Desegregation's Architects: Education Parks and the Spatial Ideology of Schooling

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Abstract

From the early 1960s through the early 1970s, a new idea drew the interest of local leaders and national networks of educators seeking to further desegregation but concerned about how to do so within the bounds of white resistance. Huge single- or multischool campuses, called education parks, would draw students from broad geographical areas and facilitate desegregation. But in the design and location choices for these imagined (but often not realized) education parks, desegregation advocates revealed a spatial ideology of schooling that reflected both a rejection of racialized black spaces and an antiurban, modernist aesthetic. Beyond recognizing the place of spatial ideology in desegregation advocacy, this article suggests that historians of education listen for ideas about space and their impact in other areas of educational history.

In the mid-1960s, many northern school districts dug their heels in against desegregation.[1] But inside some districts—and at times, in some quarters of otherwise recalcitrant districts—education officials advocated for desegregation.[2] Local leaders were at times influenced or

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[1]Systemic resistance was on ample display in 1960s New York City (Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: a History of the New York City Public Schools* [New York: Basic Books, 1988]) and Chicago (John L. Rury, "Race, Space, and the Politics of Chicago's Public Schools: Benjamin Willis and the Tragedy of Urban Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 2 [July 1999], 117–42). For a national view, see Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to Desegregation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

[2]On northern desegregation efforts in the 1960s, see Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Gregory S. Jacobs, *Getting Around Brown: Desegregation, Development, and the Columbus Public Schools* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State

joined in their efforts by a cadre of elite white male academics, foundation leaders, and state and federal officials. They convened task forces, published reports, provided support—from planning grants to informal counsel—and forwarded new ideas about desegregation.[3] In local or elite posts, these advocates pursued desegregation for various reasons, from deep commitment to integration in principle, to hope for a politically tenable approach that could fend off desegregation litigation from local activists or intervention from federal agencies, to worry over the political and economic fate of school systems that were losing white and middle-class students.

Desegregation advocates in northern school districts in these years faced a complex reality. District demographics changed dramatically as countless white and middle-class families took the federally subsidized path to the suburbs while black and Latino populations grew in urban neighborhoods.[4] And when districts initiated even modest attempts at desegregation, this often provoked strident white popular resistance.[5] Resistance multiplied even when desegregation plans protected white students from travel and school closure burdens. Desegregation advocates at the local and elite levels likely felt cornered, caught between competing or contradictory pressures. They struggled to pursue

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University Press, 1998); Jack Dougherty, *More than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Adam R. Nelson, *The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston's Public Schools, 1950–1985* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Dionne Danns, *Desegregating Chicago's Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965–1985* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[3]John Fischer, "School Parks for Equal Opportunities," *Journal of Negro Education* 37, no. 3 (July 1968), 301–09; Alvin Toffler, ed., *The Schoolhouse in the City* (New York: Frederick Praeger for Educational Facilities Laboratory, 1968); Ernest Chan-Nui, "Study of the Reported Attitudes of the 1965–1966 Teaching Staff of the East Orange, New Jersey Public School System toward Some Selected Educational Aspects of the Proposed East Orange Education Plaza," (EdD dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967); and Community Research and Development (CORDE) Corporation, *A Report on the Education Park* (Wilton, CT: Community Research and Development Corporation, 1967), ERIC ED 028613.

[4]Key works on the making of this transformation include Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007); and Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[5]Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*, 23–53.

desegregation in the name of equality while respecting the boundaries of white popular resistance and threats of withdrawal.

Focusing on desegregation advocates working within the education establishment at the local, state, or national scale offers a novel view of northern school desegregation. After an early wave of scholarship on the shape and consequences of white resistance to northern school desegregation, scholars turned their attention to understanding black community organizing for desegregation.[6] Only sporadically, however, have scholars investigated northern desegregation with an emphasis on policy-making and implementation, asking about the ideas and assumptions that influenced local and national officials in pursuing desegregation.[7] And in a literature dominated by case studies of individual cities and districts, figures working across districts and through national networks, such as Teachers College president John Fischer, Harold Gores at the Ford Foundation funded Education Facilities Laboratory, Professor Thomas Pettigrew at Harvard, or Frederick Keppel and Harold Howe II as U.S. Commissioners of Education, have drawn less attention.[8]

The work of these local and national desegregation advocates contains an important, if often underappreciated, aspect of mid-1960s to mid-1970s desegregation advocacy: its spatial dimensions. The changing spatial organization of the city and metropolis was readily apparent in the postwar decades. Desegregation advocates worried about this trajectory, but also sought to work with it, even to shape it. They thought they could do so via choices about school location and design. They

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[6]Key works on resistance include Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). For the shift to black activism, see Adina Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth': The Harlem Nine and New York City's School Desegregation Battles," and Jeanne Theoharis, "'I'd Rather Go to School in the South': How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 65–92, 125–52; Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle*; and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).
[7]Danns, *Desegregating Chicago's Schools*; Nelson, *The Elusive Ideal*.
[8]Although the civil rights bar, for example, appears as a powerful network operating across cites in histories of desegregation, the common ties across those working in desegregation policy-making within the education establishment have been less visible. On the civil rights bar, see Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Mark V. Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925–1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); and Kenneth W. Mack, *Representing the Race: The Creation of the Civil Rights Lawyer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

hoped to use a spatial approach to produce politically palatable desegregation. The more ambitious among them even called for total urban revival in the process.

Beginning in the early 1960s, federal officials, philanthropists, school district superintendents, and community organizations teamed up with some urban planners and architects to imagine the "education park."[9] There were nearly as many visions or meanings for the phrase as there were school districts (dozens) considering creating them. But across all of the iterations, massive scale was a constant. Some proposals called for five thousand students at a single-building high school, while another prototype suggested a kindergarten-through-twelfth grade facility, including multiple schools on a single campus, to serve over 18,000. To accommodate this many students, planners proposed massive school sites on as many as one hundred acres. Size was, they promised, a key mechanism in achieving desegregation. More students meant a bigger geographic zone from which they would come, and a bigger zone meant multiple, often segregated, neighborhoods could feed into the same school. Many proposals emphasized a "midpoint" location for the planned education parks, claiming accessibility to black and white neighborhoods would ease desegregation.[10]

Beyond their at times fantastical design visions, education park proposals shared a notable optimism. They conveyed faith that the metropolitan landscape could be manipulated in favor of desegregation, that "the shape of the future can still be determined by public policy decisions" in cities—an idea that was diminishing in strength as the notion of a U.S. "urban crisis" took hold.[11] Education park advocates were ambitious as well in their willingness to abandon long-established traditions in school zoning.[12] A single school or park serving 10,000 students or more meant moving beyond highly localized school

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[9]The concept had several labels: education/educational park, complex, or plaza, or school park. I use what seems to be the most common, "education park," to stand in for all of these. The only historical study that makes the education park central is Patrick Potyondy on Columbus, Ohio: "Reimaging Urban Education: Civil Rights, Educational Parks, and the Limits of Reform," in *Reimagining Education Reform and Innovation*, ed. Matthew Lynch (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 27–54.

[10]CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*; Toffler, *Schoolhouse in the City*; United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR), *Education Parks: Appraisals of Plans to Improve Educational Quality and Desegregate the Schools* (Washington, DC: United States Commission on Civil Rights, October 1967). Thanks to Matthew Lassiter for suggesting the latter source, a key prompt for this inquiry overall.

[11]CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*, 67.

[12]East Orange, New Jersey's planning for an "educational plaza" captures this well. In the 1950s, renowned city planner Harland Bartholomew and his firm worked with East Orange on a master plan, including schools. In keeping with the traditional approach, Bartholomew mapped the community's schools and made it the center of a larger circle, suggesting its geographic zone. The educational plaza planning suggested that all students in East Orange's previous twelve schools and their separate zones (with

assignment and neighborhood boundaries. The most ambitious advocates hoped for—but lacked the power to secure—metropolitan-scale education parks that would cross city/suburban boundaries (perhaps incentivized via federal funding) or that would be designed in tandem with housing desegregation efforts.[13]

Forwarding the education park idea, local and national leaders addressed terrain usually central to city planners and architects—location, scale, design—and at times they drew insights from or partnered with planning professionals. Yet the most consistent, and most consequential, advocacy for education parks came from within the education establishment. Where professional urban planners engaged with the idea, they were supportive but notably more tempered in their enthusiasm. The hard lessons of the previous decade's urban renewal projects may have informed their caution, as planners had learned that disruptions in urban landscapes were not always favorable, and physical change did not of itself generate social transformation. Planners such as Paul Davidoff offered reminders that desegregation work in education alone could easily fail if not matched by efforts in housing as well.[14]

The education park idea drew national attention, but it gained the most traction in northeastern and midwestern cities. Syracuse, New York; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and New York City (the cases discussed in greatest detail here) illustrate the range of types of education parks imagined, the various representations of what an education park could accomplish, and the multiple fates of education park proposals.[15] Despite the variation, advocates sought consistently to use intentional school location and design to increase desegregation without generating new waves of white resistance or departures from city schools. Frequently they proposed to do so by locating education parks outside

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markedly segregated school populations) would travel to a common campus. *The Master Plan for East Orange, New Jersey*, 1950 (East Orange: City Planning Board), Cornell University Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harland Bartholomew Papers, box 5, file 20; and Chan-Nui, "Study of the Reported Attitudes."

[13] Paul Davidoff, "Integrated Integration," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 4, no. 6 (September to October 1966): 57–63, and "Analysis of the Feasibility of Establishing a System of Education Parks in a Metropolitan Region," in USCCR, "Education Parks"; and Thomas Pettigrew, "The Metropolitan Educational Park," *Christianity and Crisis* 30, no. 12 (July 6, 1970), 145–50.

[14] I draw this observation from a review of the published (academic and public) articles on education parks in journals and magazines in the 1960s and 1970s. The overwhelming majority were authored by educators, rather than planners, and only a few urban planning and architecture publications ran articles on education parks. For the planner's voice most frequently linked to education park ideas, see Davidoff, "Integrated Education," and "Analysis of the Feasibility of Establishing a System of Education Parks in a Metropolitan Region."

[15] CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*; and Toffler, *Schoolhouse in the City*.

the urban core, or using architectural or design elements to separate education parks from the existing urban landscape.

In places from southern Florida to the Bronx, a few education parks were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet elements of the idea made an impact more broadly. In Nashville, Tennessee's desegregation litigation, for example, expert witnesses for the plaintiff and local school officials brought the idea of the education park into desegregation hearings and encouraged the district to relocate its high schools to midpoint locations between city and suburbs—which it did.[16] Yet most education park proposals remained just that: ideas on paper, never moving to brick and mortar. Nonetheless, these proposals merit investigation because they reveal how 1960s and 1970s desegregation advocates thought about schools and space in relationship to one another. Education parks emerged in part from a spatial ideology of schooling visible within desegregation policy-making.

A spatial ideology is a system of thought about geographic places and their social meanings and values. As Henri Lefebvre has argued, helping to inaugurate an increased interest in space among historians over the last two decades, space is not simply a geographic location, but the product of human experiences and understandings of that location.[17] Social meanings of space develop inseparably from other ideas and systems of power—around race, gender, beauty, age, and capitalism, centrally.

In the 1960s and 1970s United States, the dominant spatial ideology, reflected in most education park proposals as well as many urban redevelopment efforts of the time, was both antiblack and antiurban. The era's popular culture glorified the racialized white suburban landscape.[18] This cultural view reflected economic power as well, via decades of discriminatory practice in federal home finance that brought massive investment to suburban areas and kept capital out of cities.[19] When

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[16]Ansley T. Erickson, "Building Inequality: The Spatial Organization of Schooling in Nashville, Tennessee, after *Brown*," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 2 (March 2012), 247–70.

[17]Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Richard White, "What Is Spatial History?," https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29. Lefebvre argued that all ideology, like all social interactions and concepts, had spatial form—thus perhaps a "spatial ideology" is redundant. But the term helps to point out the social processes of meaning-making and valuing that Lefebvre highlighted, and thus is useful.

[18]For a recent discussion of this pattern, see Steven Conn, *Americans Against the City: Anti-Urbanism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). For an excellent discussion of racism embedded in and constraining city planning practice, see June Manning Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013).

[19]See works in note 4. Clarissa Rile Hayward explains this linkage of racialized ideas of space to the institutionalization of "racial interests"—such as the economic (and

cities drew federal investment, it came in the form of urban renewal, public housing development, or highway construction that often meant a radical unmaking of the historic urban landscape and the undoing of black communities in the process.[20] Meanwhile, mainstream representations of racialized black urban space emphasized decline and decay, which further reinforced the era's deficit-minded, pathologizing views of black individuals and families.[21] Together, the era's policy initiatives and cultural forces not only made their stark marks on the urban landscape, but formed what George Lipsitz has called "a public pedagogy about who belongs where and what makes certain spaces desirable."[22]

Yet spatial ideology was not exclusively a medium in which to transmit racist ideology. Long-standing American criticisms of the

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political) benefits of segregated white homeownership—in Clarissa Rile Hayward, *How Americans Make Race: Stories, Institutions, Spaces* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[20]There is a voluminous literature on urban renewal. See, for example, Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World/Ballantine Books, 2005); Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and *Journal of Urban History*, special section on urban renewal, vol. 35, no. 3 (March 2009).

[21]On the making of 1960s-era thought about poverty, see Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). For recent work on compensatory education, see Barbara Beatty and Edward Zigler, eds., *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 6 (2012), especially John Spencer, "From 'Cultural Deprivation' to Cultural Capital: The Roots and Continued Relevance of Compensatory Education"; and Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, chap. 3, "Calming the 'Migrant Crisis' through Compensatory Education," 51–70.

[22]George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011). Some readers may ask why Lipsitz's formulation of a "white spatial imaginary" and "black spatial imaginary" cannot substitute for this discussion of spatial ideology. There are two reasons, the first related to the particular history of education park ideas, and the second a more general concern for the application of spatial thinking to education. Lipsitz suggests a sharp divide between how white Americans and black Americans see space, as his terms suggest. While in many cases it would be appropriate to describe the dominant spatial ideology I describe here as similar to Lipsitz's "white spatial imaginary," that phrase would misrepresent the small but important presence of a pro-suburban, antiurban orientation on the part of some black education parks advocates. Similarly, to the extent that it equates a white spatial imaginary with understanding space in terms of exchange value, it neglects the power of capitalism to shape ideology among black people as well as white people. See, for example, N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014).Second, Lipsitz's important but limited focus on the racialization of space should not displace attention to other ideological configurations that influence how people think about space. Gendered, as well as raced, ideologies of home and childhood, particularly, helped construct a pro-suburban, antiurban spatial ideology of schooling. By adopting the broader term of spatial ideology of schooling, rather than speaking only in terms of a white spatial imaginary or a black spatial imaginary, I hope to point other scholars' attention to the range of social ideas and structures of power, including racial ideology centrally but not exclusively, that intersect in spatial ideology.

city, which predated the association between urban space and blackness that tightened in the post World War II decades, met new modernist visions developing in Europe and the United States during this time. The modernist aesthetic as deployed in the United States emphasized massive-scale, often single-use, development (as in groups of residential apartment towers without the historically intermixed retail and service facilities, for example) and preferred long blocks and open spaces between buildings rather than narrow and dense historic street grids and many intermixed land uses. Some contemporaries, and some scholars since, described the modernist aesthetic as "antiurban" for the ways it departed from the long-established patterns of density and diversity in land use and population.[23] Modernist (as well as suburban) aesthetics were not the sole province of white people, however. Celebrations of suburban space and suburban aesthetics extended to some black communities where developers were able to secure financing to meet middle-class demand, and some black advocates for desegregation suggested education park ideas that had "antiurban" elements of their own.[24] Racism comingled with ideas about design, social policy, and more in making the era's popular and intellectual understandings of space.

Applied to questions of education, spatial ideology helped designate some places and some communities as valued sites for schooling while devaluing others. Tracing this line of thinking about schools—in terms of location, design, or pedagogy—builds on the growing historical interest in education in relationship to space. In the United States and beyond, historians have started to amass an understanding of how space and place "mediate educational change and aspirations," as Julie McLeod writes.[25] This work has paid relatively more attention to

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[23] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*; Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961; repr., New York: Modern Library, 1993).

[24] Wiese, *Places of Their Own*.

[25] Julie McLeod, "Space, Place and Purpose in Designing Australian Schools," *History of Education Review* 43, no. 2 (September 2014): 133–37. On the United States, see Marta Gutman, *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850–1950* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Amber Wiley, "Concrete Solutions: Architecture of Public High Schools During the 'Urban Crisis'" (PhD dissertation, George Washington University, 2011); Mary Hoffschwelle, "The Rosenwald Schools of the American South," in *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children*, ed. Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 213–32; and articles by Michael Clapper, Domenic Vitiello, Amy S. Weisser, and George E. Thomas in *Journal of Planning History* 5, no. 3 (August 2006). On the United Kingdom and Australia, see Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor, *School* (London: Reaktion, 2008); and articles by Julie Willis, Kate Darian-Smith and Nikki Henningham, and Philip Goad in *History of Education Review* 43, no. 2 (2014).

architecture and spaces within schools than to the location of schools in the urban or metropolitan landscape; it has engaged the context of racialized urbanism in only a few cases.[26]

Talking about space and schooling in the 1960s and 1970s did important work for elite and some local desegregation advocates. As Clifford Geertz argues, ideology helps people negotiate contradictions, bridging and helping resolve the strain produced when individuals hold, within their own thinking, otherwise irreconcilable positions. Desegregation advocates, especially white elite advocates, faced major contradictions. They worked in a context in which, as a *Saturday Review* writer put it in 1967, "Almost everyone—virtually all Negro leaders included—seems willing to concede that sending white children into predominantly Negro schools is taboo for the foreseeable future."[27] They conceived of themselves as working for equity and aid for black children, but felt that they had to do so while respecting the boundaries of what most white Americans deemed acceptable and avoiding what they determined "taboo." Rendering desegregation a spatial problem with a spatial fix was one way they tried to navigate this complex terrain.

Although an antiurban, antiblack spatial ideology was dominant in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not the only way of viewing schools and space. Rejecting the efforts of education park advocates—and urban renewal advocates before them—to radically remake, and in some cases reject, the traditional city form, some black community organizers and their allies in a branch of urban planning more committed to community participation adopted the education park to fit their pro-urban vision of how schools and landscape intersected.

After a brief review of the origins of the education park idea, the sections that follow examine the formulation and outcome of education park proposals in Pittsburgh, Syracuse, and New York City. These cases illustrate a range of approaches, forwarded often by elite white policymakers, and in some cases by local black and white advocates inside and outside the school systems, about what education parks could be, what views of desegregation they fostered, and what spatial ideology of schooling they conveyed. The final case, in Brooklyn, New York, offers an exception that proves the rule—a proposal, generated within

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[26]The exceptions are Wiley, "Concrete Solutions"; Ansley T. Erickson, "Building Inequality"; Andrew R. Highsmith and Ansley T. Erickson, "Segregation as Splitting, Segregation as Joining: Schools, Housing, and the Many Modes of Jim Crow," *American Journal of Education* 121, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 563–95; and Michael Clapper, "School Design, Site Selection, and the Political Geography of Race in Postwar Philadelphia," *Journal of Planning History* 5, no. 3 (August 2006), 241–63.

[27]Quoted in Harry McPherson, "Summary for President of Saturday Review," February 17, 1967, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Califano box 8, file School Desegregation (hereafter LBJ).

a majority-black community intentionally seeking close links between the school and surrounding neighborhood, that drew opposition from city authorities for that reason.

An "Anticity" "Suburban Syndrome"? Origins of Education Parks

The idea of the education park traces back to 1901, when Los Angeles superintendent Preston Search diagrammed a 200-acre "school park" to be the singular educational facility for all of the city's children. Seeking a pastoral, "healthy farm environment" away from urban congestion and industry, Search proposed selling all of the city's existing central-city schools and purchasing a large plot on the district periphery.[28] He suggested building separate school and administrative buildings, inter-spersed with sports fields, gardens, or even a lake, and drew schematic illustrations to convey his plans (see Figure 1).

Search's idea did not take off in Los Angeles then, in a time when across the country more reform energy was going into modifying urban landscapes for children (most prominently in the form of school and playground construction) than abandoning them.[29] But the idea enjoyed a resurgence in the 1960s, when the education park became one articulation of contemporary concerns about desegregation and the city.

An elite collection of educators and policy-makers embraced the idea of the education park in the mid-1960s. Local leaders from one New Jersey district visited Washington, where they huddled with federal education officials and read pamphlets distributed by Teachers College president John Fischer. The United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) made the park idea a focus of a special report, and President Lyndon Johnson's 1967 Task Force on Education highlighted the concept as well.[30] Fellow task force member and de-segregation scholar Thomas Pettigrew suggested that federal funds pay for 90 percent of park construction costs, to incentivize cooperation between city and suburban school districts in their construction.[31] The

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[28] CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*, 8.

[29] Gutman, *A City for Children*. On the era's interest in playgrounds, see, for example, Clarence Arthur Perry, "The Rehabilitation of the Local Community," *Social Forces* 4, no. 3 (March 1, 1926): 558–62. On "open classrooms," one attempt to adjust schooling to the challenges of the urban landscape, see Daniel Freund, *American Sunshine: Diseases of Darkness and the Quest for Natural Light* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[30] USCCR, *Education Parks*; "Report of the Task Force on Education," June 30, 1967, file FG 600/Task Force on Education (2 of 3), box 35, White House Central Files, LBJ.

[31] Thomas Pettigrew, "Extracts from 'Racial Issues in Urban America,'" 1966, file Material on Task Force for Education, box 38, Douglass Cater Papers (hereafter Cater),
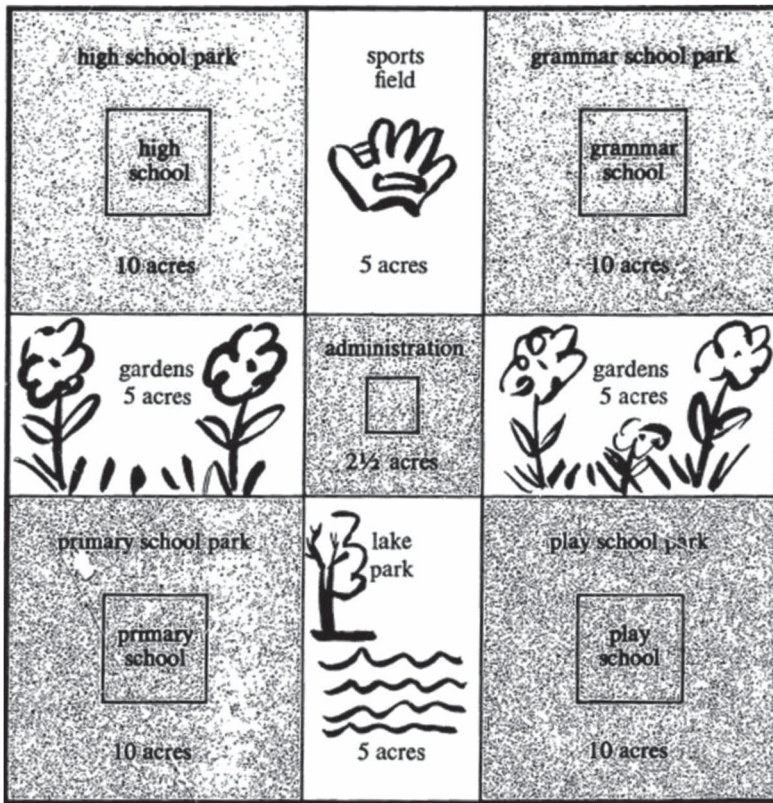
Figure 1. A re-creation of Preston Search's 1901 "school park" concept for Los Angeles captured its large scale and emphasis on a pastoral setting for schools. (Reprinted from CORDE Corp, A Report on the Education Park.)

U.S. Office of Education and Ford Foundation channeled dollars to organizations that studied and advocated for education parks.[32] The idea reverberated through American education's elite circles.

The education park gained additional allies who saw it as creating potential for innovation and improvement in the classroom via new facilities and large scale. With larger numbers of students, a wider range of specialized classes or expensive facilities, such as swimming pools or

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LBJ. (Published as "Racial Issues in Urban America," in *Shaping an Urban Future: Essays in Memory of Catherine Bauer Wurster*, ed. Bernard J. Frieden and William W. Nash, Jr. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969)).

[32] The CORDE Corporation was funded by the Office of Education; Harold Gores' Educational Facilities Lab was supported by Ford.

large auditoriums, became more feasible.[33] Placing different schools at different grade levels on a common site offered opportunities to coordinate programs and help teachers build sustaining professional networks. "Houses" or other subdivisions within large-scale schools could prevent students from becoming overwhelmed by their sheer size.[34] Other innovations of the moment—ungraded schooling, open-plan organization with flexible or no walls, new educational technology—did not depend on a large scale but made their way into the plans as well.[35] Some educators also perceived the park's new scale as an opportunity to return to long-established patterns of sorting students: Sidney Marland, superintendent in Pittsburgh, wanted to create "homogeneous grouping according to intellectual ability as we have never been able to afford in the past," again facilitated by scale.[36]

The relationship between the 1960s city and the education park needed much working out. Education planners who advocated for the concept acknowledged that the idea had been first conceived as "an anticity device," but was ripe for transformation into a mechanism to improve "the physical condition and quality of life *in* the city."[37] Others celebrated the park idea as a "physical manifestation of egalitarian education," an opportunity to recast the traditional neighborhood school concept on broader and more inclusive terms.[38] Yet many elements of the park concept seemed incompatible with urban realities. Contemporary school site size guidelines called for expansive spaces for regular-size schools. Education park compounds to serve thousands more students needed lots from 40 to as many as 100 acres.[39] Land

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[33] Education park advocates thus reprised the pro-comprehensive high school arguments of the 1910s to 1960s. See David Angus and Jeffrey Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890–1995* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999). LeRoy Allen suggested that black educators were less interested in the park as a desegregation mechanism but could support it as they saw potential for greater individualization and recognition of the "singular worth of persons as individuals" in the park idea; see "Replications of the Educational Park Concept for the Disadvantaged," *Journal of Negro Education* 40, no. 3 (July 1971), 225–32.

[34] See especially USCCR, *Education Parks.* On ideas of scale in the education park, see Harold Gores, "The Demise of Magic Formulas," in Toffler, *Schoolhouse in the City*, 165–73. The broader conversation about school scale was dominated by the comprehensive high school idea, furthered most successfully by James Bryant Conant in *The American High School Today: A First Report to Interested Citizens* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

[35] See, for example, the essays in CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*, and USCCR, *Education Parks.*

[36] S. P. Marland, Jr., "The Education Park Concept in Pittsburgh," *Phi Delta Kappan* 48 (March 1967): 328–32 ; and Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, "The Great High School Concept," supplement, *Pittsburgh Press*, December 11, 1966, 7.

[37] CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park.*

[38] Potyondy, "Reimagining Urban Education."

[39] Harold Gores, "Education Park: Physical and Fiscal Aspects," in *An Exploration of the Educational Park Concept*, ed. Milton Jacobson (New York: Board of Education of

availability and economics linked education parks to the suburbs or less-developed areas of the city. Harold Gores of the Ford Foundation funded Educational Facilities Laboratory was more critical of these elements of education park proposals than most. He saw large site size requirements as "reflex action[s] from a suburban syndrome." Naming the pro-suburban bent of much of education park discourse more directly than many of his colleagues, Gore refused to accept the notion that "the only useful school is in the suburban image."[40] Unlike most of his colleagues who argued for parks in more suburban settings, Gores visualized a "park" with an urban form: as a multistory building embedded within the streetscape, with different schools on different floors and playing fields on the roof.[41] Gores and colleagues helped New York City plan a new high school, not called a park, that modeled mixed-use development, with school floors below and market-rate commercial office space above.[42] Despite Gores's continued hope for close and porous relationships between schools, cites, and communities' needs, most education park proposals involved either spatial or design separation from the urban landscape, hints of a continuing "suburban syndrome."[43] Harvard's Thomas Pettigrew took this approach, recognizing that although there might be some education parks in city centers, "hopefully, the park could usually follow the [suburban] campus model."[44]

Crafting education park proposals brought education leaders' views of the city and the suburbs to the fore. One major federal agency—the U.S. Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—had already weighed in. Their 1958 report encouraged school districts to choose pastoral suburban locations and avoid areas with "high buildings" or apartment complexes when constructing schools.[45] Many education park designs endorsed the suburbs as ideal spaces for schools as well. Sociologist Dan Lortie was concerned, for example, that schools be "located to avoid the taint of the ghetto."[46] Parks advocates hoped that suburban or so-called "neutral" locations

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New York City, 1964), 4; Davidoff, "Analysis of the Feasibility of Establishing a System of Education Parks," 88.

[40] Gores, "Education Park," 4, 6.

[41] Ibid., 6. See also Gores, "Demise of Magic Formulas."

[42] Ibid.

[43] Gores, "Education Park," 6. See also his remarks in "Report of the Task Force on Urban Educational Opportunity," 1967, box 9, Task Force Reports, LBJ, 22.

[44] Pettigrew, "The Metropolitan Educational Park," 148.

[45] James L. Taylor, *School Sites: Selection, Development, and Utilization* (Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1958), 35.

[46] Dan Lortie, "Towards Educational Equality: The Teacher and the Educational Park," in USCCR, *Education Parks*.

would help ameliorate white resistance to desegregation: more white students would be willing to attend schools with black students if doing so did not require attendance at or travel to "minority ghetto areas."[47] Lortie paired his condemnation of racialized black urban space with concern that black students not bear all of the burden of travel away from their homes, which he described as "the strain, for Negro students, of moving into a strange white area"; other contemporary commentators saw unequal burdens as unavoidable. Paul Davidoff wrote that "Negroes would probably have to spend a greater time in travel to and from school than whites" for the parks to "gain political acceptance."[48] Preferences for suburban space fit both ideological and political agendas; they also brought the education park into line with the era's other "parks" proposals—for office parks, industrial parks, and shopping malls as retail parks—all of which grew up in the suburban fringe.

Among the education park's elite advocates, some spoke more directly than others about the hope that the park would attract and keep white families in city school systems. Pittsburgh's Marland hoped that his education park plans would return "glamour" to schools and the city, while Teachers College faculty member Robert Dentler derided thinking of fancy or novel school facilities as "white bait."[49]

As the education park idea made its way from elite circles into planning in specific school districts, these various goals—desegregation, city "revitalization," new pedagogy—gained different emphases in different locales. Others emerged, as well, as in Cleveland—where the construction jobs promised in large-scale projects helped mobilize support, or in Columbus, where the Urban League thought the park idea promised a "radical democratic" renewal in education.[50] Across varied contexts, however, educators articulated their ideas about urban space as they imagined the education park. Often, they either chose suburban locations or design approaches that allowed education parks to sit within, but separated from, the existing urban landscape.

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[47] Neil V. Sullivan, in USCCR, *Education Parks.* On "neutral" turf, see Max Wolff and Alan Rinzler, "The Educational Park: A Guide to Its Implementation" (New York: Center for Urban Education, 1970) and Pettigrew, "The Metropolitan Educational Park."

[48] Davidoff, "Analysis of the Feasibility of Establishing a System of Education Parks," in USCCR, *Education Parks*, 81, 84–5.

[49] Robert Dentler, "A Sociologist Asks: Is the Education Park a Good Idea?" in *An Exploration of the Educational Park Concept*, 42.

[50] Thanks to Argun Saatcioglu for sharing his newspaper sources on Cleveland; Potyondy, "Reimagining Urban Education."

Pittsburgh: "Neutral" Sites for a Decentered City

Pittsburgh's encounter with education parks emphasized new school designs toward a revitalized, and a "decentered," city. The brainchild of a well-connected local superintendent, the plan to create Pittsburgh's "Great High Schools" conveyed the era's spatial ideology well, distancing schooling from the urban landscape via design choices.

Sidney Marland was an education up-and-comer, serving as the superintendent of Pittsburgh schools just before President Richard Nixon appointed him U.S. Commissioner of Education. Marland claimed to be one of the early advocates—if not the originator—of the notion of an education park. Starting in 1963, Marland led the planning of a set of Great High Schools for Pittsburgh, new facilities to serve 5,000–6,000 students each on 40-acre sites linked via transportation or pedestrian routes to existing elementary and middle schools.[51] Marland's Great High Schools plan, much of which had been crafted at local firm Urban Design Associates with consultation from the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Center for Field Studies, mixed optimism for a vibrant city with a view of urban space as a problem to be fixed.[52] The new high schools would be the "marriage of physical renewal to human renewal," giving "visible testimony to the message of education, as young people travel through what may be the inner city's ugliness to the brightness and hope that education can offer."[53]

Although Marland spoke about a vibrant city, his image of the city required a radical reorganization of the urban form, and his plan for education parks separated them from the city landscape. Some of his Great High Schools would be in urban neighborhoods in terms of latitude and longitude, but would float above them in structures cantilevered off otherwise undeveloped steep hillsides. As the architectural model in Figure 2 shows, the Great High School appeared not surrounded by a city landscape, but by trees rising along a hill, networked via major highways rather than the historic street grid. Pittsburgh's planners also imagined the Great High Schools as part of a decentered city, with the schools as hubs of "subcores" that included housing, industry, office and commercial space, transit, and more. But if mixed land uses in the

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[51] Marland, "The Education Park Concept." See also Bernard J. McCormick, "Toward the Educational Park: Pittsburgh," in Toffler, *Schoolhouse in the City*, 200–06; Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, "The Great High School Concept," supplement, *Pittsburgh Press*, December 11, 1966; James Bailey, "Pittsburgh Goes Back to School," *Architectural Forum*, June 1967.

[52] John Fischer, "The School Park," in USCCR, *Education Parks*; and "The NAACP Case Against the Great High Schools," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 26, 1969, 7.

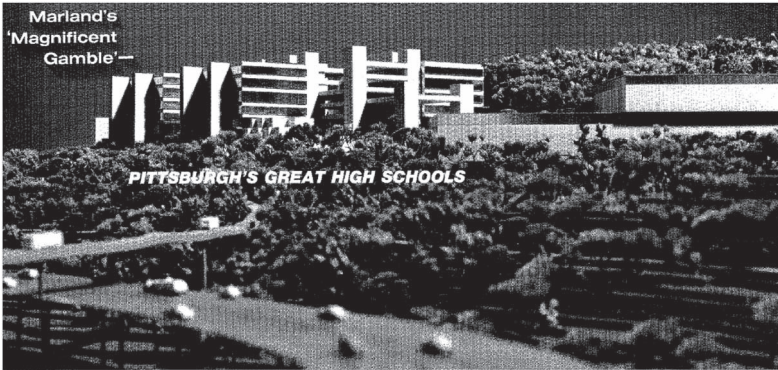[53] Marland, "The Education Park Concept," 331.

Figure 2. Sidney Marland's Great High Schools were planned for undeveloped hillsides in Pittsburgh. Cantilevered over the existing urban fabric, they were to be tied to one another (and were to link previously separate communities) via transportation routes. (Photograph of architectural models by Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, in Robinson, "Marland's 'Magnificent Gamble.'" Reproduced with permission of the publisher.)

subcore might suggest associations with the street-level social life of an urban village, for Marland the resonance was quite different. He saw a revitalized city transforming "urban ugliness."[54]

As profile drawings of the plans showed, Marland's cantilevered designs might stretch across topographical divides, potentially connecting previously separate neighborhoods. These design choices seemed to favor desegregation, but location decisions favored white residents and communities over black residents and communities. With transportation arteries running through Great High Schools sites, Marland claimed that the facilities would be accessible to those in less dense (and usually predominantly white-occupied) areas of the city, easing desegregation without creating overt conflict over busing plans or reassignment.[55] Marland also spoke of the schools and subcores they anchored as helping black families to become more dispersed through the city and suburbs, although he mischaracterized the cause of their concentration in city neighborhoods as the product of "folklore" that "calls for Negroes to live in the center of big cities" rather than many exclusionary governmental and private practices in housing.[56] Marland linked the Great High Schools plans to desegregation, but the plan did not mean

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[54]Marland, "The Education Park Concept," 328.
[55]Ibid., 331; David Lewis, "The New Role of Education Parks in the Changing Structure of Metropolitan Areas" (Washington, DC: US Commission on Civil Rights, 1967), 25–27.
[56]Sidney Marland to William B. Cannon, January 6, 1967, File Materials on Task Force on Education (2), box 37, Cater, LBJ.

desegregation on equal terms. Three of Marland's selected sites were surrounded by all-white neighborhoods, to be desegregated through transporting residents of Pittsburgh's densest African-American neighborhoods across major natural and transportation barriers.

Pittsburgh's African-American civil rights groups criticized the Great High Schools and Marland administration for privileging white residential areas.[57] The local NAACP also came to oppose the Great High Schools as a diversion from what they saw as more immediate and direct desegregation efforts.[58] With so much local energy and money tied up in costly, high school focused, and hard-to-actualize plans for education parks, the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) cited the school district's "failure to pursue integration by means other than the proposed schools."[59]

Budgetary limits, and administrative transition, resolved the debate. Sidney Marland left the city in 1968 to head an educational nonprofit; in 1970, President Nixon nominated him to be U.S. Commissioner of Education. With Marland gone, and citing a lack of funds, the school board halted progress on the one Great High School campus already in construction and canceled the rest.

Syracuse: "Periphery" Schools and Rolling Closures of Black Schools

In Pittsburgh, ideas of design and location both motivated Great High Schools plans, but in Syracuse, New York, the focus fell squarely on school location. In keeping with the pro-suburban spatial ideology of the time, manifest in other locales and in federal education discourse, Syracuse planners translated the education park concept to mean schools on the outer boundary of their urban district.

Exploring the idea of education parks on the edge of cities, or in between cities and suburbs, brought forth a variety of ideas about racialized space. Education park planners spoke of "neutral" turf, implying that in-between spaces existed between segregated and racialized black or white space, and that these spaces would be tolerable to white

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[57]Nicholas Wheeler Robinson, "Marland's 'Magnificent Gamble'—Pittsburgh's Great High Schools," *Urban Review* 3, no. 2 (November 1968): 28–31.

[58]Peter Schrag, "Pittsburgh: The Virtues of Candor," *Saturday Review*, November 15, 1966. See also Joe W. Trotter and Jared N. Day, *Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh Since World War II* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 2010), 100.

[59]"The NAACP Case Against the Great High Schools," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, April 26, 1969, 7.

parents in ways that urban spaces were not. In some geographies, finding such in-between spaces required looking across urban/suburban jurisdictional lines. The USCCR commissioned a series of papers on education parks in 1967. In one of these, Teachers College president John Fischer described as "the most imaginative and difficult" approach to education parks one in which "a central city and its neighboring suburban districts would jointly sponsor a ring of metropolitan school parks on the periphery of the city."[60] In this, he agreed with ideas shared by Harvard's Thomas Pettigrew and others. Fischer thought of education parks' location (on the city/suburban boundary) and large catchment zone (within or across district lines) as protections against the uncertainties of continued demographic change, which had transformed many once-desegregated schools into resegregated all-black institutions. Fischer explained, "To build a park only to have it engulfed in a few years by an enlarged ghetto would be a sorry waste of both money and opportunity."[61] Harold Howe II, U.S. Commissioner of Education, put the same concern in different terms, urging that possible federal support for new school construction avoid creating "chrome ghetto" schools.[62] Education parks were "strongly endorsed" by another USCCR author for "homogenous" areas as well as in desegregating ones. Yet acceptable homogeneity was white and suburban, not black and urban.[63]

Despite John Fischer's and others' calls for a metropolitan approach, nearly all education park plans operated within urban districts exclusively. In Syracuse, the education park idea followed earlier efforts to desegregate through closure of black-majority, central-city schools. In the mid-1960s, the district began to experiment with desegregation by busing black students away from one black junior high school. The superintendent then proposed more comprehensive desegregation through the closure of multiple majority-black elementary schools—an idea that drew opposition from parents who did not want their children bused out of their neighborhoods as well as from the Syracuse chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality, which objected to only black students traveling for desegregation.[64] Both black and white parents refused to participate in a voluntary desegregation plan, leaving the school board uncertain of how to navigate between "Negro parents who objected to busing their children out of the neighborhood unless

[60]Fischer, "The School Park," in USCCR, *Education Parks*. For another historical example of moving schools outward from the city core, see Clapper, "School Design."
[61]Fischer, "The School Park," in USCCR, *Education Parks*, 3, 9.
[62]Harold Howe to Douglass Cater, August 31, 1966, File Miscellaneous Correspondence 1966, box 19, Cater, LBJ.
[63]Neil V. Sullivan, "Desegregation Techniques," in USCCR, *Education Parks*, 75.
[64]US Commission on Civil Rights, *Process of Change: The Story of School Desegregation in Syracuse, New York* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 6–7.
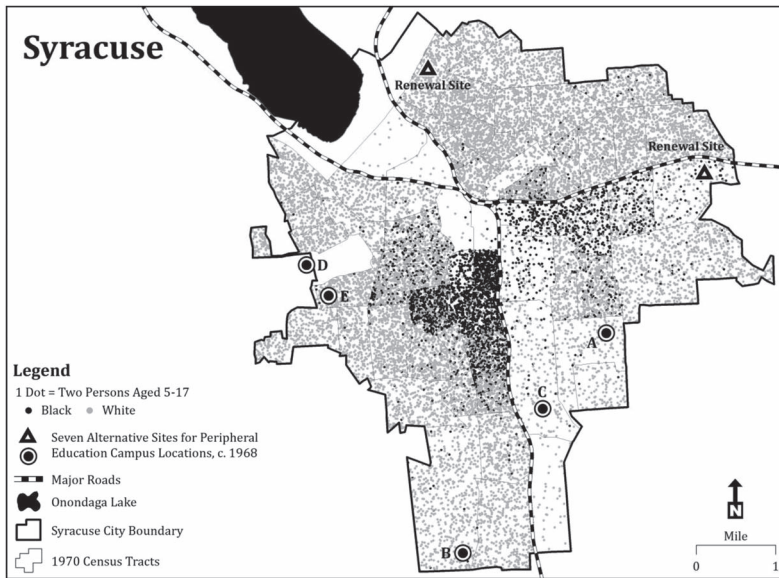
Figure 3. Syracuse's plan for peripheral elementary-level education parks moved schools out of the city center. Map by James W. Quinn. Population data from 1970 U.S. Census via NHGIS; school locations from David Lewis, "The New Role of Education Parks." Location D should appear just inside the district boundary.

[their local school] was kept 'open and integrated' and white parents who would not accept any plan to bus their children into a predominantly Negro school."[65] After this controversy, Syracuse district leaders imagined a peripheral set of education parks on the suburban fringe of the district. The education park idea seemed to offer a route forward, preventing school-by-school closure fights through a comprehensive reorganization of school location, while also addressing ongoing facilities needs and opening pedagogical and professional development opportunities.[66]

As shown in Figure 3, the Syracuse "Campus Plan" identified four sites on the city boundary and called for two large elementary schools on each of those sites.[67] All of the sites sat miles away from the his-

[65] Ibid., 17.

[66] Ibid., 18–25; Franklyn S. Barry, "The Syracuse Campus Schools Plan" (Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1967), ERIC ED 015979; and Guthrie S. Birkhead, Michael Pavlovich, and Louise Birkhead, "How the Campus Proposal Failed in Syracuse, New York" (Syracuse, NY: Eastern Regional Institute for Education, June 1970), ERIC ED 090678.

[67] Barry, "The Syracuse Campus Schools Plan"; and Lewis, "New Role of Education Parks," 62.

toric and current majority-black neighborhoods of Syracuse's downtown, and were distant from urban and suburban areas in which black families represented a substantial minority. Superintendent David Sine acknowledged that it would have been possible to place one site in the "inner city area," but that doing so would lead either to unacceptably small site sizes or to great expense.[68] Sine assured his listeners that peripheral schools would contribute to "racial balance because everyone travels," smoothing over the difference in experience for white residents traversing suburbia and black city residents moving out from the urban core to the city line.[69] The Syracuse plan staggered construction, and the first of the "campus schools" to be built would not, planners admitted, increase desegregation levels.[70] Syracuse's Board of Education and community leaders engaged in more than three years of debate about the plan, which suffered as multiple white parents' organizations rallied behind the idea of the neighborhood school. The plan lost yet more support when the school board chair resigned. He and his family had moved beyond the proposed peripheral schools, out of the district and to the suburbs.[71] Although Syracuse's periphery elementary schools were not built, the plan conveyed a clear message in rejecting central-city neighborhoods as sites for schooling.

Some education park advocates recognized the uneven travel burdens and antiurban messaging of peripheral plans as in Syracuse. New York City based education consultants and park advocates Max Wolff and Annie Stein worked in Buffalo in 1970 to revise that district's initial plan to build middle schools in a suburban ring around the city, calling instead for education parks intentionally located in "neutral" or "public" spaces, including some downtown as well as on the edge of the city.[72]

New York City: Education Parks Built and Unbuilt

In June 1964, the New York City Board of Education hosted a three-day conference, "An Exploration of the Education Park Concept." The event fell four months after a massive student boycott for "quality integrated education" (in which 45 percent of students stayed home) and three months after Queens parents rallied against proposed busing

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[68] Lewis, "New Role of Education Parks," 22–23.

[69] Ibid., 23.

[70] USCCR, *The Process of Change*, 24.

[71] Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 306 F. Supp. 1291 (WDNC 1969); and Birkhead, "How the Campus Proposal Failed."

[72] Max Wolff and Annie Stein, "A Plan for Middle Schools, Buffalo, New York. A Study of Sites, Organization and Program" (New York: Center for Urban Education, March 1970), ERIC ED 085902.

plans.[73] Education parks, some desegregation advocates hoped, could achieve their goal without provoking more white resistance. As they drafted proposals for multiple communities, New York education park advocates like their counterparts nationally judged and condemned urban space as they identified locations for schools and chose design approaches. In Brooklyn, however, community advocates tried to turn the education park concept in a pro- rather than antiurban direction, highlighting the presence of alternative spatial ideologies of schooling.

One of New York City's first education park proposals came from a community organization, the Harlem Parents Committee. The organization embraced the education park to bring modern facilities to a population of students from across smaller, highly segregated neighborhood schools. In 1965, the Committee suggested building a 15,000-student education park in Harlem's Morningside Park, one of New York City's few green spaces north of Central Park. Describing the park as "underutilized" and a "general eyesore," they argued that it would be better replaced by a collection of elementary, junior high, and high schools with elaborate supplemental facilities as well. The Morningside Park proposal never took off, perhaps in part because of community appreciation for the same park that residents defended firmly as their terrain when, only a few years later, Columbia University tried to annex a portion to construct a largely private gymnasium.[74]

New York City officials continued to think about the education park in other locales. The idea of multiple schools linked together in a single educational site (if in separate buildings) influenced planning for the controversial Intermediate School 201 (IS 201). The school served as the center of a five-school "education complex," a variant on the education park label, with a mix of newly constructed and preexisting buildings. City officials initially claimed the new IS 201 would be desegregated in part by zoning communities from across the East

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[73]Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 116–46; Delmont, *Why Busing Failed*; and Fred Powledgie, "500 Parents in Queens Protest Busing in School-Pairing Plan," *New York Times*, March 25, 1964, 23.

[74]Stefan Bradley, "'Gym Crow Must Go!' Black Student Activism at Columbia University, 1967–1968," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 163–81. Interestingly, at the same moment that the Harlem Parents Committee was considering consolidating many of Harlem's schools in a single location in the interest of desegregation, other community activists, including the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU) organization founded by Kenneth Clark and colleagues and later led by Adam Clayton Powell, pushed for dispersed storefront organizations to serve young people. Soon after, the New York Urban League and other funders created street academies—also in dispersed storefront locations—for students not succeeding in traditional high schools. See *Youth in the Ghetto: A Study of the Consequences of Powerlessness and a Blueprint for Change* (New York: HARYOU, 1964); and Daniel U. Levine, "Educating Alienated Inner-City Youth: Lessons from the Street Academies," *Journal of Negro Education* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 1975): 139–48.

River, in the South Bronx and Queens. That never came to pass, but the school's design—its windowlessness, its elevation on pillars above street level—conveyed a separation from the urban landscape and generated ample local criticism.[75] Over the next five years, Board of Education officials generated other education park plans that separated schools from the urban core, either via "midpoint" periphery locations or design elements that distanced education from the surrounding urban landscape.

New York's first completed education park sat within a newly constructed, massive housing development that exemplified the "towers in the park" approach to modernist architecture, with large buildings separated by expanses of plazas or green space. In the mid-1960s, the Co-op City housing development rose on the site of the former Freedomland amusement park in the northeastern corner of the Bronx, looking across the Hutchinson River and to Long Island Sound in lowlying, marshlike terrain. Co-op City offered more than 15,000 units of middle-class housing, in which planners expected to include 10–25 percent black families. Just across Interstate 95 sat older majority-black neighborhoods, one middle-class, one poor.

Educators, planners, and the United Housing Foundation (which built Co-op City) saw in the education park concept and the location close to black and white neighborhoods the opportunity both to meet the extensive new developments' need for schools and to foster desegregation.[76] The Northeast Bronx Educational Park included one large high school, two middle schools, and three elementary schools to serve 11,000 students on a 25-acre parcel adjacent to Co-op City's towers and plazas. As in Pittsburgh and other locations considering education parks, educators' and planners' aims reached from the pedagogical (ungraded school structures to allow more flexible grouping and individualization) to the mundanely cost-saving (a consolidated large auditorium shared by all the park's schools). Scale allowed for expensive and unique facilities, including a planetarium, museum, and 50-meter indoor pool. The park's designers imagined that the open plazas around the school could

[75] On urban school architecture of the era, see Wiley, "Concrete Solutions." Architects and board officials explained IS 201's windowlessness as a necessary response to its location close to a railroad track, but Marta Gutman pointed out that a nearby Catholic school with windows suggested other options existed; see Marta Gutman, "I.S. 201: Space, Race, and Modern Architecture in Harlem," Paper presented at Educating Harlem Conference, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, October 2, 2014.
[76] Frederick Shaw, "The Educational Park in New York: Archetype of the School of the Future?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, 50, no. 6 (February 1969): 329–31, 330.

be lighted at night, providing space for community activities, basketball, and skateboarding.[77]

Unlike Pittsburgh's education park proposals and others, Co-op City's large-scale, modernist education park facility was aesthetically consistent with the large-scale, modernist landscape that surrounded it. With thirty-five towers between twenty-four and thirty-three stories high, the "ersatz urbanism" of Co-op City made the education park look at-home, thereby highlighting how sharply dissonant education parks would be for most of the existing city landscape in New York and elsewhere.[78] Yet whether Co-op City's park coordinated with its surroundings or not, the design fared poorly over time. Architects revisiting the megastructure decades later criticized it as an example of a "lobotomized" version of modernism and found its outdoor spaces forbidding and inaccessible (Figure 4).[79]

Modernist architecture, a midpoint location, and private support for construction came together in the Northeast Bronx Education Park. The education park idea evolved differently in a group of eastern Brooklyn neighborhoods from Brownsville to East New York to Canarsie. Listed as a potential site in New York City's first discussions of the education park idea, Brooklyn later saw extensive community-based planning around the idea. Local community members tried to apply the education park concept with more connection to, rather than separation from, the existing urban landscape. But when they tried to forward an alternative view of urban space, they found strong opposition from the city.

Black Brooklyn neighborhoods had faced severe school overcrowding for decades as population grew and the Board of Education failed to construct new facilities. As one local organizer put it, "When the blacks move in, the whites and the Board of Education move out."[80]

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[77] Shaw, "Educational Park," 330; Joseph F. X. McCarthy, "The Education Park: What Should It Be? Educational Specifications for the Northeast Bronx Education Park" (Brooklyn, NY: Board of Education of New York City, August 66), ERIC ED 016710. As part of their interest in education parks, New York planners also constructed a massive high school and intermediate school campus (but on a less extensive lot), the John F. Kennedy High School, on the border between northern Manhattan and the Bronx.

[78] Co-op City's developers, the United Housing Foundation (UHF), opted against an education park in their smaller (6,000 unit) Rochdale Village development. There, they included two elementary and one junior high school on the 170-acre superblock, but did not consolidate them into a park, and sent students out of the village for high school. Frustrations in securing sufficient school seats for Rochdale residents led to UHF's decision to build the Co-op City education park themselves. See Peter Eisenstadt, *Rochdale Village: Robert Moses, 6,000 Families, and New York City's Great Experiment in Integrated Housing* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 127.

[79] Kristen Richards, "Bridging an Urban Canyon." *Oculus*, 67, no. 4 (Fall 2005), 28.

[80] Brief of American Jewish Congress [et al.] as amici curiae, July 25, 1966, file 1, box 22, Annie Stein Papers, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 13.

Figure 4. The Northeast Bronx Educational Park, including Harry S. Truman High School and feeder schools, shares a modernist aesthetic and massive scale with surrounding Co-op City housing. Shown in this 2009 image, Truman is the large, mid-rise building at the center foreground, surrounded by four lower rise elementary and intermediate schools, with apartment towers behind. (Photograph by David L. Roush, from Wikimedia Commons.)

From 1967 to 1974, no new schools opened in the area, even as at times as many as one-third of local students received less than a full school day due to split-shifts.[81] Despite the dire need for schools, Brownsville desegregation advocates sued to stop Board of Education plans to build a slate of elementary and middle schools, seeing in these plans a further mechanism to segregate the city's black students. Brownsville parents proposed, instead, a large education park (see Figure 5, location A); Board of Education planners offered their own plan, for two education parks (see Figure 5, locations B and C), in predominantly white areas.[82]

Returning a few years later to the question of how to meet the area's need for schools while also seeking desegregation, a broad coalition of East New York citizens and community organizations, alongside city

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[81]Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 168. In the later years, local efforts to encourage desegregation led to construction delays when local groups won an injunction against construction that would encourage segregation. See Taylor, *Knocking At Our Own Door*.

[82]Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto;* Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and CORDE, *A Report on the Education Park*, 69.
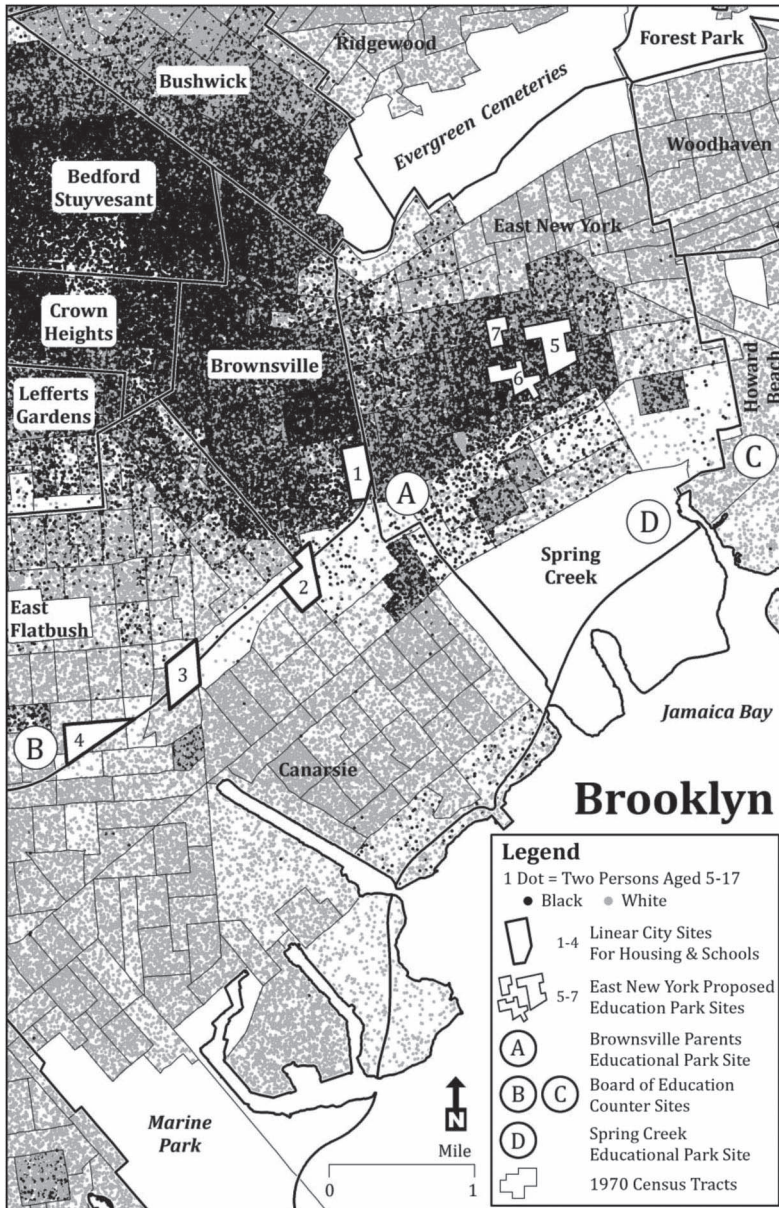
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Figure 5. Although community advocates hoped for an education park in location A, and later at locations 5–7, the New York City Board of Education suggested locations B–D, and 1–4, proximate to areas of white residence. (Map by James W. Quinn. Population data from 1970 U.S. Census via NHGIS; education park locations indicated in Thabit, How East New York Became a Ghetto, Map 2.)

planners committed to more inclusive planning processes, took up the notion of the education park in the early 1970s and shaped it to fit their hopes for their community.[83] Unlike school district generated proposals in Pittsburgh and Syracuse in the 1960s that distanced schools from urban neighborhoods, the East New York plans sought to revitalize the neighborhood, in part through building a school deeply attached to the community in both its design and its programming. After years of initial conversation, local organizers created a series of "charrettes," or open community design sessions modeled on architectural reviews. East New York leaders then put forward an image of a very large (15,000) student high school with some elements of modernist design, but also intentional integration with, rather than separation from, the surrounding community. In their terms, it would be at the geographic as well as figurative "center" of the community, part of its total "rehabilitation" (see Figure 5, sites 5–7). The large facility was planned to be interwoven with the local street grid and rehabilitated local housing.[84]

By the early 1970s, ideas about desegregation were evolving in black communities nationally. In keeping with this evolution, proposals for the education park in East New York showed how local community members valued desegregation, but wanted it accompanied by, rather than standing in lieu of, a range of other educational and community improvements. Working only a few dozen blocks from what had become the explosive center of community control activism in Ocean Hill-Brownsville in 1968, they imagined the education park as the center of educational, community-building, and economic improvements in the area. They were less concerned than education park advocates elsewhere about the perceived waste of building an education park within an established black community.[85] Their vision, however, did not align with the Board of Education's view. First criticizing the East New York plan for its location as not conducive to desegregation, the Board of Education then suggested a radically altered design, one strikingly separate from, rather than embedded in the urban landscape.

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[83] This community-based planning effort was analogous to earlier efforts to reclaim planning processes within black communities often targeted by, but not represented in, urban renewal and other interventions in urban space. See Klemek, *Transatlantic Collapse*, and Brian D. Goldstein, "A City Within a City: Community Development and the Struggle Over Harlem, 1961–2001" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2013).

[84] "East New York Educational Complex Master Plan," 1973, file 1, box 32, Annie Stein Collection, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 80, 102.

[85] "East New York Educational Complex Master Plan." On Ocean Hill-Brownsville, see Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*; Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); and Daniel H. Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, many cities discussed air-rights development over transportation routes. Baltimore leaders, for example, suggested an education park in air-rights development over downtown highways. The New York City Board of Education made a similar suggestion for the embattled East New York Education Park plans. They suggested that the park could be included in planning for a "Linear City" to rise atop the anticipated Cross-Brooklyn Expressway. Some East New York community members took the idea to be a disingenuous one, seeking to stall one project by attaching it to an even more fantastical one. But the suggestion reinforces again the trend in encouraging education parks not only in "peripheral" or midpoint locations, but with design elements that separated them from the extant landscape. Part of the Linear City's path, shown in Figure 5, ran through Brooklyn's consolidating belt of black population. Yet its design-oriented students and others not to the surrounding neighborhoods, but to other nodes on the Linear City itself—an orientation reinforced by a proposed transit system along the length of the development. The Linear City location hinted as well at a dividing line between majority-black and majority-white areas.

In the end, the Linear City idea remained unrealized as the federal Bureau of Public Roads denied funding for the Cross-Brooklyn Expressway. A few years later, the city proposed merging the East New York education park proposal with another plan for an education park in the predominantly white Spring Creek area. The site, not the location that East New York's community advocates had proposed, came closer to the peripheral or midpoint site ideal. This site faced opposition from the more than a thousand residents who would be displaced via site clearance near Spring Creek, and never came to pass. In the view of one community member and urban planner, the extended process of proposals and counterproposals was the story of the East New York community's desires being "trifled with and sabotaged" by the Board of Education.[86] Many education park proposals floundered for lack of funding or other opposition; in East New York, a community attempt to articulate a pro-urban spatial ideology of schooling drew resistance as well.

In New York City, the education park idea took multiple trajectories, but all showed the power of the dominant spatial ideology of schooling, revealed as desegregation advocates turned away from black communities as sites for schools via location or design choices.

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[86]Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, 150. The struggle over an education park in Brooklyn deserves more focused investigation. It has received brief mention in Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, and Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto* conveys a participant's perspective.

Conclusion

When East New York's advocates forwarded a vision of an education park that would fit within and rehabilitate the existing urban landscape, they sought to align the education park concept with an alternative spatial ideology of schooling. Most education park plans, generated frequently by white local leaders with inspiration and support from national education networks, shared in the era's dominant spatial ideology that rested both on racism and an antiurban aesthetic. Either through modernist design choices that helped separate school facilities from the surrounding urban landscape, or location choices that avoided urban spaces, most education park proposals reflected 1960s and 1970s era disdain for urban and racialized black spaces.

The education parks story makes three contributions to the history of education. First, it augments the developing literature on northern school desegregation efforts by highlighting the work of desegregation advocates within school systems and education networks. With previous attention directed to grassroots black activists, or to white popular resistance, this set of actors has drawn relatively less attention. Education park plans created by these advocates mixed paradoxical elements. They were at once strikingly ambitious and optimistic, especially when compared to other perspectives of the time that turned away from desegregation in favor of compensatory education, or of community control.[87] Education park ideas were bold for their time. But they were profoundly limited as well, as shown by their rejection of racialized black spaces via location or design choices. Spatial ideology helped a network of influential, primarily white desegregation advocates negotiate their contradictory commitments to foster desegregation and respect white privilege.

In this way, education park plans, and the elite network of predominantly white desegregation advocates who most concertedly forwarded the idea, make a second contribution to the history of education. They clearly represent the constraints—not only in terms of municipal boundaries, shifting demographics, and popular resistance, but in the ideological landscape as well—that shaped thinking about desegregation in the northern context. Ideas about urban space, suburban space, and their relative educational value (or lack of value) conveyed a mix of the period's racist and aesthetic agendas. These ideas were inseparable from capitalism's forces as well—in the profit available in

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[87] See the works in note 21. For information about the Ford Foundation's Educational Improvement/Great City Schools program, see John P. Spencer, *In the Crossfire: Marcus Foster and the Troubled History of American School Reform* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

segregated suburban and urban development, and in urban poverty.[88] Education park plans may have been the most assertive or extreme expressions of the era's dominant spatial ideology of schooling. But that spatial ideology was visible in desegregation plans implemented across the country, plans that closed schools in black communities but not in white communities, or that frequently and often unquestioningly transported students out of urban areas but not into them.[89] In these ways, desegregation frequently continued white privilege, at times even worsening the very inequalities it sought to challenge.[90] It did so not solely due to white popular resistance, but through the assumptions and ideas of those who shaped desegregation policy.

Third, the centrality of ideas about space and the city in the process of desegregation prompts attention to the spatial ideology of schooling in other contexts. Just as the particular configuration of spatial ideology in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s depended on the shape of the moment's racial ideology, the economic value of various parts of the metropolis, and current thinking about urban design, different spatial ideologies developed in different places and times.

Education park planners opened up a fantastical and yet limited vision of the relationship between schools and space. In other eras and settings, the relationship was quite different. For example, in early twentieth-century Oakland, California, women led public and private investment in crafting an urban "charitable landscape" to serve children. In the same decades, social reform networks and nascent city planning practices defined urban and suburban neighborhoods in relationship to the local school. Rather than identifying urban space as unsuitable for schooling, as education park proposals often did via their location and design elements, earlier generations of reformers sought to remake the urban landscape and schools within it to better serve the needs of

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[88]On the profitability of urban poverty, see N. B. D. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[89]Potyondy, "Reimagining Urban Education," also explores education parks in relation to limits of reform, but with less emphasis on the specific spatial or design approach of Columbus' park plans.

[90]For example see: Derrick A. Bell, Jr., "*Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 3 (January 1980): 518–34; Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926–1972* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); and Ansley T. Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016). For a sociological perspective, see Amy Stuart Wells, Jennifer Jellison Holme, Anita Tijerina Revilla, and Awo Korantemaa Atanda, *Both Sides Now: The Story of School Desegregation's Graduates* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

children and education.[91] A growing body of work on the history and meanings of school architecture and design (more frequently outside of the United States than within it) raises new questions about space as well.[92] And the present day offers another prompt to examine schooling in relationship to various meanings of space as urban gentrification and reinvestment alongside rising suburban poverty reconfigure the social meanings of space in relationship to enduring racism. Historians have rich opportunities to explore how ideas of space and schooling interact in other periods and in relationship to other educational agendas and challenges.

[91]Gutman, *A City for Children*; Michael C. Johanek and John L. Puckett, *Leonard Covello and the Making of Benjamin Franklin High School: Schooling as if Citizenship Mattered* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008); and Highsmith and Erickson, "Segregation as Splitting, Segregation as Joining."
[92]See note 19.