Neighborhood Schools, City Politics:

Parents and Taxpayers, the 1964 Campaign Against School Integration, and the Remaking of New York City's Political Culture, 1954-1970

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Introduction

In 1964, on the 14th of September, 275,368 students were absent from New York City schools, including around 31 percent of elementary and junior high school students, in a boycott against school integration.[1] The boycott, the most dramatic step in a monthslong campaign waged by white parents and their allies against school desegregation, was led by the Parents and Taxpayers Coordinating Council (PAT), a collective that purported to represent 500,000 people.[2] Along with the boycott, PAT and associated groups had organized rallies and established alternative private academies to prevent their children's enrollment in integrated schools. Their frenzied efforts reflected longer-term opposition to integration and more immediate animus following the introduction of a Board of Education (BOE) integration plan and a civil rights school boycott involving close to half a million students in early February 1964.[3] PAT countered the mass appeal of the civil rights boycotts through the adoption of tactics used by southern campaigns against desegregation, but they simultaneously co-opted civil rights rally and boycott tactics and rhetorical appeals to children's rights to schooling in their neighborhood and community.[4] Under pressure from groups such as PAT, the BOE abandoned its plans to integrate New York City schools. Somehow, this grassroots campaign of opposition to desegregation triumphed in the civil rights era of the 1960s, in progressive, liberal, and cosmopolitan New York City, a process crystallized by the brazenly right-wing politics of William F. Buckley, Jr.'s 1965 mayoral run.[5] The success of Parents and Taxpayers in the integration campaign, alongside its

[1] Clarence Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition to the New York City School-Integration Campaign," in *Civil Rights in New York City*, ed. Taylor, 108-9.
[2] Ibid, 107.
[3] "Boycott Cripples City Schools," *New York Times*, 4 February, 1964.
[4] Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 107.
[5] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 40-42.

role in the history of civil rights, ushered in a new era of assertive conservative politics in the everyday and electoral politics of New York City.

Racism and opposition to school desegregation in New York City predated the 1960s civil rights battles. Post-World War Two economic growth and a progressive political culture fueled New York City's development into what historian Joshua Freeman has termed a liberal "social democratic polity," built on redistribution and a purported commitment to social equality, but these same growth policies enabled racist segregation and discrimination in education, housing, and employment.[6] As deindustrialization and suburbanization drained New York of close to two million white New Yorkers and siphoned off job opportunities for millions of arriving black and Puerto Rican migrants, the city confronted a decreasing tax base and worsening discrimination with growing desperation.[7] From the 1940s, white New Yorkers had expressed antipathy toward any projects by civil rights activists or city officials associated with the desegregation of public schools.[8] In the aftermath of the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the city's BOE catered to the demands of white New Yorkers by denying charges of willful segregation and undercutting integration efforts.[9] In 1963, when the BOE finally responded to mounting frustration among local and national civil rights activists by releasing an integration plan, Parents and Taxpayers was established in October 1963 as an organization purportedly rejecting "transfers based on race."[10] At the same time that civil rights activists led by Bayard Rustin and Reverend Milton A. Galamison organized a boycott by 464,000 students on February 3rd, 1964, Parents and Taxpayers coordinated counter-protests.[11] Even as the school desegregation movement campaigned for equal education, Parents and

[6] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 55; Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 223.
[7] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 143-144.
[8] Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 107.
[9] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26.
[10] Peter Kihss,"New Group Fights Mass Pupil Shifts," *New York Times*, 3 October, 1963.
[11] "Boycott Cripples City Schools," *New York Times*.

Taxpayers waged its own campaign of protests, lawsuits, and public relations that culminated in the September boycott.[12]

While these historical events are well documented, many aspects of this narrative remain unclear, starting with the precise origins, nature, and objectives of Parents and Taxpayers. Although strongest in Queens, PAT presented itself as a city-wide organization featuring various constituencies, claiming rights as parents, taxpayers, and homeowners connected to a 'neighborhood school'.[13] This thesis provides the first archival exploration of the physical and social origins of PAT within the context of New York City to assess why the group espoused anti-integration ideals and how those views related to political ideologies in the city. I argue that PAT subverted pillars of the socially progressive post-war liberal order–middle-class upward mobility, homeownership, and quality schools–as rhetorical weapons against integration in its successful 1964 campaign. Movements like PAT were proof that conservative ideas simmered for decades in New York City within the city's political culture, as PAT inherited a decade-long discourse of 'neighborhood schools' kept alive by anti-integration activists and the BOE.[14] After the defeat of integration in 1964, PAT's grassroots campaign precipitated the rise of a coalition of right-wing voters in the city's outer boroughs in the 1965 mayoral campaign, which mirrored the nationwide, suburban political ascension of a middle-class 'silent majority' committed to anti-integration politics, welfare cuts, lessened government intervention, and law and order politics.[15] Studying the origins and rhetoric of PAT with specificity elucidates the variety of political attitudes during this period; evaluates how the intersection of local, citywide, and federal politics fostered attitudes of intense opposition to school desegregation in a city praised

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[12] See for example: "More Than 10,000 March in Protest On School Pairing," *New York Times*, 13 March, 1964.

[13] "Planner of White Boycott," *New York Times*, August 12, 1964,

[14] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26.

[15] Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 4-5; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 4.

(or, alternatively, loudly denounced) for its liberalism; and can suggest the ways in which policies and attitudes about New York City schools today reflect supposedly extinct prejudices.

Historiography

This thesis contributes to two distinct, if related, historiographical discussions. The first is the historiography of Northern movements in opposition to the civil rights struggle. The second is the local and national historiography of conservative grassroots and electoral politics, which often encompasses opposition to civil rights. As the first study to consider PAT both as an anti-integration group and as an embodiment of a broader set of conservative politics, this thesis challenges periodizations of New York City history which identify conservatism as a phenomenon of the late 1960s and early 1970s, often in terms of "backlash" to civil rights activism or as a response to the fiscal crisis of 1975.[16] Instead, this thesis emphasizes how PAT drew on existing tenets of the liberal post-war order to fight integration and forge a new conservative politics in the early 1960s, to some extent pre-empting rather than reacting to the strongest activism of the civil rights movement.

For many decades, histories of the civil rights struggle were largely focused on the South. By the 1980s and 1990s, harrowing historical studies of racism and inequality in the North challenged the North-South division, which excused Northern racism, but these books still understood civil rights activism as a phenomenon of the South.[17] By the early 2000s, historians had begun to question this geographical division. In their 2003 edited collection, Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard pointedly criticized the omission of significant Northern freedom struggles, which reflected wideheld perceptions of segregation and racism as Southern

[16] These works include Freeman, *Working-Class New York;* Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*; Rieder, *Canarsie*; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*; Holtzman, *The Long Crisis*; Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*.

[17] For two excellent examples of this earlier work, see Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* and Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

issues.[18] Subsequent scholarship challenged the distinction made by politicians and the media between Northern *de facto* segregation and Southern *de jure* segregation as the product of concerted efforts by Northerners to evade problems of racist policy.[19] As recognition of Northern antipathy grew, questions arose about the nature and aims of groups that fought desegregation. In this context, Matthew Delmont published an account of the campaigns waged in various Northern cities, including New York, to transform school desegregation from a struggle over civil rights denied by decades of discriminatory policies into a fight over "busing" and "neighborhood schools".[20] Neighborhood schools and busing were politically charged terms, not neutral descriptors; this thesis will employ those terms advisedly as embodiments of anti-integration attitudes embraced by many New Yorkers. Enacting this rhetorical and political sleight-of-hand required active campaigns of protest and lobbying by activists, such as PAT, and misdirection by city officials, most notably the BOE.[21] While antibusing politics were the most consequential outcome of PAT's protests, this thesis extends Delmont's work by dissecting the origins, practices, and ideology of PAT as a topic in its own right, not just a component of antibusing politics, to evaluate the organization's influence on the broader political culture of New York City alongside the immediate issue of school desegregation. By tracing how PAT inherited a decade-long neighborhood schools movement and spurred the formation of a conservative political coalition in the 1965 mayoral election of William F. Buckley, Jr., this thesis reveals the roots and repercussions of the organization's 1964 anti-integration campaign.[22]

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[18] Jeanne Theoharis, "Introduction," in *Freedom North*, ed. Theoharis and Woodard, 5.

[19] Matthew Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth," in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, ed. Lassiter and Crespino, 25-27.

[20] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 2-3. For a helpful overview of resistance to civil rights efforts beyond school desegregation, see Purnell and Theoharis, eds., with Woodard, *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North*.

[21] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 23-25.

[22] Biographies of Buckley include Tanenhaus, *Buckley* and Bogus, *Buckley*.

The novel political currents in which Parents and Taxpayers participated and acted have often been described as symptoms of transitions from liberalism to conservatism or as simple reactionary politics. Joshua Freeman articulated what has become a standard arc for New York City history in the twentieth century, in which New Deal liberalism gave way to an exceptional post-war liberal order framed around labor power and progressive politics, only to disintegrate under pressure from the civil rights movement and the fiscal politics of the 1970s.[23] As deindustrialization and suburbanization troubled New York in the 1960s, some historians have argued that the "militancy" of civil rights activists and the excessive liberalism of politicians irked white ethnics—a loose term referring to Jews, Italians, Poles, and other European immigrant groups—leading to "backlash politics."[24] Civil rights historian Clarence Taylor has rightly rejected the arguments that community-oriented white ethnics acted in "backlash" to so-called "black militancy", since conservative groups such as PAT and discomfited liberal groups fought integration long before the civil rights movement became a national force.[25] Unlike Taylor, who views conservative and liberal opposition to integration as separate streams, this thesis investigates how Parents and Taxpayers' racism and active resistance simultaneously drew on and diverged from the city's liberal institutions, with the aim of uncovering how discriminatory attitudes pervaded different aspects of New York's political culture.

Finally, by analyzing Parents and Taxpayers as an example of grassroots, active resistance to integration, this thesis contributes a new story to the historiography of conservatism

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[23] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*. Freeman's vision of "New York exceptionalism" is an outstanding work of labor history and an inescapable representative of New York at its best, but it is imbued with more than a touch of idealism.

[24] Most notably, Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*. See also: Jacoby, *Someone Else's House*; Morris, *The Cost of Good Intentions*. For the same argument on the desegregation of schools and housing, see Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*; Rieder, *Canarsie*; Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*. For a contemporary version (from the 1960s), see Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*.

[25] Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 106-107. The works Taylor refers to explicitly are: Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*; Jacoby, *Someone Else's House*; and Morris, *The Cost of Good Intentions*.

in New York and nationwide. Surprisingly, 20th century histories of New York City lack an account of conservative politics from the New Deal until the 1990s, or even a substantial work linking conservative grassroots movements with electoral politics in a particular era. This thesis will compare Parents and Taxpayers with local and national scholarship of conservatism to demonstrate how the outer-borough politics of New York resembled the politics of suburbs in New York State, the South, and likely across the nation. In questioning the labels of conservatism and liberalism, this thesis will affirm that PAT's anti-integration campaign reflected elements of a local, liberal political culture but at the same time incorporated elements of a nationwide suburban political turn to conservatism.[26]

Structure

The first chapter traces the development between 1954 and 1963 of the anti-integration 'neighborhood school' concept by grassroots activists, who were the precursors to PAT, and by the New York City Board of Education (BOE). It first analyzes how the policies of post-war liberalism molded the city's segregated school system. Next, the chapter considers how the BOE maintained segregated schools through racist zoning gerrymandering and rhetorical appeals to de facto segregation and the neighborhood school concept. Finally, the chapter asserts that anti-integration activists constructed their claim to the 'neighborhood school' through a middle-class, racist ideology of individualist meritocracy and anti-statist democracy built around the rights of parents, taxpayers, and homeowners. This ideology bore similarities to suburban politics around New York City and in the Sunbelt South and defied simple labels of liberalism or conservatism.

[26] For studies of the links between grassroots efforts and electoral politics relevant in the North-South and urban-suburban debates, see for New York Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* and for the nation Matthew Lassiter's account of moderate integration and neighborhood schools in the Sunbelt South in Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

The second chapter centers on the critical year of 1964 to evaluate the significance of rhetoric from Parents and Taxpayers, civil rights activists, and the BOE in determining the ultimate defeat of integration. It first weaves together the origins of Parents and Taxpayers in the outer-borough neighborhood of Jackson Heights and the buildup to the civil rights school boycott of February 1964. From there, the chapter analyzes PAT's protests, boycotts, and written publications to understand how the organization built on the pre-existing neighborhood schools arguments about educational quality, merit, democracy, and the rights of parents, taxpayers, and homeowners and responded to civil rights activists. Throughout, the chapter emphasizes the degree to which PAT's rhetoric operated within the confines of the New York City liberal political economy by exploiting the media, the BOE, and educators' sympathy.

The third chapter focuses on the afterlives of the neighborhood schools movement and PAT's anti-integration campaign after 1964. Although the issue of integration lessened in urgency, PAT periodically mobilized locally to combat integration measures and employed a lobbyist in Albany to press for a neighborhood schools law. In electoral politics, PAT's leader, Rosemary Gunning, campaigned for city and state offices on the Conservative Party ticket alongside 1965 New York City mayoral candidate William F. Buckley, Jr, who galvanized an outer-borough coalition of voters in support of neighborhood schools, law and order, and opposition to liberal redistribution. Ultimately, I argue that PAT and the neighborhood schools movement catalyzed the formation of a political coalition that recast elements of post war New York's liberal political culture as tools against integration and pioneered a more dynamic, more right-wing brand of conservative politics.

Chapter 1—Inventing the 'Neighborhood School', 1954-1963

"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. [...] It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."[27]

—1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

"New York City's schools are neighborhood schools. To the extent that the City's residential areas are segregated, schools must necessarily reflect this pattern."[28]

—Introduction to the 1957 report of the New York City Board of Education's Commission on Integration.

"We have no intention whatsoever of long-distance bussing or bussing of children simply because of their color. If we bus children, it will be because there is room in one school and not in another, as we do now. We believe in the neighborhood school."[29]

—Superintendent of Schools William Jansen in a *New York Times* interview on March 23, 1957.

In the decade of contests over New York City school integration that followed the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* and led up to the 1964 civil rights boycott, the myth of de facto segregation assumed a new, insidious rhetorical form. Anti-integration grassroots movements, New York City Board of Education (BOE) officials, and politicians in city government began to couch their hostility to integration in terms of support for 'neighborhood schools' and opposition to long-distance 'busing' of students.[30] This chapter charts how and why the neighborhood school developed into a segregationist rhetorical weapon. It first dissects how the federal and local policies of post-war liberalism created a landscape of racist school segregation.[31] Next, the chapter analyzes how the New York City Board of Education (BOE)

[27] *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (U.S. Supreme Court, 1954).

[28] "Introduction to the Report to the Commission on Integration," March 1957, MS 1481, series Integration, Box 20, folder Commission on Integration Reports, Annie Stein Papers, 1954-1993, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York, 1.

[29] Peter Kihss, "Jansen Will Face Critics in Queens," *New York Times*, March 23, 1957.

[30] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26.

[31] On the role of federal funding, mortgaging, and lending practices in racist segregation in cities and suburbs, see Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Jackson, "Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal." On the link between post-war urban liberalism and segregation, see Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; and Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth," in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, ed. Lassiter and Crespino. On the influence of city-level planners in infrastructure and residential segregation, see Caro, *The Power Broker* and Wallock, "The Myth of the Master Builder."

thwarted the integration of schools after the 1954 decision in *Brown* by manipulating zoning boundaries and amplified the language of neighborhood schools later used by anti-integration activists.[32] Finally, this chapter argues that anti-integration activists manufactured a racist claim around neighborhood schools based on a middle-class ideology of individualist meritocracy, anti-statism, and the rights of parents, taxpayers, and homeowners. This neighborhood school ideology operated within the liberal New York City political climate but aligned itself with suburbanites around New York and in the Sunbelt South. In this way, anti-integration protesters deftly harnessed the city's BOE and local media to legitimize racist segregation of schools.

Post-War New York Liberalism and the Making of the Segregated Schooling System

In New York City, the policies of post-war municipal and federal governments created a prosperous middle-class lifestyle for much of the city, built on economic redistribution and social liberalism. Joshua Freeman asserts that New York City's extensive use of New Deal programs and evolution into a "social democratic polity" made it a "laboratory for a social urbanism committed to an expansive welfare state, racial equality, and popular access to culture and education."[33] The same post-war liberal policies that built this apparent redistributive utopia condoned employment discrimination by unions and bankrolled suburbanization and urban renewal policies, which systematically disadvantaged black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers through racist housing and educational segregation.[34] The problem of segregation in New York

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[32] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26. For examples of activists, BOE members, and media members using the term "neighborhood schools" throughout the 1950s, see Benjamin Fine,"City Will Get Master Plan To End School Segregation," *New York Times*, 14 December, 1956; Benjamin Fine,"Civic Groups Back Integration Plan," *New York Times*, 2 March, 1957; Leonard Buder, "Jansen Discerns Integration Gain," *New York Times*, 30 September, 1957; "Parent Group Asks Integration Action," *New York Times*, 25 July, 1959; Homer Bigart,"Whites in Queens Keep Pupils Home in Transfer Fights," *New York Times*, 15 September, 1959.

[33] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 55.

[34] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 223; Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 179-182; Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 15.

only became more glaring in the 1950s and early 1960s as millions of black and Puerto Rican immigrants arrived in the city, while nearly two million white New Yorkers left in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, typically moving to segregated suburbs just outside the city. Freeman suggests that even more white families stayed in the city but relocated into semi-suburban, single-family homes in Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the northern Bronx, areas that came to be known in New York historiography as 'the outer boroughs.'[35] Increasingly, New York's society split between those who benefited from government-backed opportunities for upward mobility—mostly white New Yorkers—and those whom city and federal policies excluded—mostly black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers.

The New York school system exemplified the woeful state of segregation in the post-war years. Educational segregation had been unconstitutional in New York State since 1938, but segregation in New York City schools *worsened* after the 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education.*[36] A 1955 study of the city's schools found that eight percent of the city's 639 elementary and junior high schools were segregated per the BOE's definition—ninety percent black or Puerto Rican students in elementary schools, eighty-five percent in junior high schools—while that same number reached fifteen percent in 1960 and twenty-three percent in 1965.[37] A school system which entered 1954 with zero schools with ninety percent of black or Puerto Rican students had sixty-one such schools in 1963.[38] More concerningly, forty-one percent of black and Puerto Rican students studied in segregated schools in 1960, a number that rose to forty-nine percent in 1966.[39] Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, civil rights activists denounced the New York school system as segregated, its teachers as ill-qualified, and its

[35] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 172-173; cf. Sanjek, *The Future of Us All*, 28-31.
[36] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 241.
[37] Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 15.
[38] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 248.
[39] Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 16.

facilities as inadequate for the success of black and Puerto Rican students.[40] Activists lobbied the BOE and city government to combat segregation and improve resource allocation.[41] Contrary to BOE claims, mere demographic change did not explain greater segregation. Instead, residential segregation and the BOE's racist gerrymandering of school zones combined to worsen, rather than improve, the situation.[42] By all objective measures, the school system had a serious problem of racist segregation and inadequate educational provision, but the city government, most notably the Board of Education, would resist charges of segregation with remarkable tenacity.

The Board of Education, the *Brown* decision, and the Birth of the 'De Facto' Myth

The origins of New York's citywide Board of Education lay in Progressive Era-reform at the end of the nineteenth century. Progressive reformers considered the BOE's old system of ward schools to embody Tammany Hall's political graft and inefficiency.[43] With the consolidation of New York City's five boroughs into one city in 1898 came the creation of a centralized and professionalized citywide Board of Education to replace the ward system. The reforms centralized control of the public schools in the Board, leaving local school boards with no real power; granted authority over business matters, most notably the establishment, removal, or consolidation of schools, as well as veto power to a lay Board of Education (the BOE can refer to either the whole educational apparatus or only the lay Board) chosen by the mayor; and gave a Board of Superintendents (later a single Superintendent of Schools) control over educational matters.[44] The rise of the Board of Education, whose form would remain the same

[40] Leonard Buder,"City Schools Invite Inquiry Of 'Jim Crow' Allegations," *New York Times*, 14 July, 1954; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 65, 131.

[41] Adina Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth': The Harlem Nine and New York City's School Desegregation Battles," in *Freedom North*, ed. Theoharis and Woodard, 66; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 131.

[42] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26.

[43] Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 130-131.

[44] Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 161.

into the 1950s and early 1960s, therefore coincided with the elimination of local control, whether organized as a ward system or as a fictitious right to neighborhood schools.

If the centralized Board came to assume as much control over the course of school desegregation in New York City, it was at least in part due to the inaction of Democratic mayor Robert F. Wagner and of other agencies of the liberal city administration. Wagner entered office in 1954 promising to fight racism and discrimination, and he started a Commission on Intergroup Relations (COIR—later the Commission on Human Rights) to study racist discrimination and implement statutes.[45] Some historians have criticized Wagner for adopting the framework of "race relations" rather than condemning "racism" outright, and have linked his ambivalence to the COIR's political ineffectiveness.[46] Wagner was reportedly bothered by civil rights activists' charges of school segregation soon after the *Brown* decision.[47] Nevertheless, Wagner considered school issues to be essentially non-political and, consequently, deferred the problem of school desegregation to the Board of Education.[48]

The New York City Board of Education claimed to abjure racist segregation but refused to admit its presence in New York City. After the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that racist segregation of schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, officials in New York City's Board of Education (BOE) expressed a sense of validation. In a statement following the *Brown* ruling, the Board of Education interpreted the rejection of segregation "as a legal and moral reaffirmation of our fundamental educational principles" and promised to combat segregation in the city's schools.[49] By contrast,

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[45] Clarence Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition to the New York City School-Integration Campaign," in *Civil Rights in New York City*, ed. Clarence Taylor, 98.
[46] Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth,'" 67-68.
[47] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 246.
[48] Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 256.
[49] Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 252.

New York Superintendent of Schools William E. Jansen struck a different tone in an interview in June 1954, a month after the ruling. Jansen was glad to reject Southern racism, but when asked about segregation in New York City's schools, he demurred: "We have natural segregation here—it's accidental."[50] The situation in New York, he emphasized, was entirely different from that in the South. Around the same time, Arthur Levitt, the president of the Board of Education, similarly swept aside civil rights activists' accusations of intentional segregation by way of contrast with the South. He concurred in "the emphatic repudiation and rejection of the term 'Jim Crow,' applied to our New York City schools. For the plain implication of 'Jim Crow' is a segregation willfully and designedly imposed."[51] The contrast—willful segregation in the South, accidental segregation in the North—would become central to the obstruction of integration in New York and elsewhere.

In the months after the *Brown* ruling, school officials in New York, such as Jansen and Leavitt, and other cities propagated an artificial distinction between 'de jure' segregation (encoded in law) in the South and 'de facto' segregation (present in fact, but not in law) in the North.[52] According to the BOE, New York's 'de facto' school segregation resulted from unfortunate but unavoidable residential segregation patterns, in contrast to the legally encoded de jure segregation of Southern cities.[53] By using the de facto myth, the BOE stonewalled in a bid to

[50] "P.S. Super OK's N. Y. Segregation," *Amsterdam News*, June 5, 1954.

[51] Buder,"City Schools Invite Inquiry." Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 246.

[52] The seminal article on the fiction of the de jure/de facto divide is Matthew Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth," in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism,* ed. Lassiter and Crespino, 26-27. Matthew Delmont notes the reticence of BOE officials to use the term "segregation" in the context of New York City. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 32. Superintendent William Jansen insisted that a 1955 report on the New York City schools replace "segregation" with "separation." Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth,'" 70.

[53] The *New York Times* quotes a report written by Jansen where he states: "no form of 'segregation' within the meaning of the historic decision of the Supreme Court [in *Brown*] is practiced or sanctioned in New York City." Leonard Buder, "Jansen Discerns Integration Gain," *New York Times*, 30 September, 1957. The *Times* itself perpetuated the de facto myth, see for example "Changing Residential Patterns Create Problems for Schools," *New York Times*, 7 September, 1958; Leonard Buder, "City Schools Cleared In Segregation Study," *New York Times*, 7 November, 1955; cf. Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 252-255.

deny governmental guilt for segregation in the city and, consequently, to evade governmental responsibility for desegregation. As Matthew Lassiter has convincingly argued in his seminal article on the topic, the myth "rested on a false binary between de jure school segregation that resulted from deliberate actions by government officials and de facto segregation caused by housing patterns allegedly beyond their control," despite the government's key role in shaping the dynamics of the private housing market.[54]

A defense of the neighborhood school emerged as part of what Lassiter calls a "color-blind" free market discourse adopted nationwide by self-professed liberals and overt segregationists alike to defend segregation.[55] Lassiter errs, however, when he treats the neighborhood school as a semi-objective entity, even if he terms it a segregationist tool, and when he dates a national 'white backlash' to the 1960s. In fact, the neighborhood school was a segregationist fiction manufactured by the Board of Education, grassroots activists, and the media starting after *Brown* in connection with the de facto myth. The neighborhood school was a symbol, therefore, of pre-existing and growing resistance to desegregation long before the civil rights era of the 1960s, not of 'white backlash.'[56]

The Strange Career of the 'Neighborhood School'

From 1954 until 1963, the Board of Education failed to substantially integrate New York City schools. On those rare occasions when the BOE implemented reform, albeit at a minimal scale, its leadership underplayed or denied the reality of school segregation in New York City and committed to the preservation of neighborhood schools.[57] The political and social battles

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[54] Lassiter, "De Jure/De Facto Segregation," 27.
[55] Ibid, 32.
[56] Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth,'" 66-71; Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 107.
[57] Leonard Buder, "Jansen Discerns Integration Gain," *New York Times*, 30 September, 1957.

over the integration of the New York City public school systems after *Brown* dictated the nature of the neighborhood school concept.[58] While the meaning of the neighborhood school was highly contested even in this period, the Board of Education and grassroots activists used the term to prevent the integration of schools, as the BOE legitimized and perpetuated widespread resistance and hysteria among white New Yorkers about involuntary busing away from neighborhood schools.[59] The BOE and activists asserted that neighborhood schools provided safety, convenience, and stronger community bonds. The Board's own Commission on Integration (COI) issued reports on New York City school segregation defending the neighborhood school in 1957.[60] In 1959, when white New Yorkers in the Glendale-Ridgewood area protested limited integration measures, the Board hastened to underplay the significance of integration as a policy aim.[61] Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Board, grassroots activists, and the media remade the discourse on desegregation into a story of neighborhood schools and busing, to the frustration of black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers and civil right activists who sought equal education for all.

Before any concerted action by anti-integration activists, the Board of Education had already adopted the language of the neighborhood school in a bid to assuage the fears of white parents. White resistance was not a response to BOE overreach, as Matthew Delmont demonstrates, but rather the assumption under which the Board and city officials operated.[62] The BOE's Commission on Integration (COI), a body consisting of lay Board members and civic

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[58] Matthew Lassiter delineates the development of a neighborhood schools defense in the suburbs of Charlotte, albeit in the late 1960s, in a series of responses to *Brown*. Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 122-137.

[59] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 34.

[60] "Report to the Commission on Integration," March 1957, MS 1481, series Integration, Box 20, folder "Commission on Integration Reports," Annie Stein Papers, 1954-1993, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

[61] Gene Currivan,"1,000 Bedford Pupils Ordered Transferred Out of Area by Bus," *New York Times*, 24 June, 1959; Kihss, "Jansen Will Face Critics."

[62] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 34.

leaders—most notably, Dr. Kenneth Clark, the educator and civil rights leader whose arguments on the detrimental effects of segregation were instrumental in the *Brown* decision—was tasked in late 1954 with studying and reporting on solutions to school segregation.[63] The Commission released the reports of its six sub-commissions in 1956 and finished amending them in 1957.[64] These reports illustrated, to varying degrees, the Board's embrace of the rhetorical language of neighborhood schools and of busing as justification for delays to desegregation.

The introduction to the report asserted: "New York City's schools are neighborhood schools. To the extent that the City's residential areas are segregated, schools must necessarily reflect this pattern."[65] In keeping with the introduction to the report, the sub-commission reports frequently naturalized the existence of segregated neighborhood schools. In a move criticized by civil rights activists, Superintendent William Jansen substantially modified the zoning sub-commission's report, which had initially called for rezoning in fringe areas to enable integration, to incorporate the rhetorical myth of the neighborhood school.[66] "The neighborhood school concept post," he affirmed, "is that the public [...] school[s] are essentially neighborhood or community institutions which serve the children of families living within an area…"[67] A neighborhood school ensured safety, Jansen suggested, enabled children to go home for lunch or when sick, and strengthened parental and community bonds. Jansen denounced busing used "solely for the purpose of integration" and enjoined BOE officials to take into consideration "the

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[63] "Racial Unity Set for City Schools," *New York Times*, December 24, 1954; Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 254.

[64] The six sub-commissions were: Zoning; Teachers Assignments and Personnel; Community Relations and Information; Educational Standards and Curriculum; Physical Plant and Maintenance; and Guidance, Educational Stimulation and Placement. "Report to the Commission on Integration," Stein Papers.

[65] "Introduction to the Report to the Commission on Integration," March 1957, MS 1481, series Integration, Box 20, folder "Commission on Integration Reports," Annie Stein Papers, 1954-1993, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

[66] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 34-35.

[67] "Text of Jansen Report on School Zoning," *New York Times*, 27 July, 1957.

degree of difficulty in winning over the community to the change" of zoning boundaries.[68] According to this interpretation, resistance by a "community" held a comparable weight to integration itself. Putting white New Yorkers' resistance on the same level as civil rights demands for integration was one of the most damaging acts perpetuated by the BOE and by media coverage.[69] White parents and teachers believed their demands to maintain a segregated school system were equally (if not more) valid as the right to equal education.

The response to the two most controversial COI sub-commission reports, on zoning and teacher assignments, exemplified white New Yorkers' entitlement to a neighborhood school and opposition to forced transfers. Schools with high proportions of black and Puerto Rican students, in addition to having older and more decrepit facilities, suffered from shortages of teachers, in particular experienced teachers, because educators tended to request transfer out of those establishments once their first assignment ended.[70] The Sub-Commission on Teaching Assignments considered unequal staffing "morally indefensible," and advocated for a teacher assignment policy based "on the needs of the schools, rather than on preference of teachers and principals," encouraging the BOE to transfer white teachers as necessary "though it may be difficult to get teachers [sic] acceptance at first."[71] At the same time, the report linked staff shortages to teachers' aversion to working in "an older building in an unattractive neighborhood" and cited black and Puerto Ricans students' "cultural disadvantages" as a reason for higher staffing needs.[72] The sub-commission paired a rights-based statement in favor of equal staffing

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 35-36.

[70] "Introduction to the Report of the COI," Stein Papers, 3; "Report of the Sub-Commission on Teachers Assignments and Personnel to the Commission on Integration," 7 December, 1956, MS 1481, series Integration, Box 20, folder "Commission on Integration Reports," Annie Stein Papers, 1954-1993, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, New York, 2-3.

[71] "Report of the Sub-Commission on Teachers Assignments," Stein Papers, 5, 10.

[72] "Report of the Sub-Commission on Teachers Assignments," Stein Papers, 3.

with a tacit acknowledgment of teachers' prejudice against working in "unattractive neighborhoods."

In New York City educators' response to the teachers' assignments and zoning reports, they more readily defended their rights and those of parents to remain at segregated neighborhood schools than they did black and Puerto Rican students' rights to equal education. The New York Teachers Guild and the High School Teachers Association decried the blow to morale due to "forced rotation of teachers and unjustified transportation of children from neighborhood schools."[73] Assignments and transfers, which had long been the BOE's prerogative, now became symbols of anti-democratic, top-down government interference in education. Opposition to the allegedly undemocratic process of integration would serve as a rallying cry for segregationist activists in the Glendale-Ridgewood neighborhood of Queens in 1959.

In 1959, groups with names such as the Glendale Taxpayers Association, the Ridgewood Taxpayers Association, and the Committee for the Preservation of the Neighborhood Schools and Equity denounced the BOE's 1959 busing of a limited number of students from Bedford-Stuyvesant, in Brooklyn, to a nearby school in the Glendale-Ridgewood neighborhood of Queens.[74] White residents first marched on City Hall in a protest, then boycotted their (segregated) local schools to contest the transfer of three to four hundred black and Puerto Rican students from schools in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the potential expansion of open enrollment policies.[75] Rather than racism, these parents pointed to the taxpayer expense involved in the transportation of students and the apparently preferential treatment afforded to children from

[73] Benjamin Fine, "Civic Groups Back Integration Plan," *New York Times*, 2 March, 1957.

[74] Homer Bigart, "Whites in Queens Keep Pupils Home in Transfer Fights." *New York Times*, 15 September, 1959; Currivan,"1,000 Bedford Pupils Ordered Transferred."

[75] Bigart,"Whites in Queens Keep Pupils Home;" Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 39.

outside the neighborhood. In doing so, protesters exaggerated the extent and novelty of busing, which, as Matthew Delmont has pointed out, had been used by New York and other cities to maintain segregated schools for years.[76] Protesters held signs with slogans such as "Our Votes Count Too!," "We Don't Oppose True Integration," and "Stop Transplanting Neighborhoods."[77] More explicit graffiti (painted over by staff) had read "Blacks Go Home."[78] Like teachers in 1957, anti-integration activists reacted to the smallest instances of integration with a middle-class ideology of neighborhood schools and anti-busing, which rested on anti-integration activists' identities as parents, as taxpayers, and as democratic citizens so as to deny overt racism.

Figure 1.1. A photograph of the protesters in Glendale-Ridgewood, with signs showcasing the neighborhood schools argument against "anti-democratic" integration.[79]

[76] The *New York Times* pointed out that 39,000 students had used buses to attend schools the previous year. Leonard Buder, "City Board Backs Negro Pupil Shift," New York Times, 15 August 1959; Delmont, Why Busing Failed, 29.

[77] Bigart,"Whites in Queens Keep Pupils Home in Transfer Fights."

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

The neighborhood school became intertwined with broader struggles over New York City's political economy beyond integration. Similarly to the protesters in Glendale-Ridgewood, the New Yorkers who advocated for neighborhood schools tended to live in segregated outer-borough areas, which strongly resembled suburbs in New York City and across the nation, though they were inside city lines. These individuals would have likely supported, and benefited from, the policies of the New Deal and of post-war liberalism.[80] Their anti-integration stance, which one could label as conservatism, nevertheless fit comfortably within the liberal political economy of New York City, as city officials became increasingly preoccupied with keeping the tax base formed by white New Yorkers. Neighborhood school advocates were undoubtedly aware of the city's desperation and exploited it to maintain their political and social position.

Anti-integration activists who clamored for neighborhood schools articulated an ideology that functioned within the political economy of the post-war liberal city but increasingly resembled suburban politics outside New York City and across the country. In a revealing comparison, Matthew Lassiter has convincingly established how middle-class, liberal suburbanities who defended neighborhood schools in late 1960s Charlotte, North Carolina, "became the architects of a color-blind discourse that gained national traction as an unapologetic defense of the class privileges and consumer rights of the middle-class suburbs."[81] Like the Glendale-Ridgewood protesters and likeminded New Yorkers, Charlotte's Concerned Parents Association harnessed identities as homeowners, taxpayers, and parents to denounce what they deemed unconstitutional and undemocratic court-ordered busing without appealing to unfiltered racism.[82] Together, the responses of teachers and anti-integration activists in New York and

[80] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 172-174. Mason Williams has described the development of these internal suburbs with high proportions of white New Yorkers as "internal white flight," the counterpart to white flight out of the city, in Williams, *City of Fortune*, xxvi.

[81] Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 122.

[82] Ibid, 152. In Charlotte, unlike in New York, courts ordered integration using fairly extensive bus transportation.

Charlotte suggest that political developments in the 1950s and early 1960s may have depended as much on class and locality as they did on self-identified liberalism or conservatism. This suggests a greater degree of alignment in the political attitudes of outer-borough New Yorkers with middle-class suburban residents in the North and South.

New York City's struggles over integration in the 1950s and early 1960s, shaped by the rhetoric of neighborhood schools and busing, dealt with the nature and validity of different rights and the meaning of equality. These conflicts defied the labels of liberal and conservative. The federal and local policies of post-war liberalism, which had transformed New York into a bastion of social democracy and economic redistribution, simultaneously created the segregated neighborhoods where anti-integration protesters resided and the segregated neighborhood schools where their children received an education.[83] Anti-integration protesters, by presenting the neighborhood as an objective, unchanged entity, rather than a fluid terrain molded by government policy, naturalized the actively segregated spatial layout of New York City. Members of the post-war city government and Board of Education favored policies to keep white residents and legitimized the racist rhetoric of neighborhood schools and busing used by anti-integration protesters. Protesters, meanwhile, did not necessarily consider their racist attitudes regarding integration to be antithetical to liberalism.

By late 1963, anti-integration protesters, the BOE, and city and federal government had established the language of neighborhood schools and busing as a veiled but powerful alternative to explicit anti-integration stances. The neighborhood schools defense of racist segregation reflected top-down government policies and bottom-up grassroots segregationist activity. As the civil rights movement grew in strength, the stage was set for a confrontation in which a vocal

[83] Erickson and Highsmith, "The Neighborhood Unit," 2.

minority of anti-integration activists, aided by a hesitant BOE, coalesced under the aegis of Parents and Taxpayers to fight civil rights activists and their supporters.

Chapter 2—Staging a Grassroots Movement Against Integration, 1964

An observer standing outside of Public School 149 (P.S. 149) in Jackson Heights on October 7th, 1964, would have witnessed a skillful performance of political theater. As school buses prepared to depart on that Wednesday morning, a crowd of three hundred people "staged a riot," in the fitting words of one newspaper account.[84] The rioters, associated with the Jackson Heights chapter of Parents and Taxpayers (PAT), opposed the pairing for integration of P.S. 149, an institution consisting predominantly of white students, with P.S. 92 in Corona, an institution consisting predominantly of black students. More broadly, PAT opposed the Board of Education's (BOE) plan for the integration of New York City public schools. On Monday and Tuesday of the same week, these parents had defied the new pairing by bringing their sixty-five children to P.S. 149 instead of their new assignment at P.S. 92, prompting the BOE to threaten arrests.[85] Far from being cowed, the PAT members relished the spectacle of this tussle. Screaming and punching, parents resisted police officers but eventually relented as sixty-five parents were arrested, in many cases while cradling their children. Newspaper images in the courtroom captured a range of reactions: gleeful smiles, defiant words, and tearful outbursts.[86]

The actions of PAT on October 7th, remarkable as they were, embodied beliefs, methods and rhetoric developed over the course of a year-long fight in 1964 against the most recent attempt to integrate public schools. PAT drew from over a decade of anti-integration movements in New York City, as discussed in the previous chapter, but, crucially, also forged forceful, and wide-ranging politics as part of its fight against desegregation. This chapter first weaves together the origins of integration efforts by civil rights activists and the BOE and the founding of PAT in

[84] Thomas Pugh and Arthur Mulligan, "Arrest 65 Sit-In Parents, 300 Riot," *New York Daily News*, 7 October, 1964.

[85] "City Threatening Arrests in Sit-In at Queens School," *New York Times*, 7 October, 1964.

[86] Pugh and Mulligan, "Arrest 65 Sit-In Parents."

the outer-borough area of Jackson Heights, Queens. The remainder of the chapter analyzes the methods, rhetoric, and beliefs of PAT by studying protests, articles, and pamphlets to appreciate how PAT forced the BOE to curtail and, eventually, halt substantive integration. Matthew Delmont has demonstrated how PAT and other anti-integration groups substituted the concept of busing for the protection of civil rights via media coverage and influenced Congressional decisions on the subject.[87] This chapter builds on Delmont's work to emphasize how PAT's politics extended beyond the immediate issue of integration to other topics, such as the relation of educational quality, merit, and discrimination, and the links between education, family, and democracy, which remain salient to this day. By understanding how and why the racism of PAT members functioned, this chapter contests a "literature [that] naturalizes," in the words of Jeanne Theoharis, "rather than investigates, why racism becomes the chosen response for many politically alienated working-class whites" and, in PAT's case, middle-class white people.[88] Finally, this chapter uncovers how the grassroots activism of PAT challenged the chosen and ascribed labels of liberal, conservative, white ethnic and, most importantly, New Yorker amid a period of tremendous political fluidity. In detailing PAT's active anti-integration campaign, this chapter contests the dominant historiography of post-war New York articulated by Joshua Freeman, which emphasizes how the city's working-class liberalism produced prosperity and relative social harmony during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s.[89] PAT's active subversion of

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[87] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 52.

[88] Jeanne. Theoharis, "'I'd Rather Go to School in the South': How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm," in *Freedom North*, ed. Theoharis and Woodard, 140. Theoharis is directly discussing Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*. For a book with a similar approach to Formisano on white working-class and middle-class resistance in New York City schools—in the 1968 community control fight—see Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*. For a sympathetic account of white residents' resistance to housing integration, see Rieder, *Canarsie*. Other books sympathetic to white liberals and working-class white people on integration include Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*; Jacoby, *Someone Else's House*; Morris, *The Cost of Good Intentions*.

[89] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 55. For a positive, if balanced, account of Mayor Wagner's policies in the 1950s under the "race relations" framework, see Clarence Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition to the New York City School-Integration Campaign," in *Civil Rights in New York City*, ed. Clarence Taylor. For a more

key elements of the post-war order against integration contests the notion of liberal triumph by bringing to light racist and conservative elements within the city's political culture.

Setting the Stage for an Integration Fight

The decade of school integration efforts in New York City after *Brown v. Board of Education* consisted of rhetorical commitments to integration by the BOE contradicted by minimal concrete measures and resisted by anti-integration activists.[90] The BOE's planned transfer of a small number of Bedford-Stuyvesant black and Puerto Rican students to a neighboring school with a majority of white students mobilized Glendale-Ridgewood parents in the name of the neighborhood school.[91] In 1960, the BOE, under pressure from civil rights activists, implemented an Open Enrollment policy that allowed a small proportion of black students to voluntarily transfer away from overcrowded schools to institutions with a majority of white students, but only five percent of eligible students (already a small minority) chose to participate, in large part due to the Board's unwillingness to advertise the measure.[92] By August 1963, the BOE had pledged to rezone segregated schools in fringe areas and to implement (in a restricted number of cases) the pairing of schools, whereby children in neighboring, segregated schools would be integrated by combining all children from grades 1-3 into one integrated school and all children from grades 4-6 in the other integrated school.[93] The plan paired five school duos.[94] Civil rights groups were frustrated by the highly limited scope of the plan, the last straw in a long string of BOE hedges, as Superintendent of Schools Calvin Gross refused to enforce

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critical assessment of racism in the 1950s, see Adina Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth': The Harlem Nine and New York City's School Desegregation Battles," in *Freedom North*, ed. Theoharis and Woodard.

[90] Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 107.

[91] Homer Bigart, "Whites in Queens Keep Pupils Home in Transfer Fights." *New York Times*, 15 September, 1959.

[92] Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 31-33; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, 25.

[93] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 120-124.

[94] Joan Hanauer and Cy Egan, "Absenteeism 40% to 100%; Pickets March," *New York Journal-American*, 14 September, 1964.

"involuntary transfers" of white students (from schools with very high percentages of white students), and activists declared their intention to boycott schools in February.[95] Anti-integrationist white New Yorkers, meanwhile, were outraged by the plan, despite its limited scope.

PAT emerged in this context of white outrage. On October 3rd, 1963, the *New York Times* informed readers that a citywide council against "involuntary mass transfers" and in favor of "neighborhood schools" had coalesced.[96] The PAT Coordinating Council declared itself "opposed [to] 'segregated schools'" but denounced the newest attempts to integrate New York City schools as block-busting measures.[97] In its defense of the neighborhood school, PAT referred to safety risks, costs associated with transfers, and potential damage to real estate values, echoing the rhetoric of the neighborhood schools movement discussed in Chapter 1.[98] Most strikingly, PAT compared the alleged overreach of state power in the matter of school integration to slavery, stating in a circular sent to parents: "children are not chattels of the state."[99] The stakes of the integration fight or, in PAT's terms, the fights over "neighborhood schools," were existential.

PAT's origins lay in Jackson Heights in Queens, a middle-class neighborhood of Jews and Italians living in suburban-style, small houses. These individuals zealously embraced the gospel of upward mobility and meritocracy and looked down on those deemed deficient—typically black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers.[100] They were likely participants in the massive migration of white New Yorkers from Manhattan or dense areas of other boroughs to the outer-borough, suburban areas of Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, often done, in part, to avoid living in

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[95] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 120-124.

[96] Peter Kihss, "New Group Fights Mass Pupil Shifts," *New York Times*, 3 October, 1963.

[97] Kihss, "New Group Fights Mass Pupil Shifts."

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

[100] "The Old Neighborhood: Jackson Heights," *New York Post*, 29 December, 1969; Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York*, 26.

integrated areas.[101] While PAT claimed membership throughout the city, its support (and that for associated anti-integration groups) was strongest in these outer borough areas, particularly in Queens.[102] PAT's leader, Rosemary Gunning, exemplified this outer-borough identity. Born of Irish Catholic stock in the outer-borough area of Ridgewood, Queens (she participated in the 1959 neighborhood schools anti-integration protests), her father and grandfather were regulars in the local Democratic organization, and she herself worked for the party. Gunning worked an unremarkable law career, married, and immersed herself in local civic associations, moving from Bedford-Stuyvesant, which was rapidly absorbing high numbers of black migrants in the 1940s, back to Ridgewood.[103] Gunning was exceptional in one capacity—she was not a parent, perhaps a telling indication that PAT was not solely concerned with children's education. She was selected as the leader of PAT for her calm and careful manner of expression, key qualities as PAT sought to defeat civil rights activists' and the city's efforts to integrate schools.

Upstaging the Civil Rights Integration Movement

At the beginning of the year 1964, the supporters of integration appeared to have the upper hand in the struggle. On February 3rd, 1964, civil rights icon Bayard Rustin and local minister and activist Milton A. Galamison coordinated a boycott which saw close to half a million students—including African-American, Puerto Rican, and white pupils—miss classes in protest of school segregation and unequal schooling conditions.[104] The boycott embodied the frustration of black and Puerto Rican parents and activists with the BOE's decade-long failure—following the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*—to implement meaningful measures for the integration of schools in New York City.[105] Less than a week before the protest,

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[101] Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 172-174.

[102] Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 84-85, 89.

[103] Bernard Bard, "Candidate From PAT," *New York Post*, 11 August, 1965; Bernard Eismann, "That Gunning Woman," *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 January, 1965.

[104] "Boycott Cripples City Schools," *New York Times*, 4 February, 1964.

[105] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 119-121.

civil rights leaders had rejected the BOE's most recent lackluster proposal for integration.[106] As the boycott showed, only a substantial transformation of the school system would satisfy the aims of integration. The BOE, though publicly dismissive of the boycott, reluctantly began to consider changes to accelerate integration.[107]

Protests against school integration were not new by the time PAT began to debate a response to the tremendous civil rights school boycott of February 3rd, 1964. The possibility of political support for substantive school desegregation, however, was more serious and scary than on previous occasions. Following the boycott, Bayard Rustin proclaimed: "I think we are on the threshold of a new political movement."[108] Although BOE president James Donovan condemned the boycott as a "lawless course of action" and dismissed it as a "fizzle," he undeniably felt the pressure.[109]

PAT and other groups opposed to integration—or as they put it, opposed to involuntary transfers of students—disagreed over the best course of action. In mid-February, a Queens chapter proposed to file a lawsuit against the use of funds for "forced pupil transfers," which threatened the "preservation of neighborhood public schools." Other PAT chapters disagreed, calling the suit "completely without merit."[110] Their objection rested on timing: since the board had yet to implement the alleged forcible removal, a lawsuit would have no action to contest. The incident revealed, some suggested, the struggles of a young organization consisting of independent chapters.[111] Considering their next steps, however, one can also surmise that PAT favored a more public form of protest over the ostensible privacy of the courtroom.

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[106] Fred Powledge, "Monday School Boycott Stands; Rights Group Reject City Plan," *New York Times*, 30 January, 1964.

[107] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 141-142.

[108] Quoted in Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 142.

[109] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 142.

[110] Fred Powledge,"Parents Group Divided on Suit," *New York Times*, 13 February 1964.

[111] Powledge,"Parents Group Divided."

On March 12th, more than 10,000 protesters associated with PAT and the Brooklyn Joint Council for Better Education marched on the BOE headquarters and City Hall. The protesters decried the planned pairing of schools with a majority of white students and schools with a majority of black and Puerto-Rican students. Describing the crowd, the *New York Times* commented on the high proportion of women—seventy percent—and of homeowners.[112] Attendees held signs with messages such as "Keep our children in neighborhood schools" and "I will not put my children on a bus" as they marched on a dreary, cold day.[113] Despite the weather, the protesters were downright cheerful, singing and smiling for the cameras of national television networks. One jubilant woman even crowed: "This is the greatest day of my life, I'm going to remember this when I'm old and gray."[114] This crowd of protesters adopted several distinct organizational methods and rhetoric from seemingly contradictory sources.

PAT co-opted the tactics of civil rights activists in the South and in New York City, but also extended them to suit particular aims. The protest march, already synonymous with supporters of desegregation efforts, became the object of media fascination when used by segregationists. "The newness of the white protest march also helped emphasize the view that white citizens were entering the school fight for the first time," Matthew Delmont argues, "after being pushed too far by school board officials."[115] White protesters asserted their rights and those of their children to neighborhood schools. In doing so, they appealed to an idea with specific roots in earlier integration debates, as covered in the previous chapter, rather than some longstanding constitutional or moral right. New York City School Superintendents William Jansen and John Theobald conjured up the concept of neighborhood schools in the late 1950s as

[112] "More Than 10,000 March in Protest On School Pairing," *New York Times*, 13 March, 1964.
[113] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 23.
[114] "More Than 10,000 March."
[115] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 25-26.

a way to deflect political demands for desegregation.[116] School segregation assigned students living in close proximity to different institutions as a matter of racist policy; it distorted and manufactured neighborhoods and neighborhood schools. The pairing of P.S. 149 and P.S. 92 illustrates this reality—the two schools were separated by only five blocks.[117] Even when areas or school districts actually—without questionable boundary-drawing—comprised majorities of white, black, or Puerto Rican students, they were the product of racist mortgage redlining policies implemented by the federal government in the 1930s that enabled housing segregation and, by extension, school segregation.[118] The segregated neighborhood school which PAT framed as a longstanding right independent of government intervention was in actuality the fruit of decades of local and federal action.

Rhetorically, PAT placed its demands for neighborhood schools—for segregation—on the same level as civil rights activists' demands for equal schooling conditions and desegregation. Just as civil rights activists famously sang songs of freedom, including during the February 3rd boycott, PAT members sang a plea against alleged state overreach:

We've got troubles of our own,
So why not keep us close to home?
Please, oh, please, leave us alone,
Stop zoning, zoning, zoning.[119]

PAT's complaints ignored that BOE zoning had created segregated neighborhood schools. The media helped PAT by giving protesters ample print space and air time alongside civil rights activists, which allowed news of the march to spread nationally and, crucially, to enter Congressional debates on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, during which Southern senators cited the

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[116] Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth,'" 68; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 66.
[117] "City Threatening Arrests."
[118] The report of the State Education Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Human Relations and Community explicitly stated: "School segregation is a by-product of patterns of segregation in settlement and housing." Quoted in Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 165.
[119] "More Than 10,000 March."

"15,000 white mothers" as evidence of the national opposition to desegregation and of the North's hypocrisy in the matter of busing. Opposition to busing, Delmont shows, penetrated legislation and public discourse through articles and footage of PAT's city hall protest, resulting in a policy that effectively enabled Northern schools to segregate with impunity under the guise of the de facto segregation myth.[120]

PAT's influence on national legislation undeniably relied on the cooperation of most mainstream media outlets who shared some, if not all, of their views on desegregation, but the organization's local and national strength also arose from its intentional and active dramatization of political and social issues. Members of PAT, like civil rights activists, planned and projected images of their movement for popular consumption.

The name Parents and Taxpayers already broadcast an assertion about which kinds of people could make legitimate claims on the state and how they could make those claims. First, the group contended "that they occupied a higher level of citizenship than black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers," Delmont asserts, "who were also parents and taxpayers."[121] Second, PAT was one of many segregationist groups in the South and the North to deflect accusations of racism using the language of parenthood, taxpaying, and homeownership.[122] Patterns of home ownership reflected, as previously mentioned, a system of racist segregation. While segregationists commonly appealed to home ownership, PAT's appeal was exceptional in the context of New York City, where an overwhelming majority—close to eighty percent—of inhabitants were renters.[123] Thus, PAT protesters who referenced homeownership demarcated themselves not only from black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers who were systematically

[120] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26-28.

[121] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 26.

[122] For another example of how Northern white liberals used homeownership against integration, see Mary Barr, "Segregation Without Segregationists: How a White Community Avoided Integration," in *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North*, ed. Purnell and Theoharis, with Woodard.

[123] Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City*, 2; Holtzman, *The Long Crisis*, 59.

excluded from the housing ownership market but also from white New Yorkers who could not buy a home. Stressing homeownership would have been far more intuitive in the suburbs, where homeownership was the norm, but by the early 1960s, the reality and threat of white inhabitants' suburban flight frightened New York City politicians intent on maintaining their tax base.[124] PAT cannily exploited the city's desire to retain homeowners: it transformed the issue of civil rights and integration into the issue of busing and expanded the scope of the school integration debate into a discussion of the city's broader political economy. The collective straddled the line between urban and suburban politics. One PAT supporter's proud comparison of Queens to the city summed up these neighborhood politics of urban suburbia: "You know Queens? There's a lot of second- and third-generation families out here. It's a real neighborly place—not like New York City where nobody cares who lives next door and nobody owns their home."[125] PAT members lived in New York City and purported to defend their neighborhood, but also premised their continued presence in the city on the reversal of desegregation through school pairing.

In March of 1964, a second civil rights boycott led by Galamison alone attracted only half as many protesters due to internal differences over tactics, decreasing the odds of substantial BOE modifications to its integration plan.[126] The situation appeared to shift in favor of integration in May, however, when a report released by the New York State Education Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Human Relations and Community criticized the inaction of the New York City BOE and produced a plan for integration more comprehensive than city proposals.[127] PAT, already opposed to the city's plan, railed against the Committee's

[124] For statistics on white New Yorkers' flight after World War II, see Zeitz, *White Ethnic New York*, Chapter 1.

[125] Peggy Streit, "Why They Fight for the P.A.T.," *New York Times Magazine*, 20 September, 1964.

[126] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 161; "School Boycott is Half as Large as the First One," *New York Times*, 17 March, 1964.

[127] Civil rights groups were sharply divided in their support for the Committee's plan, as some felt the document omitted essential components. Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 165-167.

plan in letters, articles, and pamphlets throughout the spring and summer, and began to warn of a boycott of schools on September 14th.[128] The boycott and subsequent PAT actions, including the trespassing arrests at P.S. 149, combined with divisions among the BOE and white liberals—in and out of government—to sink the integration project by the end of 1964.

Following the March 16th civil rights boycott and the release of the State Committee's report, PAT spent the summer making media appeals as they attempted to meet with James Donovan, president of the BOE.[129] During this period, PAT members began to mention the possibility of a school boycott in September, although the idea was initially dismissed.[130] Late in the summer of 1964, having failed to meet with the BOE, PAT, Parents and Citizens, and the Joint Council for Better Education, all anti-integration organizations, co-wrote a pamphlet entitled "Education Decline in New York City."[131] Ostensibly designed for distribution to parents in areas of school pairing, the pamphlet outlined PAT's arguments against the State Committee's integration plan as an assault on educational quality. A remarkable document, this pamphlet underscores how PAT's fight against integration pushed the group to express its views on a range of educational and social issues.

The document's titular focus is on the Board's alleged destruction of educational standards. In a dramatic opener, the authors stated: "We are all aware of certain measures [for integration] that the Board of Education is planning which will cause the destruction of our school system." "Certain measures" undeniably stood for integration. The authors decried the removal of I.Q. tests; the alleged elimination of special progress, talent, and intellectually gifted

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[128] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 167-68.

[129] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 168.

[130] "Planner of White Boycott," *New York Times*, August 12, 1964.

[131] Pamphlet "Educational Decline in New York City," New York Police Department Intelligence Unit Records, Small Organizations Files, 1931-1988, box 35, folder 53 (Parents and Taxpayers News Clippings—1 of 4). New York City Municipal Archives, New York City Department of Records and Information Services, 31 Chambers Street, New York, New York.

classes; and the supposed incorporation of the "600" schools, controversial institutions designed for 'socially maladjusted' individuals that became vehicles of segregation.[132] A distracted reader might miss the place of integration, but a closer look proves instructive. According to PAT, the BOE wanted to eliminate these standards "so as to further Racial Balance," leading to the inclusion of underqualified students or, even worse, "the INCLUSION OF PROBLEM CHILDREN IN THE STUDENT BODY."[133] Ironically, the authors accused the BOE of speaking in euphemisms, even though their pamphlet was riddled with very thinly veiled racist slights against integration and against black and Puerto Rican students.

Throughout the pamphlet, the authors blamed the integration plan for the creation of an academic double standard in the name of "strictly heterogeneous classes" and for the overall degradation of education quality. Valuable effort and funding, the authors claimed, was being wasted on busing students enormous distances, on hastily improving paired schools, on building monstrous educational parks, and on "gerrymandering of school zones."[134] Meanwhile, the elimination of I.Q. tests and the supposed abolition of class standards and of city college admissions standards hurt talented students—in the pamphlet writers' eyes, white students—and failed to help students of a "deprived background"—in the pamphlet writers' eyes, black and Puerto Rican students—catch up. All students would suffer, but especially talented white students subjected to "another means of discrimination and educational deprivation."[135]

In the conclusion of the pamphlet, the authors' tone, already fearmongering in earlier passages, took a more extreme turn. Integration, they declared, was imminent, despite "how unsafe it is for any child of any race, in any neighborhood, to travel by bus, foot, or public

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.

transportation away from his immediate neighborhood," despite "all the Juvenile Delinquency running rampant in our streets."[136] Slightly later, the authors asked: "Is the family and home to be divided in these times of strain and nuclear threat???" Undisguised fear permeated these racist allusions to safety, crime, and domestic unrest, where the neighborhood stood as a haven amid a city of constant danger. The authors' untethered prose hinted at the true discomfort they experienced.

Despite this pamphlet's astonishing density of claims and of apparent supporting evidence, its contents were "full of lies and distortions," to borrow the phrasing of a prominent pro-integration organization at the time.[137] One should read the pamphlet as an example of PAT's rhetoric and its understanding of social relations, not a fact sheet. As the same pro-integration organization indicated, educational tests and standards would not change substantially under the new integration plan. "Achievement" would remain the key measure, but it would be assessed using the (fairly new) standardized tests—Regents, Iowa, and SAT/PSAT—instead of the unreliable I.Q. test.[138] Pairing as part of integration would only improve educational standards, not lower them.

This indirect exchange of ideas illustrates the slippery transition from school desegregation, a debate on the equal provision of rights and resources for students' education, to school quality, a debate on the differentiation of students according to alleged ability. In the pamphlet's historicization, educational provision had been, until now, of high quality, but integration threatened that lofty idea. Partly, PAT and the other authors' focus on educational quality responded to the interest of civil rights activists in the topic. As Clarence Taylor has

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[136] Ibid.

[137] UPA letter on PAT "Education" pamphlet, Board of Education Records, series 911 (United Parents Associations, 1921-1989), Subseries 10, Box 72, Folder 94, New York City Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Information Services, Industry City, Brooklyn, NY.

[138] Ibid.

described, activists decried the disproportionate rate of inexperienced teachers, poor physical conditions, and inferior service at schools with a majority of black or Puerto Rican students.[139] In civil rights activists' view, the decline of education quality was the consequence of segregation, not integration. Yet educational quality also divided civil rights activists and their purportedly liberal supporters. For example, teachers often used some of the same phrases as PAT, from characterizing black and Puerto Rican students as "problem children" to blaming learning struggles on "culturally deprived homes."[140] Thus PAT's positions, though clearly going against the integration movement, were sometimes in line with certain elements of the supposedly liberal persuasion, perhaps strategically modified to match the sensibilities of self-identified progressives.

Clinching the Final Act

Cognizant of these fractures among civil rights activists, liberals, and the BOE, PAT sprung into action on September 14th, 1964, spearheading a boycott of their own that saw 275,368 students absent from New York City schools, including 235,087 absentees from elementary and junior high schools—around 31 percent of total elementary and junior high school students.[141] Simultaneously, they started private schools to teach students who were kept outside of classes, although these were short-lived.[142] Both the boycott and the establishment of separate schools mimicked the tactics of civil rights activists, and they prompted the BOE to offer PAT a meeting with its leaders.

Perhaps the similar tactics should have been less surprising, since PAT members repeated over and over their alleged support for integration and for the improvement of education for

[139] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 80-81.

[140] Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth,'" 68.

[141] Leonard Buder, "275,638 Pupils Stay Home in Integration Boycott," *New York Times*, 15 September, 1964; Clarence Taylor, "Conservative and Liberal Opposition," 108-9.

[142] Bernard Bard, "Queens Co-op Tenants Act to Block First PAT school," *New York Post*, September 20, 1964.

black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers. In a typical refrain, one member stated: "We're not against integration, we're for it. We just don't want our children to have to take long, unnecessary bus rides."[143] PAT members consistently expressed their frustration—actual or feigned—at being labeled as racist or bigoted. The group's leader, executive secretary Rosemary Gunning, exemplified this approach. She emphasized that she lived with black New Yorkers in her old neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant and understood their problems. Forced integration, she suggested, would only breed prejudice and damage the psychological health of children.[144] In a later interview, she remarked: "I wish we [PAT and civil rights leaders] could be friends."[145] Civil rights activists understandably boycotted any meeting with the BOE and PAT and condemned the latter for "attempting to sabotage" even the slightest efforts at integration.[146] In these interactions, PAT always positioned itself as a reasonable interlocutor willing to discuss issues with seriousness, with members adopting remarkably consistent language. PAT excelled at staging these interactions in a favorable light.

PAT's flair for political drama was on display in its last major production of the year, on October 8th. The previous two days, Jackson Heights PAT members had brought their children to P.S. 149, instead of allowing buses to take the children to their new school (courtesy of pairing) P.S. 92 in Corona. That Wednesday, they confronted police and, eventually, sixty-five parents were arrested for trespassing (the charges were later dismissed).[147] The images of the protests, arrests, and court proceedings told a carefully choreographed story of the events. In one image, Joan Addabbo, leader of the Jackson Heights PAT, stood with her two children, all well-dressed and smiling, a prelude. Subsequent images showed women defying the police. Then, as the

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[143] Carl Pelleck and John Cashman, "Boycott Rolls at Bowl Alley Hq.," *New York Post*, September 14, 1964.

[144] "Planner of White Boycott," *New York Times*, 12 August, 1964.

[145] "PAT wants to Be 'Friends' with Civil Rights Leaders," *Long Island Press*, 16 October, 1964.

[146] "PAT wants to Be 'Friends.'"

[147] Pugh and Mulligan, "Arrest 65 Sit-In Parents."

arrests began, women carrying their babies were led into vehicles. A child cried in one image, likely confused, while a woman was overcome by emotions in another. But finally, the children sat down in a line along the court benches. Parents changed diapers and gave kids their lunches.[148] At the end of it all, one could almost forget that PAT parents had defied the law, violently confronted police officers, and berated them as part of a fight against the desegregation of New York City schools. One could almost forget that PAT was equating its fight against desegregation with the civil rights movement's struggle for freedom. One could almost forget that PAT, far from being passive, had actively set the stage for, and sought out, this confrontation with the police and with the city. Thus, PAT members were able to deftly maneuver—both physically and rhetorically—between the domestic and the public spheres, bursting into conflict with politicians and officials in one instant and then retreating into a placid ideal of family life in the next.

Figure 2.1. Outside P.S. 149, PAT protesters, baby in hand, are arrested and put on a bus.[149]

[148] Pugh and Mulligan, "Arrest 65 Sit-In Parents."
[149] "65 Parents Seized at Queens School," *New York Times*, 8 October, 1964.

In 1964, PAT successfully waged a campaign to defeat the integration of New York City schools by the BOE. The organization used tactics from Southern anti-integration campaigners and civil rights activists as it turned key elements of New York's liberal political culture—middle-class upward mobility, homeownership, and quality education–against desegregation. During the campaign, PAT coalesced as an outer-borough movement of grassroots conservatism working simultaneously in tandem with and in defiance of the city's liberal political norms.

Chapter 3—Bringing Neighborhood Politics to the City and State, 1965-1970

By the beginning of 1965, PAT had staved off the immediate threat of citywide school integration in New York. Nevertheless, PAT continued its social and political struggle in two consequential afterlives of the neighborhood school movement. The first afterlife of the neighborhood school movement which PAT led was in the issue of integration, as activists mobilized to neutralize integration by the Board of Education and to lobby at the state level for anti-busing legislation.[150] The second afterlife of the neighborhood school movement was in electoral politics, as PAT espoused a broader set of political beliefs. PAT's leader, Rosemary Gunning, ran as a Conservative Party of New York State candidate unsuccessfully in 1965 and successfully in 1968.[151] She shared the ticket in 1965 with William F. Buckley, Jr., whose quixotic quest for New York City mayor capitalized on outer-borough, white New Yorkers' working- and middle-class resentment, centering the issue of neighborhood schools alongside cuts to government social welfare spending, curbs to state intervention, and opposition to a Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) with oversight of police misconduct.[152] Buckley's campaign became the basis for the rise of a more assertive, more conservative New Right politics in New York City, New York State and prefigured the rise of the new Republican Party at the national level.[153] The neighborhood schools movement and PAT lived on in New York City's political culture as the basis for a new political coalition built on middle- and working-class New

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[150] Peter Kihss, "Lindsay Seeking More Home Rule," *New York Times*, 4 October, 1966. Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 93.

[151] "Woman May Run as Conservative," *New York Times*, 27 June, 1965; "Results of Citywide and Local Races; State Senate; Amendments and Propositions," *New York Times*, 4 November, 1965 [note: Gunning is listed under her husband's last name, Moffett]; James F. Clarity, "Republicans Gain Safe Albany Edge," *New York Times*, 7 November, 1968.

[152] John Leo, "Very Dark Horse in New York," *New York Times*, 5 September, 1965.

[153] Sydney Schanberg, "Shea Stadium Ban Is 'Odd' to Judge," *New York Times*, 1 October, 1968; Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 5-7; Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 93-94.

Yorkers' resentment toward the liberal state and on their identities as parents, taxpayers, and homeowners.

Keeping Integration at Bay

PAT entered 1965 buoyed by its triumph in preventing citywide integration. The issue of integration remained alive at a smaller scale, however. While maintaining some of the direct action methods of 1964, PAT also mounted challenges to integration through legal avenues and political channels. At the local level, the year 1965 saw PAT pursue three objectives. First, in March, PAT defied the BOE's orders to shut down its private academy in Jackson Heights, declared deficient.[154] Second, in April, PAT protested the Board's lackluster updated integration plan.[155] Third, in November, PAT suffered a loss when the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal against the Jackson Heights school pairing discussed in chapter 2.[156] At the state level, PAT and allied politicians lobbied on multiple occasions between 1965 and 1969 to have the New York State Legislature pass an anti-busing bill; they succeeded in 1969, only to have a federal court rule the bill unconstitutional.[157] Although PAT endured setbacks in each of its individual actions, the organization prevailed in its ultimate goal of preventing any serious integration proposals at the city or state level.

The underfunded Jackson Heights school that PAT established in September 1964 was, in the words of a BOE spokesperson, "inadequate" and "the instruction was not up to par."[158] For

[154] Martin Tolchin, "P.A.T. Still Fights to Retain School," *New York Times*, 22 March, 1965.

[155] Leonard Buder, "Pickets Protest Integration Plan," *New York Times*, 15 April, 1965.

[156] Fred Graham, "High Court Backs Pairing in Queens," *New York Times*, 9 November, 1965.

[157] John Sibley, "State Senate, 41-19, Votes To Forbid Busing of Pupils," *New York Times*, 20 April, 1966; Kihss, "Lindsay Seeking More Home Rule;" John Kifner,"Assembly Blocks Bill to Ban Integration by Busing," *New York Times*, 21 March, 1968; Sydney Schanberg, "State G.O.P. Seeks Curbs on Busing," *New York Times*, 17 February, 1969; Bill Kovach,"Governor Signs Anti-Busing Bill; Curb on Scholarships Is Passed," *New York Times*, 3 May, 1969; "Antibusing Law for State Voided by Federal Court," *New York Times*, 2 October, 1970; Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 110.

[158] Sara Slack "He Will Take PAT into Court and Close their 'White' Schools," *Amsterdam News*, 5 September, 1964; "P.A.T. Says State Approves School," *New York Times*, 29 March, 1965.

this reason, the Board considered the schools illegitimate and had since the fall regarded the forty students attending the school as absent from their public school for months.[159] While the Board lacked the authority to decree the school's closure, it had brought the children's parents to family court in the spring for failure to give appropriate instruction—"neglect"—an ironic charge for an organization defending quality education.[160] If the children struggled with the curriculum due to poor instruction, they could at least express PAT's neighborhood schools ideology. A visitor listened as first and second graders chanted: "Let's be friendly. Let's be friendly. Let's be friendly with our neighbors every day."[161] PAT's black and Puerto Rican neighbors would undoubtedly have wondered how parents and students could show their friendliness when they were unwilling to share a building. Although PAT's academies, lacking financial resources, would not last much longer, the trend of white students' exodus from public schools—through white flight or a switch to private schools—worsened in 1965, as around 25,000 white pupils exited the system (2.9 percent of the 1964 white population).[162] Many pointed to the BOE's lackluster integration policy as a catalyst for white students' exit. While PAT lost the immediate battle, supporters of integration would have despaired at the prevailing trends.

A similar dynamic of defiance by PAT, frustration among civil rights supporters, and weak integrationist policy played out as the Board released an updated plan in April 1965 to build on Superintendent of Schools Calvin Gross's weak August 1964 proposal. By this time, the BOE had asked Gross to resign, citing uninspired leadership.[163] Its criticisms of Gross notwithstanding, the Board's newest integration plan was hardly an improvement. Admittedly, the BOE plan did anticipate the transfer of 32,000 students, but it included no measures to send

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[159] Bernard Bard, "Board Finds PAT Schools in Queens Substandard," *New York Post*, 22 December, 1964.
[160] Tolchin, "P.A.T. Still Fights."
[161] Ibid.
[162] Leonard Buder, "Racial Patterns Shift in Schools," *New York Times*, 7 June, 1966.
[163] Leonard Buder,"School Board Calls on Gross to Resign Post," *New York Times*, 3 March, 1965.

white children to schools with a majority of black and Puerto Rican students and no additional school pairings.[164] Despite the limited scope of the BOE's plan, it tellingly felt compelled to hold hearings for people to express their opinions. Unsurprisingly, 1,000 PAT supporters picketed outside BOE headquarters, a testament to their ferocious opposition to any integration measure.[165] Civil rights supporters, meanwhile, criticized the Board for holding a hearing to debate the validity of equal education. They held signs stating "We Protest These Immoral Hearings" and "Our Rights Are Not a Matter of Opinion," angry that the Board was again platforming civil rights and white resistance as two equally valid sides.[166] PAT used public protest to skillfully distort the narrative of school integration. The weakness of the proposal was proof of how PAT had monopolized the desegregation debate.

PAT did suffer a painful loss in November of that year, when the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed without a hearing PAT's appeal of a New York State Supreme Court decision upholding the pairing of P.S. 149 in Jackson Heights and P.S. 92 in Corona.[167] In bringing the suit, PAT claimed that the pairing violated the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision because, as the *New York Times* summarized, "the school pairing denied their children the right to attend their neighborhood school because they are white."[168] The BOE refuted the accusation of discrimination by noting that students were placed only according to their grade level (one school held grades 1-3, the other grades 4-6), "without regard to [their] race, color, or creed."[169] Traveling an extra six blocks, the BOE drily noted, did not constitute a discriminatory burden. In fact, paired schools had experienced marked improvement in teacher-to-student ratios and in overall performance and had avoided outstanding instances of racism among the integrated

[164] Leonard Buder, "Pickets Protest Integration Plan," *New York Times*, 15 April, 1965.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Fred Graham, "High Court Backs Pairing in Queens," *New York Times*, 9 November, 1965.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

student body.[170] PAT's appeal to the *Brown* decision used what one might term, with complete skepticism, a claim of 'reverse discrimination' predicated on a supposed 'color-blind' attitude toward the issue of integration.[171] In actuality, of course, racism was integral to PAT's conception of the neighborhood school and its dogged resistance against any transfers of white students. Regardless, PAT would maintain its supposed color-blind opposition to 'reverse discrimination' as it pushed for an anti-busing law at the state level.

The statewide push for a bill to forbid student busing for the purposes of integration brought together conservative and liberal Republicans as well as some Democrats, as PAT and its political allies again substituted a discussion of neighborhood schools and busing for a discussion of equal educational provision.[172] As Rosemary Gunning, PAT's leader, put it at a hearing of the State Legislature, the bill was necessary so that "no child be compelled to attend a school because of his race, color, religion or national origin," echoing the 'reverse discrimination' rhetoric of the school pairing lawsuit.[173] Prodded by PAT, the State Legislature voted on, but did not pass, a version of the bill in 1966 and 1968, even as at the federal level the House debated the issue of funding for busing.[174] Finally, in 1969, the bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Nelson Rockefeller.[175] Although a federal court later ruled the bill was unconstitutional, its passage was a testament to the political power of the neighborhood schools movement.[176] The bill's sponsors, revealingly, were Joseph J. Kunzeman, a Queens Republican, and Norman F. Lent, a Nassau County, Long Island, conservative Republican, an indication of

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[170] Leonard Buder,"A Year of School Pairing: High Hope—and Bitterness," *New York Times*, 17 May, 1965.

[171] For an analysis of neighborhood schools and voluntary transfer policies as so-called 'color-blind' concepts in the Sunbelt South, see Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 41-42.

[172] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 94-95.

[173] Kihss, "Lindsay Seeking More Home Rule."

[174] Sibley, "State Senate Votes To Forbid Busing;" Kifner, "Assembly Blocks Bill to Ban Integration by Busing;" Marjorie Hunter, "Bus Curbs Dropped In School Aid Fight," *New York Times*, 6 December, 1967.

[175] Kovach,"Governor Signs Anti-Busing Bill."

[176] "Antibusing Law Voided by Federal Court."

the degree to which outer-borough New York's political attitudes aligned with suburbs around New York City and upstate. An equally significant indicator of the neighborhood school's political capital was Governor Rockefeller's decision, despite his famously liberal brand of Republicanism, to sign the bill into law.[177] The neighborhood schools law originated from and was strengthened by conservative activists and politicians, but, like the neighborhood school concept itself, implicated liberal governmental actors. Indeed, at the same time as PAT and its allies fought for the neighborhood schools law, they ushered in a transformation in the electoral politics of New York City that crystallized with the mayoral run of William F. Buckley, Jr., and came to encompass the right-wing politics of Barry Goldwater and George Wallace.

The Remaking of New York's Political Culture

At the same time as PAT members carried out a grassroots movement against integration, they underwent a broader political transformation from the Democratic Party to the conservative wing of the Republican Party. The group's leader, Rosemary Gunning, embodied this remarkable shift. The daughter of a worker for the IRT (ancestor of the New York subway) and granddaughter of clubhouse Democrats, she had imbibed the ethnic affiliations of her Irish ancestors and the upwardly-mobile, middle-class values of her outer-borough and Long Island homes. "Growing up with the Democrats," she commented, "is almost like being Catholic. You never really stop being either one."[178] Her loyalty to the Democrats had not stopped her from voting for conservative Republican Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election.[179] Launching her own political career, Gunning joined the 1965 New York City mayoral ticket of

[177] Kovach,"Governor Signs Anti-Busing Bill."
[178] Bernard Eismann, "That Gunning Woman," *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 January, 1965.
[179] Ibid.

William F. Buckley, Jr., as a Conservative Party candidate for president of the City Council, largely on the basis of her stance for neighborhood schools.[180]

Buckley, a right-wing iconoclast for over a decade, ran for mayor in 1965 to challenge the liberal establishment of the New York Democrats, represented by comptroller Abraham Beame, and Republicans, represented by Congressman John Lindsay, who ran a fusion ticket.[181] Buckley's program advocated a novel brand of assertive conservatism, rather than mere backlash politics. He denounced excessive social welfare; demanded cuts to taxes and government spending; preached in favor of law and order—he opposed the institution of a Civilian Complain Review Board (CCRB) to oversee police misconduct (a demand among many black New Yorkers); and, importantly to PAT, attacked measures for the integration of schools.[182] His articulation of the neighborhood schools ideology encapsulated the concept's slippery avoidance of overt racism but also embodied anti-integration activists' unabashed bigotry. "I believe in the principle of neighborhood schools," Buckley crowed, "that education should take precedence over integration at least where education is concerned…I believe that young thugs are young thugs, irrespective of race, color, or creed."[183] In appealing simultaneously to anti-integration rhetoric and to racist rhetoric about criminality, Buckley mirrored PAT's arguments in 1964 about safe and unsafe neighborhoods. Together, Buckley and Gunning formed an all-Irish Catholic ticket that rejected New York's pluralistic political culture.[184] For Gunning, balancing the ethnic makeup of the ticket (a common practice given New York's myriad immigrant groups) was "so un-American."[185] Like Gunning, a number of New Yorkers (particularly Catholic New Yorkers),

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[180] Richard Madden, "Slate Completed by Conservatives," *New York Times*, 2 July, 1965; Bernard Bard, "Candidate From PAT," *New York Post*, 11 August, 1965.

[181] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 19.

[182] Ibid, 40.

[183] Quoted in Tanenhaus, *Buckley*, 601-602.

[184] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 40.

[185] Bard, "Candidate From PAT."

though likely a minority at that point, abandoned their support for New Deal-style redistributive policy in favor of a politics of economic individualism and social conservatism.[186]

When the results came in, Buckley was a distant third, behind the winner Lindsay and Beame, and Gunning was third in her race for Council president with about 200,000 votes, but victory had never been a realistic aim.[187] Buckley amassed 12.9 percent of the vote, just over 340,000 votes out of 2.6 million, a remarkable total for a Conservative candidate in New York City.[188] The volume of votes was perhaps less noteworthy than their *location*. Buckley placed second in four outer-borough, suburban districts, including in Ridgewood, Queens, and his best results were in similar areas with higher homeownership, strong ethnic affiliation, and racist attitudes.[189] These were precisely the areas where PAT had its strongest base of support. PAT members showed their support for Buckley's platform in a more open manner, too, by marching with members of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (the police department's union), of the Young Republicans, and of the Conservative Party in opposition to the CCRB.[190] In the wider scheme of local and national politics, Buckley's platform of economic individualism and social conservatism, steeped as it was in racism, had won over lifelong Democratic voters in the outer-boroughs, in what one author has argued was among the earliest pieces of evidence for the existence of a 'silent majority' in the city and the country.[191] Previously, historians have located this silent majority in the South or in the suburbs, not in the liberal cities of the North.[192] In the

[186] Tanenhaus, *Buckley*, 592-593; Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 38.

[187] "Results of Citywide and Local Races; State Senate; Amendments and Propositions," *New York Times*, 4 November, 1965.

[188] Thomas P. Ronan, "Conservative Vote Sets Record here," *New York Times*, 3 November, 1965; Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 69.

[189] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 69; Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, 83-85.

[190] Homer Bigart, "Police Pickets to Keep Pistols," *New York Times*, 29 June, 1965.

[191] Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 64-65.

[192] Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 1-19.

long-term, Buckley and the Conservative Party would push the local and national Republican party to leave behind liberalism and embrace right-wing conservatism.[193]

PAT and other New York social groups were participants in the national shift toward more conservative politics embodied by the presidential primaries of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and George Wallace in 1968 and the senatorial run of James Buckley (brother of William). During the 1964 school boycott, PAT members had expressed their support for Goldwater, and the senator's staff canvassed at PAT protests.[194] As one protester complained in justifying the boycott, "We've been conducting ourselves like ladies and gentlemen and where has it got us? [...] They [other PAT protesters] said 'I'm going to vote for Goldwater.' If other communities are like ours, [...] Goldwater's going to be our next president."[195] In October 1964, Goldwater made a speech before a raucous crowd at Madison Square Garden where he railed against busing and vowed to defend neighborhood schools.[196] Goldwater did not win New York City, where he received 27% of the vote, or the presidency, but the presence of support from PAT and other outer-borough constituencies nonetheless stands out.[197] In another sign of the mounting conservative sentiment in the city, a 1966 referendum saw almost two-thirds of New Yorkers reject the CCRB, a vindication for the racist law and order tack of the NYPD.[198] The CCRB decision had pitted Lindsay, a liberal Republican, against conservative Republicans and the Conservative Party, with the latter triumphing.[199] That same year, the Conservative Party's plank for New York State and the country pledged to support neighborhood schools, cuts to spending,

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[193] Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 69-71.
[194] Les Dennis, "'Bye Bye Busing' Sing 8000 Foes," *New York World-Telegram*, 24 September, 1964.
[195] Peggy Streit, "Why They Fight for the P.A.T.," *New York Times Magazine*, 20 September, 1964.
[196] Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 93-94.
[197] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 386.
[198] Ibid, 183.
[199] Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 79.

and curtailment of pro-union and anti-discrimination laws.[200] Veiled racism and social spending cuts became increasingly prominent in New York City's political culture.

Even the avowed segregationist George Wallace received some support from PAT members and from working-class unionists during his 1968 run, illustrating the penetration of conservative ideas within the liberal political culture of New York City.[201] One should not exaggerate support for Wallace, an extremist even for more conservative New Yorkers, as he only received 4.7 percent of the city's votes against Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey. Still, his best results were in PAT's birthplace in Queens, where he received 9.7 percent of the vote.[202] (Nixon, it should be noted, became a firm defender of antibusing politics and obstructer of integration.)[203] In a less extreme barometer of New York conservatism, Gunning won her Queens district's State Assembly seat (a logical outcome, given PAT's level of support there), while the Conservative Party senate candidate for New York, James Buckley, ran in 1968 on a similar plank to William and received over 470,000 votes in New York City, 130,000 more than his brother had gotten in 1965, and came first in the Queens district where PAT was based.[204] By 1970, Lindsay had been booted from the Republican party line and had to run for re-election as an independent (he won, far more narrowly than the first time around), while James Buckley, running on the Conservative Party line, won the Senate race, in large part thanks to support in New York City's outer boroughs, where resentful white middle- and working-class Democratic voters switched affiliations, and upstate.[205]

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[200] "Excerpts From Conservatives' Platform," *New York Times*, 8 September, 1966.

[201] One PAT chapter leader was a lawyer for Wallace in a New York City case. Schanberg, "Shea Stadium Ban Is 'Odd;'" Dyer, *The Era Was Lost*, 55-58.

[202] Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 386.

[203] Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 137, 158; Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 114-118.

[204] James F. Clarity, "Republicans Gain Safe Albany Edge," *New York Times*, 7 November, 1968; Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 386-387.

[205] Sullivan, *New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*, 119, 135; Cannato, *The Ungovernable City*, 392-394.

This political conversion was not a backlash by PAT and other New Yorkers against civil rights. Rather, the reconfiguration of outer-borough political culture from staunch Democratic support to conservative Republicanism marked the fulfillment of a slowly developing ideology that began with the neighborhood schools movement in the 1950s and culminated in the late 1960s with the entrenchment of racist rhetoric against integration, governmental intervention, and social spending and for a politics of law and order. PAT's ideological shift functioned within the liberal institutions of New Deal and post-war New York but later came to oppose their socially progressive, redistributive tenets. In doing so, PAT revealed pre-existing and contingent conservative elements of New York city's political culture.

Conclusion

The 1964 defeat of school integration by Parents and Taxpayers cast a long shadow. Seventy years after *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that racist segregation was unconstitutional and sixty years after civil rights activists campaigned for equal education, New York City's school system remains the most segregated of any large city in the nation.[206] In 2018, around seventy-five percent of black and Latino students attended schools with less than ten percent of white students, and seventy percent of schools had less than ten percent of white students.[207] New York City has not needed explicitly racist laws to segregate. Instead, continued residential segregation and the city's testing system, which separates children into two tracks–one for the 'gifted-and-talented', the other for the rest–have served as the means of racist and classist segregation.[208] The city's eight test-screened specialized high schools, the crown jewels of New York public education, are also monuments to the persistence of segregation.[209] 'Achievement' has become a tremendously effective segregationist tool, one which appears to transcend ideological labels of liberalism or conservatism.

Nevertheless, this thesis has emphasized how PAT harnessed facets of New York's liberal political culture in its fight against integration and, in the process, brought together a wider conservative political coalition. The story of the neighborhood schools movement and of the

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[206] "Report Shows School Segregation in New York Remains Worst in Nation," *The Civil Rights Project, UCLA*, 10 June, 2021, https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/press-releases/report-shows-school-segregation-in-new-york-remains-worst-in-nation/.

[207] "School Diversity in NYC," *New York City Council*, 2018, https://council.nyc.gov/data/school-diversity-in-nyc/#:~:text=After%20the%20landmark%201954%20Brown,Percentage%20White%20Students:%2015%25; "School Segregation in New York Remains Worst in Nation," *The Civil Rights Project*.

[208] Errol Louis, "Why Are New York City Schools Still So Segregated?," *New York Magazine*, 22 May, 2024; Amanda Schmidt, Talia Gerstle, Clemence Idoux, "Reducing Segregation in New York City: Examining the Effects of Two District Policies on School Integration," *William T. Grant Foundation*, 11 November, 2024, https://wtgrantfoundation.org/reducing-segregation-in-new-york-city-examining-the-effects-of-two-district-policies-on-school-integration.

[209] "School Diversity in NYC," *New York City Council*.

political coalition that coalesced around PAT demonstrate that segregation, far from being an accident, resulted from intense and wide-ranging socio-political struggles. After the 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the city's Board of Education and grassroots anti-integration activists manufactured claims for neighborhood schools and against busing to justify the maintenance of the post-war landscape of segregation. In so doing, they revealed how racist segregation featured in the liberal political culture of New York City and they showcased active resistance to equal education.

In 1964, PAT assumed leadership of the neighborhood schools movement, reprising the defense of parents', taxpayers', and homeowners' rights as a segregationist tool. PAT veiled its racist attitudes in the meritocratic language of achievement and in the rhetoric of safe and tight-knit neighborhoods, but simultaneously revealed its more explicit bigotry. By using tactics from conservative Southern massive resistance and from civil rights activists to assert white parents' and children's rights, PAT deftly exploited various elements of the city's liberal political culture even as it led a successful grassroots conservative campaign to repel integration.

In the years after the 1964 campaign, PAT galvanized a new political coalition centered around neighborhood schools, which came to embrace a broader set of conservative political beliefs about social welfare, government intervention and spending, and law and order. PAT warded off threats to integration by asserting the neighborhood schools defense at the city and state level through direct action, lawsuits, and legislation. By the late 1960s, a political consensus against active desegregation had expanded from the original alliance of outer-borough and suburban conservatives to encompass more liberal political actors at the city and state level. PAT's support for the increasingly assertive conservatism of mayoral candidate William F. Buckley, Jr., and of presidential candidates Barry Goldwater and George Wallace, as well as the

Conservative candidacy of the group's leader, Rosemary Gunning, solidified the strength of the conservative political realignment ushered in by the 1964 campaign against integration.

In telling the story of PAT, this thesis has analyzed racism as an ideology practiced by elements of New York City's political culture that may be considered conservative and ones that may be considered liberal. Labels of conservatism and liberalism are not objective categories, rather they are analytical attempts to distinguish the different values and methods through which people understand their world. PAT, the BOE, and the media functioned, at various times, within the confines of conservatism and liberalism. A label should not serve as a foil to justify inequality.

Indeed, PAT's defeat of integration and the continued segregation of New York schools remind us how contemporary politics and society can retain the discriminatory assumptions of a movement long after it ends. New York's reputation for political liberalism remains as strong as ever after the election of Zohran Mamdani, but the city has failed to solve the problem of segregation during mayoralties of all political stripes.

In 1964, the potential for integration arose in a moment of incredible contingency, as civil rights activists and their supporters defied an unequal system. Once Parents and Taxpayers and the Board of Education thwarted integration, that sense of possibility faded. One can only wonder: if an opportunity for rapid desegregation and equal education in New York City arose in a future moment of contingency, would it triumph or would a new coalition emerge to defeat it? The answer, as in 1964, would indelibly alter our understanding of New York City history.

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