

Telling the Story

A Critical Narrative Analysis of Policy and the Politics of Desegregation

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Abstract

In this article, the author discusses the implications of the absence of democracy that surrounded the policy evolution in Galena Park regarding desegregation in 1970. A brief description of narrative analysis, as methodology, is reviewed before discussing policy development. In conjunction with the Galena Park setting, the construct of scholar–practitioner is also revealed prior to detailing the numerous failed desegregation plans of the school district. The legal correspondence, which began the court order mandate, is noted before concluding thoughts are made. The author reveals, through critical narrative analysis, how conflicting interests resulted in the politics that prevented the restructuring of Galena Park Independent School District, in order to provide an effective and equal education for all students. The ideals of democracy were sacrificed when perceived deceptive actions did not include the voice of a community, the foresight for equality, and the spirit of unity.

Introduction

Policy—it exists and we abide by it. In fact, as school leaders, we enforce it, and depend on it to support the expectations that have been handed down over the years when it may not even make sense to us. What does policy say about the philosophy of a school district? How does policy develop and evolve? A lengthy paper trail detailed the noncompliance of Galena Park Independent School District’s journey to forced desegregation. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was clearly defined, Galena Park’s interpretation was insufficient without the court’s

interference and vision to improve education for all students. The superintendent and school board's unwillingness to rezone is conclusively documented in the policies that were created to circumvent equity, and evidenced by the artifacts that were discovered in files in the superintendent's office. Letters, memoranda, legal documents, and newspaper articles revealed the history that comprises the reconstructed timeline outlined in this article that led to court ordered desegregation, and the closing of an African American neighborhood school.

This article discusses the implications of the absence of democracy that surrounded the policy evolution in Galena Park regarding desegregation in 1970. A brief description of narrative analysis, as methodology, is reviewed before discussing policy development. In conjunction with the Galena Park setting, the construct of scholar-practitioner is also revealed prior to detailing the numerous failed desegregation plans of the school district. The legal correspondence, which began the court order mandate, is noted before concluding thoughts are made.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis was used as the methodological tool to form the timeline that would reconstruct the events that led to desegregation in Galena Park in 1970. Moreover, the method provided the scaffolding that allowed the researcher to synthesize the events that were sketched by artifacts regarding the desegregation process. The organization of many data sources provided the path for an intended storied outcome.

Polkinghorne (1995) clearly delineates narrative analysis from other forms of analysis. In narrative analysis, "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories" (p. 12). For this article, the researcher utilized artifacts to reconstruct the timeline that led to court ordered desegregation. Therefore, the researcher was able to discern fractured pieces that became whole as narrative analysis techniques were employed. "Narrative analysis moves from elements," (p. 12) with the outcome resulting in a story. Narrative inquirers using narrative analysis are required to "develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement" (p. 15). The narrative analysis employed in this study resulted in an "explanation that [was] retrospective, having linked past events together to account for how a final outcome" (p. 16) resulted.

Policy and Democracy

Policy designs are intentional, are derived from a specific context, and have "consequences for that context" (Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 69). They may either provide scaffolding for consensus, or fracture the status quo depending on the context, and the manner in which the policy was born. Decisions made

in Galena Park during the late 1960s and 1970 created new policies for the district that had specific purpose and definite consequences for the schools that served two populations—African American and White students. The intent of the policy that developed was to perpetuate the existing segregation that had been in existence for many years. This was done without practicing democratic principles. That is, policymakers must have established trust with the communities for which they serve, where social capital is used appropriately, if a true democratic institution is to be obtained. In the 1960s, Galena Park was not a democratic organization with regard to all populations it served. Maintaining the status quo of segregation was the goal, rather than communicating with all stakeholders and bridging the two existing communities. “Consensus demands communication” (Dewey, 1944, p. 5). Galena Park Independent School District failed to meet the basics of Dewey’s definition of community that begins with communication. Students forced to integrate Galena Park High School did not receive any communication from the district until approximately two weeks prior to school beginning. Few African American students were placed in each classroom, and no assemblies or town meetings were held to introduce the change, or to discuss community concerns.

Schneider and Ingram (1997) posit that policy design has “significant consequences for democracy” (p. 66). These consequences were discernible in the classrooms and the hallways of Galena Park High School after forced desegregation. African American students felt no sense of belonging, and they had little opportunities for student involvement, which completely modified their high school experiences as they knew them at their previous Fidelity Manor High School. Schneider and Ingram (1997) criticize pluralism because it does not acknowledge the “hidden and subtle forms of power” (p. 66) that ultimately create societal conditions; the new conditions in Galena Park were powered by subtle policy decisions. The beliefs of all citizens (which would indicate the belief of democratic policy making) were not considered, and therefore, were not manifested through policymakers. Just policy “acknowledges the sense of place and the relevance of different cultures, histories, and experiences” (p. 92) of the citizens it will affect. The desegregation policy that emerged in Galena Park jeopardized democracy, and affected communities that were never consulted. Nevertheless, they were forever changed.

Policy and the scholar–practitioner in Galena Park I.S.D.

As scholar–practitioners, we must question and critically analyze policy. Scholar–practitioners are able to find the praxis that exists when both terms (scholar and practitioner) are conjoined. The scholar makes meaning of research, is well read, and uses both philosophy and theory to shape her studies, therefore her work. Reciprocally, the practitioner is able to lead effectively because of the continuous scholarly improvement that she seeks in her practice due to her research, reflection, and self-evaluation. The powerful combination becomes one ideal, as

both elements work to inform the other. Moreover, scholar–practitioners exist to deconstruct concepts in order to better appreciate or better understand; they are able to apply a critical lens, like that of narrative analysis, to a given situation. In this case, the evolution of policy to desegregate a school district serves as the situation. Currently, the author is a principal in the same district that is scrutinized—Galena Park Independent School District, which is situated near the Houston Ship Channel and considered a suburb of Houston, Texas. The school district has changed drastically since the integration of its two high schools. No longer is the district defined by Black and White. Now, it is home to over 20,000 students, and the demographics include a student composition of 21% Black, 11% White, and 66% Hispanic. The remaining 2% is comprised of Asian and Native American students.

We can use history as an example, or perhaps as a non-example, of policy development. The desegregation that occurred in Galena Park Independent School District in Houston, Texas, can be contextualized using certain historical artifacts that encapsulate the communication between the school superintendent and the many offices that held the responsibility of enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The artifacts discussed in this article were discovered in the superintendent’s office and consist of memoranda, newspaper clippings, and legal documents. They detail the policies that were born and reborn regarding desegregation—and plans to avoid it—in the 1970s.

The narrative analysis offered here is a portion of a larger research project, my dissertation. It also serves as a reminder that elements of the same have the potential to again resegregate our schools. As neighborhoods become racially homogeneous, so do neighborhood schools. Moreover, we must learn from history that failing to meet the expectations of society may result in legal implications, and more importantly, the marginalization of people. During the 1960s, Galena Park Independent School District was determined to remain segregated and maintain their two racially divided high schools. The decisions (and lack of decisions) on the part of the school district were purposefully devised in order to maintain the status quo of the current situation of the era prior to the district’s mandate, which changed everything for two high schools and a neighborhood. Ultimately, the district’s position undermined democracy and omitted the voices of those in which desegregation was to protect.

Failed Desegregation Plans

It was decided in 1954 through *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate schools were no longer considered equal (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). This decision introduced into the United States of America the expectation for all students to have an equal education. Time marched through a decade prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Schools remained segregated; among other places, this was the case in Galena Park. As desegregation plans for Galena Park Independent

School District were evolving, the institution that governed education was the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare: Office of Education in Washington, DC. However, the Office for Civil Rights, and the Equal Educational Opportunities Program also worked to ensure compliance.

In a memorandum written by the United States Commissioner of Education, Harold Howe, dated January 1967, copies of “school desegregation guidelines” were provided to school superintendents and boards of education of school systems “qualifying for federal financial assistance under voluntary plans for desegregation” (H. Howe, personal communication, January 1967). Accompanying the memorandum were sample letters for parents, and official news releases that could be easily modified to include local school district desegregation plans. The memorandum warned that continued eligibility for federal assistance in 1967–1968 required “continued progress” in “eliminating the dual school system, in regard to both students and faculty” (H. Howe, personal communication, January 1967). Moreover, Howe suggested that “local initiative” was the “most important factor” in achieving desegregation (H. Howe, personal communication, January 1967). Walter C. Cunningham, then superintendent of Galena Park Independent School District, received such a memorandum.

On May 26, 1967, Harold B. Williams, Acting Assistant Commissioner for the Equal Educational Opportunities Program sent a memorandum to Superintendent Cunningham admonishing that the “report . . . submitted on the status of desegregation indicates that ‘relatively little progress’” (H. B. Williams, personal communication, May 26, 1967) is being made to desegregate the schools in Galena Park Independent School District. Furthermore, Williams requested a timely visit in order to “evaluate the operation of the [desegregation] plan to determine whether it is adequate to satisfy the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act” (H. B. Williams, personal communication, May 26, 1967). While the school district anticipated its visit, Cunningham was also advised to “discuss with . . . the board what additional steps can be taken at the earliest possible time to make further progress in the elimination of your systems [sic] dual school structure” (H. B. Williams, personal communication, May 26, 1967). Williams further warned Cunningham that current information received regarding both the past and present school operation “indicates that in all probability it cannot be accepted as an adequate basis for the continued eligibility of your school system for participation in federally assisted programs” (H. B. Williams, personal communication, May 26, 1967). This memorandum was also copied to both the Chief State School Officer and the Regional Assistant Commissioner.

A false sense of desegregation. Cunningham submitted a response to Williams’ May 1967 memorandum. His rhetoric revealed his “surprise” to Galena Park Independent School District’s insufficient plan and apologized for his administrative staff doing a “poor job” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967) keeping the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare informed.

Cunningham explained that “natural barriers” made it necessary for the “zone system” to be utilized in Galena Park Independent School District. Historically, the Galena Park school system desegregated

all administrative and faculty activities [and continued this practice for a] period of eight or ten years [before the school board passed a 1964] resolution completely desegregating all schools in the district. (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967)

Cunningham’s rhetoric continued to suggest that he felt desegregation had been achieved. Details provided by Cunningham revealed that because of summer school, Head Start, Title I opportunities, athletic events, music festivals, and “all other extra curricula activities” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967), Galena Park Independent School District had achieved desegregation. Again, due to the “natural barriers” in Galena Park, this plan was “met with wholehearted approval of a large majority of the entire community” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967). A map of the school district’s attendance zones would accompany his response memorandum addressed to Williams to demonstrate the district’s inability to move “children from one attendance zone to another” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967). Cunningham concludes his response with an invitation to anticipated committee members visiting Galena Park Independent School District. He states, “If this program can be improved in any way, we would be happy to improve it” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967). Furthermore, Cunningham considers the prospective visit “a real favor” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, June 6, 1967) and offers the school board members’ presence at the time of the visit.

The first visit. Williams indicated in an additional memorandum to Cunningham that someone from the Equal Educational Opportunities Program would be contacting him in the “immediate future [to arrange for a meeting date in Galena Park, in order to work toward] eliminating the dual school system” (H. B. Williams, personal communication, June 1967) within the school district. Herbert C. Kane authored a confirmation memorandum following a June 21, 1967 telephone conversation with Cunningham regarding the agreed scheduled visit beginning June 21, 1967. Two representatives, C. D. “Cap” Landolt and A. T. Miller, were assigned the responsibility of visiting Galena Park Independent School District “to discuss . . . plans for and progress toward meeting the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (H. C. Kane, personal communication, June 9, 1967).

Although no artifacts were uncovered to detail the suggestions or decisions made during the June, 1967 visit, a memorandum composed by Don M. Vernon, Acting Regional Director, Region VII of the Equal Educational Opportunities

Program thanked Cunningham for his letter (dated July 18, 1967), which indicated “teacher crossovers [and approximation of] 110–115 Negro students attending desegregated schools in 1967-68” (D. M. Vernon, personal communication, August, 1967). However, Vernon admonished that although the “revised [student] estimates . . . are a positive step they fail to meet the minimum standards” (D. M. Vernon, personal communication, August 1967) specified by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Cunningham is reminded that the standards are outlined in Commissioner Howe’s earlier memo he, as a qualifying school superintendent received in February 1967.

Minimum expectations. In the July 18, 1967 memorandum, Cunningham quoted a portion of the law that specified the commissioner’s responsibility to determine the adequacy of school desegregation plans. Vernon cautioned that Galena Park’s “geographic desegregation plan . . . is not operating effectively to eliminate the dual school system” (D. M. Vernon, personal communication, August 1967). Long-range plans were encouraged as a goal for Cunningham and the school board. Consultants were offered for assistance in developing such a desegregation plan. Vernon indicated that although the Galena Park Independent School District desegregation plan “did not represent the kind of progress expected” (D. M. Vernon, personal communication, August 1967), it did meet the minimum standards to qualify for financial assistance for the 1967–1968 school year, provided that a long-range desegregation plan was developed and submitted by the end of the 1967–1968 school term. An invitation to accept the proposal was extended to Cunningham for continued financial support.

The second visit. In 1969, Carl Flaxman, Regional Director for the Office for Civil Rights, produced a memorandum sent to Cunningham thanking him for his hospitality during a visit that occurred February 11–14, 1969. Flaxman shared that upon review of district information obtained during the visit, Galena Park Independent School District continued to maintain “vestiges of a dual school system—Fidelity Manor Junior-Senior High School and Fidelity Manor Elementary Schools” (C. Flaxman, personal communication, February 24, 1969). It was advised that “alternatives appear to be available by which the racial identity of these schools can be eliminated” (C. Flaxman, personal communication, February 24, 1969). Policies mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were reviewed:

Compliance with the law requires integration of faculties, facilities, and activities, as well as students, so that there are no Negro or other minority group schools and no white schools – just schools. (C. Flaxman, personal communication, February 24, 1969)

A desegregation plan was requested, and was to be completed, by “no later than April 10, 1969 [that included the] proposed pupil and teacher assignment patterns

and practices . . . so as to have eliminated all vestiges of the dual structure by September, 1969” (C. Flaxman, personal communication, February 24, 1969).

Failure to present a desegregation plan for the Galena Park schools would result in the beginning of

administrative proceedings [which resulted in the] termination of . . . Federal financial assistance . . . [and could be so ordered] no sooner than the day following the close of the 1968–69 school year, or anytime during the 1969–70 school year. (C. Flaxman, personal communication, February 24, 1969)

Details of the proceedings addressed to Honorable Wayne Morse, Chairman for the Senate Education Subcommittee, United States Senate, accompanied the memorandum sent by Flaxman.

The third visit. Evidence of Flaxman’s communication surfaced again on March 17, 1969. This memorandum again thanked Cunningham for the hospitality extended to Flaxman and members of his staff when they visited Galena Park again on March 13, 1969. Nonetheless, Cunningham was faced with detrimental issues that could no longer be avoided. Specifically, the district was provided an outline of the areas that were not in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. They included:

1. Two schools within your system—Fidelity Manor Jr-Sr [sic] High and Fidelity Manor Elementary—were part of the dual school system prior to 1954 and today still maintain total Negro student enrollments. They therefore constitute vestiges of the dual school structure.
2. The present make-up of the faculties of Fidelity Manor Jr-Sr [sic] High and Fidelity Manor Elementary Schools indicates an existent pattern of assigning Negro teachers to the schools of the old dual system. Eighty-six percent (86%) of the fulltime faculties of Fidelity Manor Jr-Sr [sic] High and Fidelity Manor Elementary Schools are Negro.
3. The district is perpetuating the dual system by permitting student teachers to be assigned as they were prior to 1954 in that no white student teacher has ever been trained at a Negro school and no Negro student teacher has ever been trained at a predominately white school.
4. The following disparities exist in the area of equal educational opportunities:
 - a. There are a greater number and a wider variety of courses offered at the predominately white senior high schools than at Fidelity Manor High School.
 - b. There are more sequences to meet college requirements offered to students at predominately white senior high schools than at Fidelity Manor High School.

- c. The grade structure at the predominately white senior high schools is 10 through 12; at the predominately white junior high schools, it is 7 through 9; and at Fidelity Manor Jr-Sr [sic] High School, it is 7 through 12. This results in a situation in which teachers assigned to the predominately white senior and junior high schools are specializing respectively, in senior and junior high school courses. On the other hand, many teachers at Fidelity Manor Jr-Sr [sic] High have more class preparations to prepare for than teachers at the predominately white senior and junior high schools.
5. Geographic attendance zones have been so established so as to perpetuate the Fidelity Manor schools as Negro schools.
6. The “minority transfer” policy has been unsuccessful in eliminating the dual school system in that 86.5 percent of all Negro students in the district are still attending the old schools of the dual school system.
7. Reasonable alternatives are available, either through rezoning or through the rearrangement of the district’s present transportation system, by which steps can be taken to eliminate the dual system. (C. Flaxman, personal communication, March 17, 1969)

At the close of the memorandum, Cunningham was reminded that it was the school board’s responsibility to “present a plan which will eliminate all vestiges of a dual school structure” (C. Flaxman, personal communication, March 17, 1969). He was also prompted to submit a new desegregation plan by a newly agreed upon date—April 25, 1969 (C. Flaxman, personal communication, March 17, 1969).

Attached (by paperclip) to the back of the March 17, 1969 memorandum from Flaxman was a typewritten, unsigned narrative that argued many points Flaxman detailed. According to the nameless narrative,

there are a greater variety of courses offered in some of the other schools than those offered in the Fidelity Manor Senior High School, but I would like to point out to you that this is entirely due to the size of the school. (Anonymous, n.d.)

The author continues, “every student in the Fidelity School is made aware that if he desires a broader offering, the transfer program is available to him” (Anonymous, n.d.). The author also suggested:

The people there (Fidelity Manor) do not feel as though they are segregated other than the fact that they live in a separate neighborhood. If they were to move into another attendance zone, naturally, they would attend the school in that geographical zone. . . . [Additionally, the] minority transfer program

in our school district was adopted in 1966, and has worked extremely well for us ever since. Each year has shown some increase over the year before, and has resulted in a very successful school program for the district. . . . We feel that the plan we are now using has worked successfully and so satisfactorily in both communities that we would like to continue this plan since our community is so situated. (Anonymous, n.d.)

Although the narrative does not claim an author, it can be assumed that at least Cunningham presented a portion of it to the Office for Civil Rights as the Galena Park Independent School District's desegregation plan. This assumption is due to the statements found in the following paragraph. Roberto Gonzalez, Acting Chief of the Office for Civil Rights, authored a May 5, 1969 memorandum responding to Cunningham's April 18, 1969 letter which indicated the intention of Galena Park Independent School District to "continue operating its system under a minority transfer policy" (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, May 5, 1969).

According to the Office for Civil Rights, Galena Park continued to operate a school district that contained "two schools as vestiges of a dual school structure" (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, May 5, 1969). Furthermore, Gonzalez reprimanded Cunningham for not providing the data requested in the memorandum dated February 24, 1969. Gonzalez stated:

Your failure to submit an acceptable plan leaves us no alternative under the law but to forward the information in your case to our Washington office with a recommendation that administrative enforcement proceedings be initiated. (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, May 5, 1969)

Statements regarding the sanctions of federal financial assistance follow the notice that Galena Park Independent School District was being referred to Washington, DC. Gonzalez indicated that future communication would be directed to Dr. Lloyd R. Henderson, Chief, Office for Civil Rights. Furthermore, an additional copy of the letter sent to the chairman of the Senate Education Subcommittee was attached to Gonzalez's memorandum (R. Gonzalez, personal communication, May 5, 1969).

District analysis. May 13, 1969 resulted in a memorandum confirming a telephone conversation between Cunningham and Jerry Brader, Senior Program Officer for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Regional Office. According to Brader, Cunningham requested "a study be made by which a satisfactory state of compliance . . . be achieved by the Galena Park School District" (J. H. Brader, personal communication, May 13, 1969). Brader recommended five team members to conduct the needed study in Galena Park: Pete Williams,

Chairman, Associate Director for the Texas Educational Desegregation and Technical Assistance Center at the University of Texas (TEDTAC); an additional TEDTAC member; Gilbert Conoley, Director, Title IV Technical Assistance Officer for the Texas Education Agency; A. T. Miller, United States Office of Education; and Albert Macias, United States Office of Education. This team of five was advised to “conduct a thorough and careful analysis of the Galena Park Schools and present . . . recommendations that will remove racially identifiable schools” (J. H. Brader, personal communication, May 13, 1969). The report from the team would be submitted to Cunningham by June 13, 1969.

Technical Assistance Team

A four member team, rather than the five members previously recommended, comprised the survey team that researched possible desegregation solutions for Galena Park Independent School District. The “technical assistance team . . . conferred with the administration, gathered data and visited schools” (Williams, Price, Miller, & Macias, 1969, p. 3). Williams et al. (1969) reviewed that the district had

existed as an independent school district since 1931 . . . [and had] operated on a geographic attendance zone basis since before Brown I (1954). The district complied with state constitution requirements by establishing and maintaining a separate school for Negro children in the Fidelity Manor area. (p. 2)

The survey team submitted their suggestions for desegregating Galena Park Independent School district in June 1969. The 18-page report detailed the current enrollment at each of the Galena Park schools, as well as recommended options for the desegregation effort. Although three specifically detailed options were discussed for grades one through nine, only one option was proposed for desegregating Fidelity Manor Senior High School:

Both the capacity of Galena Park High School and the favorable proximity of that school to Fidelity Manor area suggest that this school should receive all senior high students from the Fidelity Manor area. (p. 4)

The team also shed light on financial savings for the desegregation process:

The educational advantages and the dollar savings to the district are obvious. Transportation costs to the district would be minimal as compared with the present cost per pupil of operating a high school for fewer than 250 students in the upper [10th through 12th] grades. (p. 4)

Additional defense for the recommendations included projected enrollment figures of an “additional 200-220 students from the Fidelity Manor School” (p. 5). Suggestions were made for the transfer of staff members as well (Williams et al., 1969).

Williams et al. (1969) also shared with the school district a “checklist of relevant points and proven methods to successfully eliminate the dual school structure” (p. 14) for Galena Park Independent School District. The district was charged with involving and informing the people of the community. School personnel were ranked in order of significance to the process. They included the “superintendent, board of trustees, instructional staff, community, and students” (p. 14). Each key group was provided an outline as to the expectations of the survey team. Students were provided with six specific recommendations for “plan implementation” (p. 13). First, it was suggested that the student body be provided an orientation for all students within a desegregated school. Second, interactions were to be planned for cross-cultural mixing. Next, the student body was to be involved in activities that would promote acceptance, and therefore secure a unitary school. The “confidence and self-concept of minority and disadvantaged” (p. 16) students was to be strengthened. A “non-authority, non-disciplinary technique” (p. 16) was recommended when probable discussions surfaced that indicated problems. Finally, student councils were considered the best way to “promote human understanding [and] leadership opportunities for minority students” (p. 16).

After receiving the survey results in June 1969, Cunningham again produced a revised plan for his school district that was sent to Flaxman on July 17, 1969. This time, Cunningham submitted a plan “based on geographic zones, supplemented by special programs and policies” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, July 17, 1969). Cunningham detailed the number of both students and teachers, by race, which would occupy Galena Park High School. He also specified that “all teachers of Fidelity Manor High School will be re-assigned to other schools” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, July 17, 1969), but did not indicate locations. Transportation was not planned for anyone other than special education students and students living outside the two-mile state expectation. The district’s “minority transfer rule” would remain in effect under the new plan. This meant that “any child attending a school where his race [was] a majority [could] transfer to a school where his race [was] a minority” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, July 17, 1969). Special education was addressed, as well as summer programs, administration and teacher programs, and interscholastic league expectations. Cunningham concluded his revised plan with the following sentiment:

It is respectfully submitted that the above plan is the only solution within the capability of the District, taking into consideration the welfare of the

children and financial ability of the District. (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, July 17, 1969)

His revised plan for the 1969–1970 school year continued to meet with opposition.

Legal Implications

On August 21, 1969, Cunningham received a crucial memorandum authored by Lloyd R. Henderson, Educational Branch Chief for the Office for Civil Rights. Henderson advised Cunningham that “after reviewing the plan carefully we find it inadequate to meet the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (L. R. Henderson, personal communication, August 18, 1969) because of the intent to maintain both Fidelity Manor Junior High and Fidelity Manor Elementary School as “racially identifiable facilities for Negro students” (L. R. Henderson, personal communication, August 18, 1969). Furthermore, the district had no “terminal date for eliminating the racial identifiability” (L. R. Henderson, personal communication, August 18, 1969) of the two schools. Because of the findings cited by Henderson, the only alternative was to refer the Galena Park file to the “Office of the General Counsel with a recommendation that [the] district be offered an administrative hearing” (L. R. Henderson, personal communication, August 18, 1969). Again, the opportunity for submission of a just plan promised the dismissal of future proceedings.

Cunningham’s next move was to respond to Henderson’s August memorandum. In his succinct response, he acknowledged the receipt of Henderson’s “reject[ion of] the revised plan for operation of the schools of Galena Park Independent School District” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, September 2, 1969). Cunningham also advised that the school board believed the new plan met with compliance. Ultimately, Cunningham asked for the date and place of the proposed hearing “in order that the school district’s position may be fully presented” (W. C. Cunningham, personal communication, September 2, 1969).

The local community paper, *Sentinel*, published on September 11, 1969 an article depicting the events that led to Cunningham’s September 2, 1969 memorandum in which he sent to the Office for Civil Rights. The article reviewed the visit by the Technical Assistance Team and the recommendations made by the study the members authored. It reported to the community:

After five years of quiet behind-the-scenes negotiations, the Galena Park School Board and the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare are still unable to agree that the board is making every effort to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (Stewman, 1969, p. 1)

The three alternative plans for the intermediate and elementary schools were published, along with the sole recommendation for the desegregation of Fidelity Manor Senior High School. Stewman (1969) reported that the school board “accepted only the . . . recommendation [to transfer] the Fidelity Manor students and closing that high school” (p. 1). The article concluded that the district was awaiting a response that was authorized by the school board on August 28, 1969 and sent by Cunningham on September 2, 1969 requesting a formal hearing (Stewman, 1969).

The inconclusive response Cunningham awaited from Henderson was dated October 2, 1969. Henderson acknowledged the receipt of Cunningham’s September 2 letter and offered that the “Office of General Counsel [had the Galena Park] case under review” (L. R. Henderson, personal communication, October 2, 1969). Henderson also advised Cunningham that he would be informed as to any future actions.

Although communications occurred almost monthly, no artifacts were found for the time period after Henderson’s September 1969 letter until July 1970. On July 24, 1970, Cunningham received a letter from Leon R. Graham, Assistant Commissioner for Administration for the Texas Education Agency. Graham confirmed a telephone conversation that took place with Galena Park Independent School District, and outlined the “negotiation sessions available to local school districts on . . . July 28 and 29, 1970” (L. R. Graham, personal communication, July 24, 1970). Guidelines for the negotiation sessions were detailed. Only three district representatives were allowed to communicate with the “Federal negotiation teams” (L. R. Graham, personal communication, July 24, 1970). Each school district was allowed one hour to be heard and present “its complete desegregation file and . . . plan” (L. R. Graham, personal communication, July 24, 1970). Graham promised that any plan found to be in agreement through the negotiation process would result in the compliance of the school district.

No artifacts were discovered to suggest that Galena Park Independent School District did or did not attend the planned negotiation session. However, chronologically, the next event was the court order mandate (Civil Action No. 70-H-832), which “approved through . . . counsel, the plan for student assignment proposed by Galena Park Independent School District” (*United States v. Texas Educ. Agency*, 1970). Student assignments were to be “effective with the commencement of the 1970–1971 school year” (*United States v. Texas Educ. Agency*, 1970). Enrollment figures were prescribed for the school district, and the bi-racial committee requirements were established.

A document dated September 15, 1970 reveals the district’s intent to comply with *United States v. Texas Educ. Agency*. O. L. Lambert, Board of Education President for Galena Park Independent School District, addressed a letter “To whom it may concern” indicating that the school district was “complying with the court order on plan for desegregation of the Galena Park Schools, issued on August 21, 1970 . . . by the Honorable Judge James Noel” (O. L. Lambert,

personal communication, September 15, 1970). Although it is unclear as to who may have received the letter authored by Lambert, it does indicate the school board's acceptance of the court order.

Summary

Shils (1991) suggests, "all societies . . . are sites of conflicting interests in the sense that, at any given moment, when one part obtains more of anything, there is less for the other part" (p. 15). This statement speaks to the situation regarding the desegregation process in Galena Park, and has been evidenced by the chronological details provided. Discovered artifacts (memoranda, letters, legal documents and newspaper articles) describe the politics that surrounded the closing of the neighborhood school that African American students attended until 1970. In the case of Galena Park Independent School District, this critical narrative analysis reveals conflicting interests resulted in the politics that prevented the restructuring of a district in order to provide an effective and equal education for all students. The ideals of democracy were sacrificed when perceived deceptive actions did not include the voice of a community, the foresight for equality, and the spirit of unity. This cultural resistance is perceived to be out of fear. Fear dictated marginalization, the demise of democracy, and the lack of adequate policy to provide what was just. Democratic ideals were absent throughout the decision making process, and voices were left unheard.

Scholar-practitioners have the responsibility to inform. Many have, by position, the obligation to create policy that supports democracy and the interest of all people. A school district's policy development and its continuance is a direct reflection of the organization for which it exists. Because of this, policymakers should ascertain that decisions are based on civility—enough so that "institutions . . . maintain them effectively as civil institutions" (Shils, 1991, p. 19). It is difficult for all humans to easily detach themselves from a particular self-interest group. Policy design should reflect the masses of those in which it governs while maintaining an interest in the "common good" (p. 19). In Galena Park, the common good was forfeited until forced to occur.

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