unlikely to capture relevant school differences. Teachers’ assessments of school quality, for instance, were reduced to yes-or-no responses to vague questions about difficult-to-define school problems. Teachers in historically deprived schools might have very different standards for assessing “effective leadership” or high faculty turnover relative to teachers working in a more affluent community. If, however, the survey took as much interest in teachers’ views as it did in teacher background, it might have included a list of more concrete questions enabling comparison across schools. The survey questions about teachers’ preference to teach more advantaged students did reveal a small relationship to student learning in Coleman’s analysis, and more recent research suggests that this relationship may have been understated by Coleman’s analysis. A contemporary reanalysis of the EEO data using Hierarchical Linear Modeling found school characteristics to have a much stronger relationship to student achievement, between and within schools. Geoffrey Borman and Maritza Dowling specifically found that, within a given school, teachers’ preference for teaching middle class students and the school’s emphasis on ability grouping into different curricular tracks were each associated with wider achievement disparities between different racial or social class groups in the school (Borman and Dowling 2010).

The EEO study’s teacher and principal surveys, much like the data collected by urban race and education study commissions, thus reflected a preoccupation with the material and human resources available in each school and with on-paper curricular offerings and district policies. These surveys could have documented the degree to which

clerical staff were overburdened, the degree and kind of instructor supervision and support, the way teachers handle diverse classrooms, or teacher attitudes about students from different racial and class groups. These topics received little or no attention. Furthermore, the report did not raise concerns about the reliability of reported data or the possibility that actual administrative and instructional practices might diverge from the policies and curricula on record. Such concerns would merit site-based investigations of school administration and operations to complement national survey data. Although the Office of Education commissioned some qualitative, site-based research alongside the national survey, Coleman's 700 page report devoted little space to discussing this other research, and aside from a brief disclaimer early on (37), it did not suggest that additional research using different methods might help confirm or revise the study's findings.

Even more extensive than the teacher and administrator surveys were the personal survey questions and achievement tests administered to students. The fine-grained depiction of students' home life and personal attitudes reflected the researchers' decision to control the effects of student social class and environment in order to distill the effects of race and school inequity. The Coleman Report, like the more informal urban studies that preceded it, viewed class disadvantage and racial inequity as two dichotomous factors contributing to racial achievement disparities, and it collected meticulous student survey data to carefully distinguish any potential out-of-school factors before identifying the effect of unequal schooling.

From this perspective, the existing relationship between student attributes and student achievement represented the normal variation one should expect if all schools were created equal. Markers of low socio-economic status, thus, indicated the disadvantages of one's upbringing and social environment rather than any prejudice or neglect by educators. Attitudinal measures of a student's sense of control over his own fate showed a substantial effect on student test scores, and Coleman speculated that these and other attitudes were instilled through the student's social environment outside the classroom, rather than being a product of one's experience in school (Coleman, et. al. 1966: 324). In short, the Coleman Report posited that student attributes have a direct influence on learning outcomes and the vast gap between achievement levels across racial groups was, therefore, attributable to non-school factors. If, however, the low rate of academic progress among lower class and racially marginalized youth reflected trends in poor quality instruction or poorly managed schools serving these populations, such relationships would have been difficult for the EEO study to detect. Detailed data describing students' lives and a lack of information about what happens inside schools and school bureaucracies all but guaranteed that any such systematic variance in the quality of schools serving different groups would show up in this analysis as the effects of student disadvantage. As Charles Payne once concluded in his commentary on the Coleman Report, "the argument that educational inequalities must be understood in terms of the cultural inadequacies of the children comes from studies of students, not studies of the educational process" (Payne 1984: 19).

The EEO study's overall approach also reflected an implicit theory of how racial inequity operates in schools—a theory that paralleled the theoretical assumptions characterizing local commissioned studies on race and urban education. The study attempted to find evidence of racial inequities in the form of uniform and consistent school deficiencies associated with a high percentage of black students in attendance. Coleman was

surprised to find a lack of discernible differences between black and white schools, and he used this evidence to call into question accusations of racial educational inequity.

This premise, however, relied on an oversimplification of the complex and multifaceted problem of school segregation. To compare school resources across racial groups, the Coleman Report juxtaposed urban schools serving black students with rural white schools, concluding that these schools were similarly well-equipped and, thus, offered a similar quality of education. Without exploring the specific educational challenges associated with different contexts of school segregation, this research asked whether patterns of racial imbalance manifest in a consistent pattern of unequal schooling. However, in the event that the problematic conditions affecting segregated black and brown schools vary depending on the regional context and social and political history of the particular community, one might not expect aggregate data on predominantly black schools to reveal these school problems. To diagnose the deficiencies of segregated schools, this research might have probed the distinct challenges and burdens facing, for instance, black schools in the rural South, with exclusively black teachers and principals, relative to black schools in the urban North, where white educators and administrators sometimes clashed with black staff and families. Beyond comparing the degree to which specific variables effect black students in these different regions, an alternative approach would develop separate models with distinct variables and specific caveats reflecting the distinct realities of segregation and school governance in the South relative to other regions. Even within a single school district, the circumstances of race and segregation sometimes varied greatly across communities, complicating analyses that lump together all predominantly black schools.

The Coleman Report reflected the precedent established by local urban study commissions, but this national study was created under different circumstances that seemingly should have supported more incisive and critical research. It was designed to produce a formal scientific assessment, and the researchers were less vulnerable to political pressure from local school officials threatened by this new scrutiny. The EEO project benefited from a powerful political mandate, which it wielded to compel local participation in its research. If Coleman experienced political pressure, it would have come primarily from progressive officials in the Johnson Administration eager to indict local school districts and justify federal intervention in the name of racial reform. Once the research was complete, prominent state bureaucrats, experts, and activists were disappointed that the study was not more critical of America's public schools, and they contested the analytic framework adopted in the Coleman Report, questioning the validity of the study's conclusions and suggesting possible alternatives for analyzing racial educational inequity. On their own, these critiques largely lacked empirical foundation and would not compel Coleman and his allies to temper their conclusions, but the lasting influence of the EEO study and its analytic framework hinged on the inability of progressive reformers in the Johnson Administration to mount a competing research effort capable of substantiating these criticisms and shedding light on invisible inequities related to the schooling process.

Contesting the Coleman Report

For the present day audience, the evidence and assumptions informing the Coleman Report might appear familiar and warranted, but at the time the meaning of school segregation and the science of educational inequality were unsettled. For some prominent scholars and policymakers, Coleman's analysis was unconvincing and misguided. Coleman,

meanwhile, acknowledged that his analytic framework was arbitrary but, nonetheless, presented it as uncontroversial, insisting that no compelling evidence justifies accommodating a different theory or method. According to one internal memo, Coleman's research team at least considered, in the early stages of planning its study, alternative ways to define and operationalize the equality of educational opportunity. One option was to include "various intangible characteristics" of schools to help estimate the impact of relevant differences in school quality. The memo, however, abruptly dismissed this option, arguing that it gave "no suggestion of where to stop, or just how relevant these factors might be for school quality" (cited in Coleman 1968: 17). The Coleman Report benefited from an apparent lack of any competing approach or compelling challenges to the study's analytic framework, and it was able to make bold and provocative assertions on the premise that its framework was relatively comprehensive and uncontested. Many readers, however, brought very different expectations to the study of racial educational inequity and found the study's conclusions to be unpersuasive.

This pushback initially came from the public officials who commissioned the study and were responsible for promoting it. A top aide to President Lyndon Johnson and leaders in the Office of Education were unimpressed by early drafts of the report, and they clashed with EEO researchers and the head of the National Center for Education Statistics over the contents of the EEO study's executive summary, which would preview the study's findings before the complete volume was published (Grant 1973). The Office's first draft of the executive summary was criticized by department researchers as misrepresenting the report and effectively ignoring its most central and provocative conclusions. Officials viewed the study's findings as politically inconvenient for the Johnson Administration's education agenda—which included the recently passed Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its dramatic increase in federal funding for disadvantaged schools. They were also skeptical that the available evidence justified Coleman's bold conclusions. Led by Assistant Commissioner for Equal Educational Opportunity David Seeley, these critics argued that such superficial data reported by defensive school administrators provided a weak empirical basis to outright deny any role of segregated school districts in contributing to the dismal academic outcomes of so many black students. Although schools appeared to have little impact on overall patterns of educational inequality, these reformers were unwilling to concede that basic school improvements and broader school desegregation interventions could not profoundly counteract this pattern (Grant 1973: 23-28).

Jeannette Hopkins was hired by the Office of Education to write the first version of the executive summary, which deliberately buried the report's main conclusions and angered Coleman and his allies. She elaborated her criticisms of the Coleman Report in an unpublished review essay (Hopkins 1966). Among Hopkins' criticisms, she argued that teacher and principal attitudes "cannot be measured adequately in a quantitative survey," and she drew on unpublished materials from local case studies initially conducted for the EEO project to analyze interview data reflecting these attitudes (45A). Hopkins highlighted examples of defeatist attitudes and biased treatment to suggest that black students faced ineffective and even antagonistic instructors, and she argued that, despite growing investment in school facilities, black schools remained inferior and in need of substantial improvements (97).

Hopkins worked with Kenneth Clark as the editor for his famous 1965 book *Dark Ghetto* and his co-author on another book about the War on Poverty. Her rebuttal to the

Coleman Report echoed Clark's stance on racial educational inequity, which was rooted in the 1964 report on race and educational inequality in New York City produced by Clark's community service organization, Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. (HARYOU). The HARYOU study marks a clear contrast with the analytic framework used in official studies commissioned by local school boards and the U.S. Office of Education. It evaluated educational inequity in New York City's public schools by estimating students' rate of academic progress in each school based on differences in achievement scores between each grade level. The study identified a relative lack of academic progress in schools serving the segregated black Harlem community, and it investigated the distinguishing characteristics of these apparently ineffective schools rather than asking whether the characteristics of the students distinguish them from students in higher performing schools. Intensive interviews with teachers and principals revealed contemptuous and condescending attitudes toward local students and parents, and data on the specific socio-economic disadvantages facing different census tracts in Harlem revealed that academic failure was a common problem similarly affecting students facing distinct socio-economic circumstances (HARYOU 1964). HARYOU's analytic approach included interviews and field research rather than an exclusive focus on resources and curricula, investigating ineffective schools rather than analyzing the effects of student class and race, and theorizing racial inequity as flexible forms of interpersonal and institutional racism, rather than theorizing inequity as specific educational disadvantages associated with racial imbalance.

Table 4.1. Two Contrasting Frameworks for Analyzing Educational Inequity

	Data Describing Schools	Factors Explaining Achievement Disparities	Theorized Mechanism Driving Racial Inequity
<i>Equality of Educational Opportunity</i> (Coleman, et. al. 1966)	School resources, courses reported by school administrators	Student class background and social environment versus Race and associated school characteristics	Deficiencies of predominantly black schools
<i>Youth in the Ghetto</i> (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. 1964)	Administrative data; In-depth interviews and field research	Effective schools versus Ineffective schools	Systemic racism (bias, lack of accountability, institutionalized discrimination)

The HARYOU report illustrates the contrast between research conducted by a community-based service organization, rooted in realities and experiences in the ghetto, and the official studies emerging around the country during the mid-1960s. By the time the Coleman Report was published in August 1966, urban movements for racial educational justice were beginning to reject school integration and more forcefully articulate their concerns regarding racist and mismanaged schools run by white school bureaucrats and principals. Several prominent movement leaders, including new director of the Congress of Racial Inequality (CORE) Floyd McKissick, condemned the Coleman Report for suggesting that black students were incapable of learning without the positive influence of middle-class white peers (Burkholder 2017). McKissick's appointment as the leader of CORE marked the prominent civil rights organization's shift toward a politics of black empowerment, and he

expressed this political philosophy in a letter to the editor of the *New Republic* magazine titled “Is Integration Necessary?”.

McKissick’s letter, written in response to an article summarizing and endorsing the Coleman Report, challenged the theoretical approach to racism and educational inequity embodied in the large-scale research project. Addressing the attitudinal variables that Coleman found to be strong predictors of both race and low academic achievement, McKissick argued that self-defeating attitudes among black youth only confirmed what black community groups had been saying all along—that racist schools and public institutions discourage black students and disempower black parents (McKissick 1966). Coleman, drawing on sociological approaches in both race and education research, viewed attitudinal variables measuring students’ “self-concept” and “sense of control over one’s own fate” as attributes of the individual. He argued that such attitudes were likely instilled through a students’ family upbringing and other out-of-school variables, and where black students exhibited shared attitudes, he attributed them to persisting deficiencies in black culture rather than the immediate realities of black life (Coleman 1966a: 75; Coleman, et. al. 1966: 321-324). McKissick, in contrast, viewed these variables and Coleman’s survey research, in general, through the prism of his theory of racist oppression. Citing Coleman’s finding that less qualified teachers or a student’s poor self-concept mattered more if the student was black, he argued that these factors affected black students because they were symptomatic of and exacerbated by political and economic powerlessness and the pervasive ideology of black intellectual inferiority. McKissick called for the empowerment of black parents and professionals in schools governed by local communities (McKissick 1966).

Political Constraints in the Making of the Coleman Report

The Coleman Report, like any study, faced the inherent limitations of its methodological choices and theoretical assumptions, but in the beginning, the EEO project presented an open-ended and seemingly limitless opportunity to probe understudied questions about educational inequality. Section 402 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act mandated that the U.S. Office of Education conduct a study “concerning the lack of availability of equal educational opportunities for individuals by reason of race, color, religion or national origin...”. The mandate came with no specific guidelines and no resource limitations with the exception of a strict due date—the study was to be completed within two years of the passage of the July Act. The small Office of Education, which traditionally served a limited role in the nation’s decentralized education system, was, thus, empowered to conduct a large-scale, high-profile national research project on the most controversial topic in public education. It set out to collect sensitive data on race and student test scores, confronting head on concerns regarding federal government intrusion against the local control of schools. With its open-ended Congressional mandate, the EEO study secured responses from about 70% of schools in its sample, including over 3,000 schools and 600,000 students nationwide (Lucas 2016). The political impetus of the Civil Rights Act made this groundbreaking research possible, and the roots of subsequent social science research in education are largely traceable back to political circumstances during this pivotal historical moment.

On the surface, the Coleman Report was relatively impervious to political influence. It is still regarded as a classic case of objective social science research influencing the policymaking process. Before the specific implications of this dense statistical report gained

traction in policy debate, government officials avoided publicizing its controversial findings precisely because it did not concede to the priorities of its state sponsors. The report relied on a small group of scholars who challenged the policy community to confront its heterodox conclusions (Jencks 1969; Moynihan 1968; Nichols 1966). The political circumstances that occasioned the EEO project were, nonetheless, crucial to shaping the theory and methods employed in this research. Political constraints imposed by the politics of federal policymaking and by the politics of knowledge in city school districts combined to shape the process of producing new knowledge about educational inequality. These political forces shaped the circulation of ideas and evidence and prevented local controversies from gaining traction in official debate and problematizing the Coleman Report's evidence and conclusions. After reviewing these political constraints, the following section will examine two additional federal government research initiatives conducted around the same time as the Coleman Report, asking how similar constraints undermined these parallel attempts to expose racial inequities in the quality of public schooling.

Constraints from Above: Limited Time and a Detached Perspective on Local Issues

During the mid-1960s, growing racial unrest in cities and persisting school segregation across the country made school desegregation an urgent issue for federal government policymakers. The problem did not, however, invite any clear solution, and even among supporters of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in Congress, the nature of *de facto* segregation and the appropriate approach to urban school reform in the North were unsettled issues provoking polarizing disagreements. The Equality of Educational Opportunity study provided an opportunity to shed light on these murky issues and help guide the national agenda. To do so, this research had to command the legitimacy of neutral, scientific research, and it had to be completed fast, given the political pressure on the federal government to confront persisting school segregation. The Coleman Report was produced under these pressures of federal government policymaking, and it reflected the limitations of strict time constraints and political standards of neutrality.

The first constraint on federal government research was the political imperative to maintain the semblance of neutrality, which, in the case of this racially polarizing issue, required that the Office of Education avoid collaborating with anyone directly engaged in civil rights advocacy. In the South in particular, any association between federal bureaucrats and local black activists would scandalize local school officials and anger regional HEW staff. During the mid-1960s, the Office's Division on Equal Educational Opportunity struggled to develop and implement its desegregation agenda while maintaining distance from local activists because, without insider information, agency staff lacked insight into local administrative tactics and specific conditions on the ground (Radin 1977). This externally imposed standard of neutrality on controversial racial issues was especially important for the Office of Education's EEO project, which promised to provide objective scientific evidence to persuade skeptical moderates in Congress of the value of school desegregation reform. The Coleman Report was a product of both scientific standards for objective research and this political standard for neutrality on racial issues, which narrowed the range of possible experts that could lead the project without inviting charges of bias.

James Coleman, a white sociologist with no history of studying racial issues, satisfied this criterion. While James Coleman's qualifications for his role as director of the EEO project included his specialization in the sociology of education and his methodological

training in survey analysis (Grant 1973), his background did not include experience studying race or inequities in public schooling. Unlike many of the race and education experts consulted by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights or invited to the White House's civil rights conference, the director of the EEO project was a scholar with limited existing familiarity or personal ties to the specific controversies he was asked to resolve. The person in charge of this crucial research effort was necessarily someone who would be approaching it from a generally blank slate, wading into this understudied set of questions without guidance or experience to help navigate it.

The challenge of developing a compelling theoretical framework and methodological approach without existing literature or personal experience was compounded by a lack of time. Coleman's research team operated under strict time constraints dictated by the Civil Rights Act. Policymakers generally face time pressures impeding engagement with research that is still in progress or outside the scope of official or trusted sources (Stone 2002: 290). The Equality of Educational Opportunity study was established to produce new knowledge that would be reliable and available in a timely manner, and the researchers were, thus, expected to conform to a political timeline without regard for the scope and originality of the research they requested. By the time the Office of Education formulated its ultimate plan for the EEO project and hired Coleman, the study team had about a year and a half before Congress' imposed deadline. The Office decided to administer the survey in the fall of 1965 and, after requesting a short extension, Coleman completed and submitted the final report in August of 1966. Not only did this short process involve running complex statistical analyses with mountains of data and the assistance of the Education Testing Service in New Jersey, but it also required a number of complex decisions about which data to collect and how to analyze it, including decisions about how to utilize field research on local cases of racially segregated school districts.

The time constraint specifically limited the extent to which Coleman could engage beyond official sources, adapt the study design, or reconsider the analysis of available evidence. During the months before the survey was administered, Coleman's primary research team consulted with local school officials regarding its survey plans, and Coleman worked closely with a separate team of local investigators studying race and education controversies in a small group of metropolitan school districts. These local case studies offered Coleman some insight into the complexities of the *de facto* segregation issue and the concerns of local protesters in cities outside the South. Nonetheless, already constrained by his lack of familiarity with these issues and limited amount of time, Coleman's review of local research was impeded by constraints from below, restricting his ability to see past the official analysis of racial educational inequity provided by local study commissions and other official sources.

Constraints from Below: Local Resistance and the Limits of Existing Research

Early on in the EEO report, Coleman acknowledged the potential limitations of his quantitative survey data for capturing the range of relevant school characteristics, and he pointed the reader to a short chapter based on eight local case studies that reveal "aspects of segregation problems and community response that a statistical study could hardly match" (Coleman, et. al. 1966: 37). Before the Office of Education hired Coleman to lead a national statistical survey project, the Division for Equal Educational Opportunity contracted a team of law professors who were dispatched to conduct these local investigations in Northern and

Western metropolitan school districts. According to Law Professor John E. Coons, he and the other five investigators contracted to conduct these case studies worked long hours alongside James Coleman during the summer of 1965, before Coleman's national survey was administered, pouring over drafts and producing final reports that would ultimately go unpublished. These case studies offered the potential to raise pressing questions about school quality and inequality that might problematize Coleman's formulation, but this opportunity was apparently missed.

Published fragments and unpublished drafts reveal that local case studies focused on official policy and legal disputes while skimming over underlying controversies about crisis conditions and racist personnel in local schools (Hill and Feeley 1968; Coons 1965b). The chapter in the Coleman Report that drew on these eight case studies echoed the same questions and claims articulated in urban study commissions. Its discussion of the "performance of minority group children" insisted that the connection between quality education and racial disparities in student outcomes is "problematical," and that black students face "more than a color problem" (Coleman, et. al. 1966: 463-467). Although Coleman highlights local resistance to data collection and the inadequacy of existing analytical tools to account for achievement disparities, his argument implies that a more scientific analysis would simply require a more systematic collection and analysis of the same kind of data—namely, indicators of school resources and student attributes.

If these preliminary studies of race and education did not disturb the narrow framing of the issue imposed by local school board-commissioned studies, this was not because of a lack of effort. John E. Coons, the Northwestern University law professor recruited to conduct the investigation of Chicago's schools, developed an ambitious plan to produce an original analysis of test score data based on field research and teacher surveys in a sample of 50 schools. The scope of his research aims surpassed the efforts of Robert Havighurst's research team a year prior, but, in practice, Coons accomplished much less than his predecessor. His goal was to collect data during April and May of 1965, yet these months were largely squandered while Superintendent Benjamin Willis repeatedly stalled and interrupted Coons' requests for assistance (Coons 1965a; Coons 1965b; Cuban 1976). The end result of this research was "spottier and thinner" than Coons had hoped because his "plans for a more detailed examination of individual schools were frustrated by the refusal of the General Superintendent to cooperate" (Coons 1965b: II-12).

In June, Coons submitted a lengthy draft to James Coleman that described official disputes and existing research findings from the previous four years of Chicago's race and education conflict. Because of the limitations of his own research, Coons explicitly relied on the research and counsel of Robert Havighurst, and his analysis reproduced the basic framework employed by the Havighurst study and other local reports. He recounted legal clashes, official statements, and special board meetings, all of which primarily addressed the question of racial imbalance, before delving into the controversy of unequal schooling based on existing and new research. On the topic of teacher quality, he provided some new data allowing him to comment briefly on issues like teacher absences, teacher turnover, and the implementation of curriculum guides—problems that escaped the evidence and analysis of Chicago's official advisory reports. Coons, however, gave these details limited consideration in his broader analysis, noting his lack of evidence beyond anecdotal conversations and an informal Chicago Teacher Union survey. Unable to administer his own questionnaires, Coons relied on Havighurst's teacher questionnaire and, ultimately, echoed Havighurst's

analysis of test score disparities. While acknowledging “the importance of teacher-student relations in slum schools,” Coons’ case study acknowledges the limits of his own data and stresses the apparent correlation of achievement with student socio-economic status (Coons 1965b: II-33). The report initially resists exculpating schools for the dismal learning outcome of black students, but it, ultimately, cites Havighurst’s observations about the success of middle class black communities to insist that “the problem is not simply a racial problem” and to defer to a class-based analysis (II-20).

Coons’ report to Coleman, therefore, reproduced existing research and legitimized Havighurst’s less critical analysis. At times, the study reveals Coons’ personal skepticism toward the sufficiency of existing data, the class-based explanation of failing low-income schools, and the singular focus on racial imbalance, yet its overarching analysis and conclusions fall back on this analytic framework and the arguments made in Chicago’s two earlier commissioned studies. Coons’ report suggests that Coleman’s brief engagement with local case studies was impeded by political constraints on the kinds of evidence and arguments these case studies could muster. During this short period of time, the most ambitious investigators attempted to survey the range of disputes surrounding race and urban education and gain access to schools and school files from school districts mired in legal disputes and public controversy. Much of Coons’ data collection effort faced delays and obstruction, but even where he and other local investigators were able to secure personal interviews with teachers or permission to enter local schools, these legal experts were not well prepared to tackle technical controversies about the quality of instruction and school administration. Even Coons, who was familiar with Chicago’s race and education debate, remembers feeling unqualified to express his judgments based on site visits to individual schools, and his report repeatedly deferred to the expertise of professor of education Robert Havighurst.

Local resistance to outside scrutiny among urban school districts combined with the influence of existing research commissioned by local school boards to restrict the range of ideas and evidence that were accessible to Coleman’s investigators. These local constraints, alongside Coleman Report’s detached vantage point and strict time limit, help explain how the apparently comprehensive EEO project, overseen by the reform-minded Office of Education, failed to engage with local activists concerns and problematize the analytic framework articulated in official urban race and education reports. From Coleman’s perspective, the technical controversies surrounding the methodological choices of local study commissions were not readily apparent, and the case studies produced by his local investigators did not provide much evidence to lend credence to activists’ accusations of ineffective schools.

In Coleman’s short chapter on these case studies, he commented on the limits of existing research, gesturing toward the value of his new study in resolving ongoing controversies about race and urban education. Existing reporting, according to the Coleman Report, lacked test score data and rigorous methods for analyzing the relationship between students, schools, and academic achievement (Coleman, et. al. 1966: 461-467). Coleman did not question the empirical and theoretical questions posed by existing research or highlight black community concerns regarding the quality of education or discriminatory policy and practice by school officials. Instead, the Coleman Report narrowly framed local controversies and uncritically adopted the analytic framework employed by urban study commissions. Constraints from above and below limited the capacity of this monumental

research effort to penetrate the official discourse of urban school districts and directly engage with the controversies animating political protest on the ground. Preliminary research struggled to produce new evidence of educational factors or relationships overlooked by existing official studies. On two other occasions, the federal government would mobilize its political and material resources to attempt a more critical analysis of racial educational inequity, but political constraints and pressures, ultimately, prevented any alternative framework from penetrating official debate and gaining expert legitimacy during this pivotal historical moment.

Federal Government Expertise Concedes to Coleman's Framework

Officials in the Johnson Administration had two clear opportunities to challenge the Coleman Report's analysis and produce compelling evidence of racial educational inequities beyond the mere existence of racially imbalanced schools. Much like the Coleman Report, however, research efforts relied on existing data and resorted to the analytic framework already available in official research. In 1965, top officials in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) attempted to take legal action against *de facto* school segregation outside the South and initiate a thorough investigation of Chicago's schools, but they struggled to produce initial evidence of educational inequity that would establish probable cause and justify punitive action. These officials failed to anticipate the counter-arguments that local school officials and their allies would make—arguments that were derived from Chicago's two race and education study commissions—and they were forced to abandon their plans for further investigation. In early 1967, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published its major national study on *de facto* school segregation. The study was led by a group of progressive Commission staff and expert consultants who were committed to advancing sweeping reforms in segregated urban school districts. The Commission's study, nonetheless, relied on the survey data recently collected for the EEO project, importing Coleman's analytic framework and settling on a similar rationale for school integration. Despite the intellectual views and political interests of official and experts in the Johnson Administration, state-sponsored investigations regurgitated existing data and bypassed local controversies surrounding existing research. The Coleman Report, thus, escaped immediate challenge from other federal government-sponsored research.

HEW's Thwarted Chicago Investigation

The Civil Rights Act initiated a range of government investigation and enforcement efforts to address racial discrimination. Title IV of the Act, addressed public education and was relatively weak, reflecting the sensitivity of the school integration issue for Congressional representatives from the North as well as the South. It created federal government funding to support local school desegregation efforts and it commissioned the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* research project. More important for the short-term fight against school desegregation, however, was Title VI. The statute gave federal agencies the power to withhold funding from local government agencies suspected of administering racially discriminatory programs. Payments would be deferred pending an investigation and agreed upon terms for redressing any proven inequities. In the South, where school desegregation lawsuits were stalled in federal district courts, HEW and its Office of Education were able to compel local compliance with its new desegregation guidelines by

threatening to withhold funding from intransigent school districts (Halpern 1995; Orfield 1969; Radin 1977).

In 1965, HEW's effort to enforce school desegregation using Title VI turned Northward and confronted the underlying controversies animating urban race and education struggles involving *de facto* segregation. Even in the South, school officials nominally ended segregation to conform with the *Brown v. Board* ruling on paper, and judges and government officials faced the same problem of *de facto* segregation as they attempted to define, diagnose, and remedy the unofficial pattern of segregated schooling in Southern school districts. The Northern problem had become the national problem, and HEW officials felt pressure to pursue their school desegregation enforcement effort beyond the Southern states (Orfield 1969: 170-172). The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in the summer of 1965 dramatically increased the amount of federal funding allotted to urban school districts, and HEW sought to use this new leverage to force local compliance with its investigations and policy demands by withholding these funds on the basis of "probable noncompliance" with the Civil Rights Act's anti-discrimination clause. HEW's Title VI enforcement effort in the urban North began and ended with its failed attempt to withhold funds from Chicago's public schools, and the backlash against this confrontation with Chicago illustrates the way that the local politics of knowledge constrained national efforts to define, study, and expose racial inequities in public education.

HEW officials decided to target Chicago for its Northern desegregation enforcement effort because the school district was notorious for resisting racial reforms and because of the relative wealth of available research on Chicago's race and education controversy. Any urban school district that could demonstrate well-meaning efforts to address racial segregation would be difficult to target using Title VI, and HEW received compelling complaints of civil rights violations from city's where intransigent school superintendents sparked ongoing protest and political stalemate. During the summer of 1965, the Division of Equal Educational Opportunity focused on civil rights complaints from activists in four such cities—Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and Chester, Pennsylvania. The Chicago complaint, submitted by the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO), impressed David Seeley, who ran the Equal Educational Opportunity Division. He described it as "the most detailed" with the most "explicit claims" and "specific examples" (cited in Orfield 1969: 173). The complaint held that Chicago's school system was "by its own statistics, segregated and discriminatory on a racial basis, and that the education offered Chicago's Negro children is not only separate from, but inferior in quality to that offered white children" (Raby 1965: 1). It detailed unequal conditions across racially separate schools, and it argued that the school system's actions demonstrated its silent support and ongoing contribution to these disparities. According to the CCCC, these discriminatory actions included the neglect of overburdened black schools, lobbying against the state anti-segregation law, and the district's inflexible commitment to the neighborhood school policy (Raby 1965).

For leaders in HEW and its Office of Education, the CCCC's complaint was well substantiated and compelling, but indirect assertions about the bad intentions of the local school district would provide a woefully inadequate justification for sanctioning Chicago's schools. As political scientist Gary Orfield recounted in his 1969 study of federal desegregation enforcement efforts, the miscalculations of key officials regarding the strength

of its case against Chicago led to a dramatic political backlash that undermined the Johnson Administration's ability to enforce school desegregation (Orfield 1969). To justify withholding funds from Chicago's schools, HEW needed to demonstrate "probable non-compliance" with the Title VI anti-discrimination statute, and this required some initial evidence suggesting that school administrators discriminated against black students or teachers in assigning them to schools or in the allocation of resources and administration of the overall educational program. While the CCCO could marshal official data demonstrating racial disparities and imbalance across schools, and although it could demonstrate a lack of interest among district policymakers in addressing these disparities, proving discriminatory intent in fostering these disparities or systemic racial bias presented a unique challenge. The CCCO's letter to HEW drew heavily on the Hauser Report, a board-commissioned study that explicitly rejected any inference of racial discrimination or neglect causing existing inequalities. David Seeley warned HEW leadership of the "practical difficulties involved in an assumption that unequal facilities and programs or simply *de facto* segregation violated Title VI," yet federal officials concluded that the CCCO's evidence was compelling and warranted punitive action pending more thorough research (180).

HEW's embrace of the CCCO complaint as justification for its bold action against Chicago's schools indicates its lack of familiarity with the complex and polarizing controversies surrounding race and education issues on the ground. When the case against Chicago faced public scrutiny and pushback, officials were not prepared to respond to official explanations for persisting racial disparities. The CCCO's complaint levied severe charges against the schools, blaming the schools for maintaining segregation and arguing that the arrival of black students in a school consistently resulted in a "lower standard of education" in the school (Raby 1965: 7). The implications were clear, yet the CCCO's "raw data"—largely taken directly from the Hauser Report—were merely suggestive, offering no new evidence to counteract the official analysis of educational inequality. The civil rights complaint did not explicitly counter the class-based analysis of achievement disparities or identify specific administrative practices to blame for the pattern of less qualified teachers and high overcrowding in black schools. Underlying disputes about how to analyze educational equity in Chicago did not penetrate the official discourse surrounding the Title VI enforcement effort, HEW officials jumped to withhold funds with a clear strategy for arguing its case and pursuing further evidence.

Local controversies about the causes of documented disparities surfaced momentarily during Congressional hearings on *de facto* school segregation during the summer of 1965. A two day hearing on Chicago's schools included a presentation from the CCCO that added to its existing complaint specific examples of racially gerrymandered schools, but, once again, it provided evidence already familiar since the publication of the Hauser Report without any explicit argument to counter competing interpretations. The more technical controversies about how to analyze this information were briefly discussed during the CCCO's 15 minute rebuttal to the Superintendent's testimony. The activist group rejected the assertion that low-income and Southern migrant youth were "unable to profit from adequate education," arguing that degree to which black students underperformed on achievement tests indicated the inadequacy of schooling in black neighborhoods (Committee on Education and Labor 1965: 214). Willis claimed that his administration was committed to "keep up standards" in the "fringe areas" where formerly white schools witnessed an increase in black enrollment, but CCCO leaders argued that the

superintendent's actual policies contradicted his statements. Before their time expired, they provided one high-profile example of a school at the edge of the ghetto abandoned to overcrowding while underutilized nearby white schools were spared by rigid attendance boundaries and a strict transfer policy (215).

This brief exchange exhibited some of the complex controversies surrounding the issue of racial educational inequity in Chicago, but the broader hearing focused primarily on official data and less controversial claims about racial imbalance and the failure of public officials in addressing documented racial inequality. Even Junerous Cook, the Chicago Urban League researcher who drafted a scathing critique of the Havighurst Report, delivered a Congressional testimony that bypassed arguments about the need for more data, the inadequacy of class-based explanations, and the mismanagement of fringe area schools. Instead, she focused on the prevailing legal and social scientific arguments against racial imbalance, and she elevated Havighurst's critique of Willis' policies (Committee on Education and Labor 1965: 121-127). Philip Hauser delivered his own statement affirming, in contrast to the Hauser Panel's report a year earlier, activists' accusations of substandard schooling in Chicago's black communities, but his newfound critical stance did not come with new data or a commentary on existing research. Hauser, like representatives from the CCCO, the Urban League, and the Chicago branch of the NAACP, framed the *de facto* segregation for Congress primarily in terms of racial imbalance, and offered few new insights to help problematize prevailing justifications for racial educational disparities.

Given these parameters of official debate, HEW officials' emphasis on existing evidence and arguments was misguided. The civil rights complaint, the case study drafted for the EEO study, and the various testimony presented to Congress amounted to a long list of well documented disparities that provided little insight into role of racial discrimination or ineffective schooling in driving these inequalities. Department investigators reviewed available research to substantiate the agency's case for sanctioning Chicago, but their research was too broad and open-ended to deliver any useful results within a reasonable timespan (Orfield 1969: 197). Without expert guidance or a clear evidentiary standard, HEW's leadership failed to appreciate the limitations of existing evidence. When they finally decided to withhold federal funds in September, HEW's bold claims about suspected discrimination in Chicago's schools quickly evaporated into a cloud of confusion surrounding the specific nature of the school district's alleged crimes (Evans and Novak 1965; Orfield 1969: 189-191).

After HEW announced its decision to withhold funding, Chicago's powerful Democratic mayor successfully lobbied the President to intervene on the city's behalf. Orfield argues that a more effective school desegregation enforcement effort would have required more patience and political savvy in choosing the initial school districts targeted for Title VI sanction (Orfield 1969). Any such strategy would have also required a more careful and well-researched plan for justifying the initial deferral of funds and then pursuing a thorough investigation of the local district, compelling local cooperation as a condition for restoring federal funding. In contrast, the decision to sanction Chicago before federal funding was disbursed for the 1965-1966 school year was motivated, in part, by an incorrect assessment of existing evidence. HEW and Office of Education leadership were convinced that Chicago's schools were racially discriminatory, and they viewed the scope and nature of racial disparities as both inherently problematic and indicative of discrimination. Because federal officials failed to appreciate the complex controversies that complicated existing

evidence, they did not prepare a strong case to support their claim of probable noncompliance, and the political backlash undermined future efforts to intervene against *de facto* segregation.

In December of 1965, David Seeley explained to group of black educators that the Title VI enforcement effort hinged on one question—“is it racial inequality or slum inequality?” (Herbers 1965). HEW lawyers continued to examine evidence of racial educational disparities to build its case that these inequalities were driven by racial factors and not simply a reflection of socio-economic differences across urban neighborhoods. The Johnson Administration, however, would not attempt to invoke Title VI to sanction another school district outside the South, and its subsequent investigations of Chicago’s schools were superficial, relying on local cooperation and consent rather than the legal authority to withhold federal funding.

The Civil Rights Commission Concedes to Coleman’s Framework

In November of 1965, after HEW retracted its attempt to withhold funding from Chicago’s schools, the president issued another call for a scientific research initiative to clarify the extent and causes of racial segregation and unequal opportunity in America’s public schools. Unlike the EEO study, the president’s Race and Education project was led by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR), a permanent commission that was first created by President Dwight Eisenhower to investigate racial disputes and advise the president on racial reform. The Commission was asked to investigate the problem of “racial isolation,” referring to concentrations of black students in schools, particularly where the deliberate segregation of black students was not legal. The president’s request suggested that this new research focus on *de facto* segregation outside the South, the thorny problem that continued to hamper the administration’s national school desegregation agenda, but beyond this suggestion, the parameters of the study were not clearly defined. This project overlapped with the ongoing EEO project, but in contrast to Coleman’s team, the USCCR featured a more experienced and progressive-minded staff and network of experts with a different relationship to the problem of school segregation.

Key figures overseeing this research were not initially content to focus on racial imbalance and set aside concerns of official discrimination and educational inequity. Both David Cohen, the young scholar selected to serve as the lead investigator and author of the study, and Thomas Pettigrew, the prominent expert on race relations serving as Chief Consultant to the Race and Education project and chair of the Commission’s new Advisory Committee on Race and Education, believed that schools serving black students were in need of basic improvements. Pettigrew found the Coleman Report’s assessment of the quality of education in black schools to be misleading and ahistorical, ignoring the long legacy of educational exclusion and under-resourced schools. As the Commission’s primary expert consultant, Pettigrew played a hands-on role in planning the study and reviewing the research, and he worked with the support of 14 Advisory Committee members who also offered advice and suggested revisions throughout the process. The Committee included Philip Hauser and James Coleman as well as more critical scholars and educators like Teachers College professor John Fischer and Kenneth Clark.

The lead author of the USCCR’s new study, David Cohen, had expressed his views about the inadequate education in segregated black schools in an earlier publication (Peck and Cohen 1964), and his previous experience working for the Civil Rights Commission

exposed him to the difficulties of producing clear evidence proving such racial educational inequity. Cohen led the education research for the USCCR's hearings on conditions in the black ghetto in Cleveland, Ohio. Cohen and his researchers were frustrated with their inability to demonstrate unequal treatment and deficient black schools, and they described the inadequacies of "such readily ascertainable factors as student teacher ratios, quality of the school plant, library resources, etc." that were made available to the research team by local administrators (Glickstein 1965). USCCR general counsel Howard Glickstein argued for a race and education study that went beyond the issue of racial imbalance and probed less readily identifiable educational problems like the quality of instruction and the disproportionate placement of black students in lower tracks. According to Glickstein, the vast majority of Americans did not believe that "a child cannot get a quality education in a racially imbalanced school," and he viewed an exclusive focus on racial imbalance as an ineffective strategy for promoting a federal school desegregation agenda (Glickstein 1965).

Despite Glickstein's case for a more ambitious study, the USCCR's study resorted to the kind of data and methods familiar and readily available to the investigators. The most important data source for this project was the EEO survey. The Commission began its project just as Coleman began analyzing the new data set, and it hired its own scholar to reanalyze the data for the USCCR's study. Similar to the Coleman Report, *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools* (1967) argued that the composition of students in a school was a key determinant of educational opportunity, and maximizing educational opportunity for all required more evenly distributing different groups of students across schools. The difference between the Commission's findings and Coleman's claims was that the Commission concluded that the *racial* composition of a student's peers, as well as the school's socio-economic profile, impacted student achievement. Rather than viewing racial integration as means to achieve socio-economic diversity, the USCCR report argued that racial diversity was inherently educationally beneficial because the psychological effects of "racial isolation" on black students undermines their educational progress. Any educational improvements or compensatory programs, the Commission argued, would be ineffective until the underlying problem of racial imbalance was resolved.

This analysis did not, however, accept Coleman's assertion that black and white schools were roughly equal, and it left room for the possibility that school improvements, under the right conditions, could have a profound impact on black student achievement. The *Racial Isolation* study argued, in particular, that EEO data was insufficient to discount the importance of upgrading the quality of instruction, but it agreed with Coleman that the composition students was the more critical factor affecting student achievement (United States Commission on Civil Rights 1967: 100). According to the commission, racial balancing was a necessary condition for achieving equal educational opportunity without which all other school improvements would not be effective. Even when citing the HARYOU study's analysis of ineffective schools in New York, the Commission reinterpreted the problem of teacher racial bias as a symptom of the broader stigmatization of segregated black schools in society, implying that racial integration would resolve teachers' racism and low expectations (105). The USCCR report outlined a school desegregation agenda that, nonetheless, included expansive plans for new types of schools and educational programs, combining racial mixing with dramatic improvements to urban schools, in particular. These costly proposals, however, lacked an educational justification. Racial integration was, according to the report's findings, essential for educational equity,

but costly investment in reconstructing urban schools, it argued, served the political purpose of making school desegregation proposals more attractive to the broader public (195-198).

Despite their more broad and complex understanding of racial educational inequity, the experts directing the USCCR's Race and Education study chose to make a more a narrow intellectual intervention, focusing on the problem of racial imbalance and its educational effects. Much like HEW officials seized existing local evidence of racial disparities in Chicago and failed to probe concerns about racial discrimination and the inadequacy of public schooling for black and brown students, the USCCR took advantage of the EEO's unprecedented national survey, combining its analysis of this data set with new research by sociologist Alan Wilson to demonstrate the educational effects of racial isolation. Even local activists in Chicago initially endorsed official research that obscured many of their underlying concerns. In 1965, the CCCO attempted to leverage the Hauser Report to both support local desegregation and substantiate its Title VI civil rights complaint, contributing to the confusion that undermined HEW's attempt to investigate Chicago. By 1967, however, CCCO leadership publicly rejected the city's new approach to school desegregation and, in a new complaint to HEW, carefully outlined accusations of educational racism that rendered the city's incremental racial mixing schemes inadequate if not counter-productive (CCCO 1967). During the late 1960s, while urban black activists across the country were shifting to a politics of black power and demanding community control of mismanaged schools, progressive reformers in Washington D.C. settled on a justification and strategy for desegregating schools that narrowly focused on racial percentages and the inherent benefits of student diversity.

Outside of the context of this federal government research project, prominent civil rights leaders and experts debated the strategic merits of focusing their school reform demands primarily on racial balancing (Roberts 1966). While Thomas Pettigrew feared that persisting school segregation would become entrenched and impossible to undo, Kenneth Clark articulated a different perspective. Unlike several other progressive educators and scholars, Clark was not actively involved in reviewing drafts of the of the *Racial Isolation* report, and although he was not publicly critical of its findings, his analysis and political stance diverged from the Commission's conclusions. In a paper presented to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's seminar on the Coleman Report, Clark largely ignored the EEO study and withheld any direct criticism of the USCCR report, yet the prominent professor made a radical proposal that contradicted the analysis in both studies. For Clark, the dismal state of public schooling in the ghetto left considerable room for improvement, and he argued that immediate educational upgrades in the ghetto would have to precede the racial integration of students because in the political and educational context of that period, integration was not politically feasible. White families would never accept integration into dysfunctional schools with low academic standards. Clark's paper proposed alternatives to local public schools, such as the establishment of federal government-run schools in segregated districts where district-run schools were failing black students (Clark 1968). His advocacy and community work in the late 1960s supported campaigns to decentralize New York's schools and restore accountability and good governance in what he viewed as a broken public institution.

The contents of the USCCR report did not reflect a fundamental intellectual disagreement with Clark as much as a difference in political strategy. While Clark did not publicly critique federal government research used to advocate for integration, he saw less

value in evidence that exclusively focused on the effects of racial imbalance. State officials and USCCR experts would have preferred to demonstrate clear evidence of racial educational inequities driving disparities in student achievement, but they faced limited available data, constraints on time and local research access, and ongoing uncertainty about the complexity of local controversies and the kind of research methods required to reveal underlying inequities. Because the success of local study commissions in circumscribing official debate on race and urban education, and because the unrivaled influence of the massive EEO data set amidst a relative lack of alternative data and research, Coleman's argument for racial mixing, and the analytic framework upon which it rested, would continue to preoccupy experts in education policy and social science research.

Conclusion

Once Coleman's team settled on their analytic approach and produced the final report, their survey data and analysis had profound and lasting consequences. The study shifted attention away from educational questions about effective instruction and school administration, and provided a scientifically authoritative argument for the inherent educational benefits of school integration. Not only did the Coleman Report substantiate the theory that the race and class composition of students in a school was a critical factor influencing student achievement, but it also showed how policymakers could manage the profile of students in a school to maximize educational opportunity for disadvantaged students without negatively affecting more advantaged students. Advocates of school integration seized this justification but perhaps did not appreciate the broader political significance of this new expertise. By endorsing this research and policy prescription, progressive reformers settled disputes about the means and ends of school desegregation reform, implicitly siding with urban school officials and against grassroots black activists. School bureaucrats and city elites had a stake in separating school desegregation from more routine questions of school policy and administration, focusing equity reform on shuffling around black students and preserving majority white and middle-class schools. While black activists hoped integration would end the neglect of black public schooling and equalize academic standards across all neighborhoods, the national school integration agenda increasingly downplayed the relevance of upgrading the quality of education in historically segregated schools, often treating school improvement plans as a sort of consolation remedy for black students forced to remain in racially homogenous schools. This political realignment, uniting national reformers and experts with local school authorities, was neither a conscious concession nor an historical accident. Instead, it was the outcome of political struggles over race and knowledge production that forged a new body of expertise that silently consolidated the marginalization of black voices in the post-civil rights politics of racial educational equity.

The Coleman Report had profound and lasting political consequences because it was the basis for a dominant strand of social scientific expertise on educational inequality. It is still lauded today as a foundational text in the contemporary sociology and economics of education (Alexander and Morgan 2016; Heckman and Neal 2005; Kahlenberg 2001; Lucas 2016). The study has inspired methodological innovations and more sophisticated approaches to the analysis of within-school and out-of-school factors, improving upon yet largely preserving Coleman's fundamental approach (Lucas 2016). While the field of education policy studies is diverse and includes specialists in pedagogical methods, school-

level organizational dynamics, and other aspects of the schooling process, policy debates are often dominated by macro-level regression analysis that relegates the schooling process to a black box. Debates about the racial achievement gap revolve around statistical efforts to distill the effects of “race” from “class” and the problem of racial segregation in schools is primarily analyzed in terms of “peer effects” and the benefits of exposure to middle class social environments (Kahlenberg 2012; Reardon 2016). Although neoliberal reform initiatives like the school choice movement adopt the rhetoric of school responsibility for educational inequality, these initiatives pass responsibility down to students and teachers while ignoring the entrenched legacies of racial inequity that set up some schools to fail (Lipman 2013). The “school accountability” policy agenda, since its rise in the late 1980s, placed more emphasis on punishing schools that do not meet performance standards and less emphasis on providing support for chronically failing schools (Mehta 2013), many of which are products of a long history of segregation and systemic neglect.

The influence of the Coleman Report on educational expertise was felt almost immediately after its publication. In the beginning, a small but influential group of scholars took interest in the study, and the Commission on Civil Rights promoted its similar analysis and argument for integration. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Christopher Jencks, two prominent public intellectuals, each helped disseminate Coleman’s analysis in the press and mobilized academic expertise and resources to further study the new data set (Hodgson 1975). A large volume on the Coleman Report co-edited by Moynihan and an ambitious study on *Inequality* led by Jencks reanalyzed Coleman’s data set and reinforced many of the central conclusions of the original report (Jencks et al. 1972; Mosteller and Moynihan 1972). Several leading economists of education cut their teeth studying the EEO survey, including Eric Hanushek, who became a leading figure in the study of “school effects” and debates about the effectiveness of school finance reform for influencing student outcomes (Heckman and Neal 2005). As Henry Aaron argued, many of Coleman’s scholarly critics tested his conclusions by applying more rigorous statistical techniques to the same EEO data set, thus reinforcing the original study’s basic framework and precluding findings that might contradict Coleman’s basic conclusions (Aaron 2010).

This chain of events is traceable back to the choices made by federal officials and their commissioned study director in the effort to produce new knowledge about educational inequality and provide guidance on a politically charged and intellectually complex policy problem. The making of this influential study depended simultaneously on its apparent independence from political interference and the unique political context that provided both the impetus and the constraints shaping the knowledge production process. I argue that the Coleman Report’s bold conclusions and emerging scientific consensus were made possible by political constraints from above and below that together restricted the scope of debate to exclude the local controversies that animated urban protest and black activism across the country. Because federal government investigators unwittingly engaged in racial controversies about *de facto* segregation that were already filtered through the political suppression of local school officials, they could provide a scientific resolution to these controversies and avoid any empirical evidence or conceptual challenges that might complicate this resolution and reopen Coleman’s black box. If, however, Coleman had more time to investigate local issues, more familiarity with political debates on the ground, or more research access to scrutinize local schools, he might have viewed this analysis of school resources and student attributes as inadequate to resolve racial concerns and upend

liberal assumptions about racial educational inequality and the need to improve the educational effectiveness of America's schools.

The novelty of the Coleman Report aside, aspects of the study did reflect the prevailing liberal and academic views of James Coleman and other social scientists during this period, and one might presume that Coleman's own social position, politically and in the scholarly field, predisposed him to focus on student attributes and racial imbalance. My analysis takes into consideration Coleman's position within social and intellectual networks and his lack of any personal connection to urban black activism and local race and education controversies, but it also suggests that Coleman's academic position in academic or political fields do not help explain the making of the Coleman Report. Social psychologists like Thomas Pettigrew and Kenneth Clark were similarly positioned with respect to the kind of academic expertise they specialized in and Clark, in particular, achieved academic success by studying the effects of racial imbalance on the attitudes and educational potential of black youth. These scholars were, nonetheless, more skeptical of Coleman's analytic framework, and they drew on years of engagement with racial disputes over inequality and injustice to formulate their intellectual position. Despite his lack of familiarity with race and education issues, Coleman held liberal political views that predisposed him to seek evidence of racial educational inequity, yet surprising research findings forced him to revise his initial assumptions. Among these three thinkers, Coleman was the least politically committed to school integration, but, in the end, his analysis became the most influential expert rationale for pursuing racial mixing in federal law and policy.

Understanding the historical conditions that shaped the making of the Coleman Report requires looking beyond Coleman the individual and analyzing the social movements and state institutions directly engaged in the knowledge production process. Black protest helped provide the impetus for state actors, locally and nationally, to initiate a new wave of research on race and educational inequality, establishing the foundation for a new body of expertise. Urban school systems were key sites for struggle over the definition of the school segregation issue, both because they raised the question of *de facto* segregation, which had national implications, and because they sought political legitimacy in the face of a national civil rights movement and local protest. The federal government possessed the capacity to mobilize new expertise and intervene in the local politics of knowledge surrounding urban school segregation, and the relationship between federal agencies and local school systems became the circuit through which a new form of expertise would forge its object of study and analytic toolkit. The constraints shaping this knowledge production process reflected both the local politics of knowledge in urban school districts and the policy priorities and tactics of actors in the federal government. These constraints enabled seminal acts of research that led to the emergence of a dominant strand of academic and policy expertise about educational inequality that still frames public debate on race and education today.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the Limits of Liberal Reform

The Coleman Report is a foundational text in contemporary social science and education research. Its analytic framework provides the dominant paradigm for analyzing educational inequality and the basic rubric for public debate about the racial achievement gap and school segregation. As settled science, its assumptions about relevant school factors, about the dichotomy between class-based out-of-school factors and race-based school inequities, and about the mechanisms through which segregation and racism produce inequalities are often taken for granted or only challenged at the margins, leading to gradual methodological evolution and subordinate subfields of competing education research. In the 1960s, however, these assumptions were squarely and forcefully contested, and the Equality of Educational Opportunity study's production and ascendance reflected the indirect effects of ongoing political and intellectual struggles.

Since the Supreme Court ruled in favor of "separate but equal" schools in 1896, the question of the quality of separate black schools was the subject of both intellectual debate and political maneuvering. During the 1950s, the legal threat to school segregation that culminated in the *Brown* ruling prompted Southern states to create the appearance of equal black and white schools by investing in historically deprived black education (West 1968). During this same period, industrial centers like Chicago and Detroit invested post-war largesse in public education (Rury and Mirel 1997), contributing to the construction of segregated black schools, alongside new segregated housing projects, to cope with intense overcrowding and fortify the ghetto. The litigation that led to the *Brown* ruling targeted racially segregated schools that were approaching equality in school resources, and the Supreme Court's landmark decision seized this fact to avoid addressing the legacy of material educational deprivation affecting these separate black schools and communities (Scott 2000). In the 1960s, educators' call for compensatory education targeting the poorest students prompted another infusion of funds into historically resource-starved segregated schools, further helping school officials pave over historic resource inequalities across neighborhood schools.

Educators, thus, insisted that they were providing an equal standard of schooling across racial groups, but this relative increase in school spending did not necessarily represent an adequate or good faith effort to repair the collective harms of generations of educational exclusion. Challenging the premise of "equalized" black and white schools were black urban movements of the early 1960s, which brought national attention to the issue of *de facto* segregation and sparked the proliferation of new research including the 1966 Coleman Report. In the urban North and West, these movements decried the quality of black neighborhood schools and responded to racial gerrymandering, persisting overcrowding, and burdensome student transfer plans as indicative of an unspoken policy of racial containment driving the stigmatization and abandonment of black public education. For these activists, segregation affected the quality of public schooling, and the "equalization" of resources represented a superficial bandage over the wounds of discrimination and organizational dysfunction. In the South, too, agitation for racial educational reform strived to improve the quality of teaching and overall educational opportunity for black youth, and many black leaders questioned the effectiveness of integration for solving this basic challenge (Bell 2004; Brown-Nagin 2011; Cecelski 2000).

For black America and the black-led movements demanding educational justice, racial educational inequity was never reducible to the racial separation of students, and attenuating long-standing resource disparities was, by itself, inadequate to repair dysfunctional schools, raise academic standards, and make up for generations of economic and educational deprivation.

Contemporary social science research on educational inequality emerged out of this debate over racial educational inequality, and the conditions for the consolidation of social scientific education expertise lay in political forces of racial struggle and suppression. Black movements drew sustained national attention to the racial crisis in urban schools and sparked an expert debate about the causes of racial imbalance and racially disparate achievement scores. These movements, however, struggled to penetrate mainstream public discussions of educational inequity, often relying on the official framing of the segregation issue in terms of psychological damage rather than inferior schooling. Activists mobilized local communities by voicing popular criticisms of biased educators and deteriorating schools, and they were vocal in demanding independent assessments of their concerns, but the accomplishments of the grassroots wing of these urban movements through direct action protest did not translate into public recognition of their race-based claims. Racial backlash from educators and the white media blamed disparate academic achievement on the deficits of black students, and public officials wielded their influence over urban education research to restrict the scope of investigations and impose a narrow set of empirical and theoretical questions on state-commissioned research. This persisting repression of black voices rendered the grassroots critique of segregated schooling invisible to outside observers, and the official reporting and disputed evidence emerging from city school districts largely excluded the underlying controversies over educational failure that animated black protest.

National studies like the Coleman Report did not adopt this circumscribed analytic framework simply because white liberals like James Coleman were predisposed to provide race-neutral explanations of inequality. Coleman was embedded in institutional and personal networks for accessing information and ideas, and these networks reflected political constraints from below, limiting access to local research, and from above, restricting the people and processes involved in state-sponsored research. Political constraints blocked some local controversies from influencing the research questions of federal government experts, rendering a more superficial racial educational dispute that could be scientifically resolved based on reported information about school resources and policies as well as student and teacher survey responses about their personal attributes. The outsized capacity and influence of this government research affected the strategic choices of progressives seeking to leverage existing data and authoritative research in the service of school desegregation. The uptake of Coleman's findings by elite policy actors, in turn, made this research more visible and increased the cost of criticizing its framework by opening up the black box of the schooling process. Initial scholarly support and political uptake, thus, helps explain the scholarly consolidation and lasting influence of this expertise (Latour 1987). The Coleman Report's core ideas continue to circulate in leading research and public debate on issues of educational inequality.

This argument does not imply that *Equality of Educational Opportunity* and the research it influenced is bad science. The Coleman Report inaugurated productive bodies of research literature that continue to evolve and produce new insights. This research, however, represents one lens into the problem of educational inequality, and overreliance

on this lens, even for the purpose of pushing a progressive agenda, risks reproducing the relations of power and misrecognition that enabled the construction of this analytic lens in the beginning. This sociological history of our contemporary understanding of school segregation and inequality has important implications for the way we produce and use social science expertise, for the way think about the limits of racial progress after the 1960s, and for the way we talk about racially separate and unequal education today.

The Coleman Report is a classic case of academic social science influencing public policy, but it is also a cautionary example of the way the political pressures and institutional openings specific to policy-oriented research can dictate the formation of social scientific knowledge, causing unintended political effects. While Coleman's study drew authority from its apparent scientific objectivity, this objectivity mirrored the standards of political neutrality prevailing in the Office of Education rather than the norms and expectations of existing intellectual debate on race and education. In general, the political constraints shaping the production of state-sponsored research narrowed the scope of relevant questions and data sources such that local school administrators could be enrolled in the knowledge production process and help construct the primary lens for assessing the characteristics of schools. Later in life, Coleman lamented the study's narrow focus on "administrative inputs," blaming the policy orientation of his government sponsors for this preoccupation with the distribution of school resources (Coleman 1996). The implication was that school policy affects school resources, and other educationally relevant variables represent diffuse social dynamics that school officials cannot control. The question of which aspects of the schooling process officials can or should control, however, was politically contested, and this question was answered for, rather than by, social scientists in the 1960s. The prevailing perspective and practice of school administration was, thus, embedded in a new and lasting framework for academic analysis, not because policymakers dictated the priorities of the Coleman Report, but because political barriers at different levels of the knowledge production process filtered out critical perspectives on school management and instruction, allowing prevailing administrative practice to dictate the relevant parameters for scientific inquiry.

In the 1970s, sociologists coined the term "loosely coupled" to describe the prevailing organizational features of school administration, highlighting the loose connection between administrative decisions and their actual implementation within schools and classrooms (Meyer 1975; Weick 1982). The observation that school administrators are oriented toward official policy and documentation and struggle to influence day-to-day school operations still resonates today, but this fact is neither inevitable nor invariant across schools. The urban education crisis of the 1960s included a crisis in administrative organization and efficacy, and overburdened ghetto schools epitomized this problem. The failure to educate black students was, for many, a symptom of low teacher morale, organizational dysfunction, and bureaucratic resistance to change (Payne 1984; Rogers 2006; Schrag 1968). While activists during this period fought to make these issues a centerpiece for racial equity and education reform, the politics of knowledge about race and education rendered the internal dynamics of schooling outside the bounds of official policy debate and expert analysis, sealing shut the black box of the schooling process. A series of seemingly innocuous scientific choices, thus, reinforced the impenetrability of internal school and classroom operations, rendering these spaces not only political resistant to change but also invisible to outside scrutiny.

Political constraints from above and below combined to restrict the purview and possibilities of Coleman's seminal study and undermine other attempts to leverage state capacity and produce competing research. The outsized significance of the federal government in early education research made these political circumstances in the making of the Coleman Report profoundly consequential for the subsequent development of education studies in academic economics and sociology. Expert reliance on official sources allowed local officials to limit the scope of possible policy reform and shirk responsibility for school failure, and we continue to live with the consequences of this expert perspective on our current progressive discourse on school inequality and equity-oriented reform.

This historical account, thus, compels social scientists to reflect on the relationship between academic research and public policy, asking whether conditions for producing social scientific knowledge rely on political assumptions about the potential and willingness to change specific organizational dynamics and social relations. Increasingly formalistic methods like the prevalence of randomized controlled trials benefit from scientific credibility but narrowly define counterfactuals, restricting policy debate to micro-level interventions rather than the development innovative policies and new state capacity. Conversely, the colloquial tendency to label any research drawing on local activists' views or contentious proposals as "political" and lacking the neutrality of objective social science only reinforces the pitfalls of policy-oriented social science. Increasing the range of relevant sources, interlocutors, and audiences of scholarly research will be necessary to produce reflexive sociology that squarely reckons with the layered ties between state interests and the history of social science disciplines.

This study also contributes to Critical Race Studies and theories of the limits of antiracist discourse in law, policy, and academia. Scholarly commentary on the failures of school integration are often traced back to Derrick Bell's critique of school desegregation litigation and his theory of racial reform as the product of converging black and white interests (Bell 1976, 1980). Bell helped lead the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's assault on school segregation during the 1960s, but his experience led him to question the utility of this litigation strategy and its potential for achieving lasting change. He argued that school integration initiatives were often inadequate to rid schools of discrimination and deep-seated inequities, and, regardless of the gains integration promised to yield, official support for integration receded by the mid-1970s when elite interest in demonstrating racial progress receded. Bell's historical theory of the "interest-convergence dilemma" suggests that these elite interests are often negotiated among competing groups of white elites while black actors are treated as silent, third-party beneficiaries of racial justice reform.

Moving from law to academia, my analysis of the adoption of a new racial justice reform agenda builds on this theory by demonstrating how elite interests and representations of racial justice are simultaneously constructed to overlap and garner legitimacy for new forms of state power. The rise of school integration in law and policy drew on the negotiated settlement of a clearly defined integration agenda, which involved a politics of knowledge fought, primarily, in big city school districts. When urban school officials' informal practices of racial segregation came under scrutiny in the 1960s, they gradually turned to school desegregation as a legitimate means to manage racial demographic change and the challenge of the urban ghetto. I argue that they successfully framed the desegregation agenda with the help of social science experts whom they indirectly influenced, and by the 1970s, the mandate to desegregate, articulated in terms of

preserving white majority schools, could be utilized by local authorities to invest in majority white neighborhoods, support broader urban planning schemes, and justify existing plans to consolidate metropolitan school districts (Erickson 2016; Monti 1985).

This historical construction of representations of racial justice helps account for shortcomings in much of the leading academic and policy research on racial issues. Critical race scholars argue that dominate scholarly approaches to race downplay the violence of institutional racism and subjugate the perspectives of people of color who attest to racism and mistreatment in their daily lives (Crenshaw 2019). This dissertation traces the limitations of leading race and education scholarship back to specific political clashes over research and reform in the 1960s to show how the contemporary social scientific study of racial inequality at once responded to new demands for racial justice and reproduced old relations of racial subjugation in new forms. By suppressing black voices in the debate over school segregation and inequality, local school officials created the conditions for an elite academic consensus around an official framework for analyzing educational inequity. The rise of a new post-civil rights antiracist discourse, attached to its seminal—albeit newly defined—principal of school integration, was a product of political struggle and the persisting political suppression of community-based black movements. Progressive demands for school integration today often invoke the promise of better schools and equal treatment across racial groups, but when they rely on the still prevailing scholarly rationale and strategy first articulated by James Coleman in the late 1960s, these demands risk reinforcing the narrow limits of Coleman’s framework and the marginalization of race-based community-level demands for better local schools.

Overall, this dissertation forces us to reconsider the meaning of school segregation and the relationship between race and educational inequality in contemporary public education. A dominant strand in progressive research and advocacy continues to focus on the imbalanced racial composition of schools and the pursuit of racial diversity. Whether one subscribes to the inherent benefits of student integration or simply views integration as a political feasible and educationally practical intervention, the school integration agenda reinforces the prevailing progressive orthodoxy that racial separation is the fundamental legacy of educational racism and racial mixing is the radical means to uprooting educational inequity. Without abandoning all strategies for reapportioning students to schools based on their race, the fight for racial justice in education should, instead, center substantive standards for decent schooling and the actual experiences of black students and other students of color in school. Although black communities continue to lack the political power to secure resources and influence over their own neighborhood schools, bringing relatively elite white families into historically black communities may continue to weaken the influence of black students and parents or divert new school resources away from the students who need them most (Cucchiara 2013; Cucchiara and Horvat 2009; Lewis-McCoy 2014; Posey-Maddox 2014). The very discourse of school integration, despite its often productive application in law and policy, has contributed to the disempowerment of black families in the politics of public education, and reframing the problem of school segregation can help shine new light on systemic racism even in racially diverse school settings.

Since 1966, social science has developed sophisticated methods for revealing the influence of racial and socio-economic inequalities on the educational process, but the history of black American struggles for educational liberation compels us to examine this relationship in reverse. Public education policy and practice arguably plays a central role in

the historical construction of racial inequality, and, from slavery and conquest to the present day, the multifaceted history of racially segregated or exclusive schooling has been instrumental to every phase of racial domination in U.S. history. Since Reconstruction, black Americans have strived to establish and utilize public schools as pillars for the advancement of black individuals and communities (Anderson 2010; Du Bois 2017), yet these critical institutions have been systematically undermined every step of the way. Whereas communities of European decent invoked whiteness to separate themselves from marginalized black populations and secure material advantages for their local schools and neighborhoods (Harris 1993; Lipsitz 2009), demands to invest in local black schools articulated in terms of racial justice have consistently failed to garner official recognition. Framed as a social intervention targeting hearts and minds, school integration is presented as a racial politics of recognition while community-level demands for repairing black schools are recast as a class-based politics of redistribution (Dumas 2008). Because the historic problem of school segregation has been sanitized and dissociated from its underlying dynamics of racial violence and institutional sabotage, schools are routinely viewed as a symptom rather than a source of racial oppression, but by re-centering the obscured history of educational ghettoization and the systemic underdevelopment of black public education, we can uplift a progressive school reform agenda that makes the investment in model public schools a requirement for repairing racial injustice and a pillar for the development of thriving black communities across the United States.

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