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2020

**Racial Integration, White Appropriation, and School Choice: The  
Demise of the Colored Schools of late Nineteenth Century  
Brooklyn**

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Racial Integration, White Appropriation, and School Choice:  
The Demise of the Colored Schools of late Nineteenth Century Brooklyn

By Judith Kafka and Cici Matheny

“The doing away with the distinctively colored schools and ... bringing about mixed classes,” wrote the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in September of 1899, “has done more toward the education of the race than any other individual effort.”<sup>1</sup> Just three years earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that segregated public facilities were permissible by federal law, lending legitimacy to the growing practice of racial segregation across the country.<sup>2</sup> Yet Brooklyn, which had become part of the consolidated New York City in 1898 but for the time being maintained control of its schools, seemed to be moving in the opposite direction – at least in education. Brooklyn’s Board of Education had officially ended racial discrimination in schooling in 1883, by requiring all district schools to admit any student living within their enrollment boundaries. The *Eagle*, Brooklyn’s largest-circulating newspaper, had opposed the decision at the time, but now declared the results a huge success.<sup>3</sup> No Black parent with children in the public schools, the *Eagle* maintained, “would tolerate for a moment the suggestion that the old order of things should be restored.” Perhaps more importantly from the perspective of the *Eagle*’s publishers, the newspaper claimed that the positive effects of school desegregation were inextricably linked to Brooklyn’s spatial and economic development:

One can readily see that when schools were established for a particular race, that race would settle thereabout, to be within walking distance of the school for the children. And when the race settled there they built their churches. This very natural condition followed the establishment of each of the colored schools in Brooklyn.

However, “now that the colored children are admitted to all the public schools the colored people have dispersed,” the paper continued: “They are now found in every section of the city.” The advantage of this geographic redistribution of Black families, explained the *Eagle*, was evident in rising property values in the neighborhoods they left behind:

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It is admitted that where colored schools were maintained they worked an injury to the localities by diminishing property values, because they became known as purely colored settlements. But these conditions have been very much abated, and in some instances quite removed by the opening of the white schools to colored children, and it is admitted by men well located in realty values in Brooklyn that by distributing the colored people over the city through the influence of the public schools, better conditions prevail than were formerly known.<sup>4</sup>

Yet despite the paper's assertions of its widespread benefits, Brooklyn's school desegregation was not universally applauded. Some White families objected to rising numbers of Black students in what had previously been all-White schools, and some Black families and community members objected to the loss of their own, separate institutions, staffed primarily by Black teachers and led by Black principals. Indeed, the impetus for the *Eagle's* article, entitled "Find Mixed Classes Best," was what it referred to as a "little outburst of feeling on the part of the colored people in the Eastern District" in response to a proposed plan to move students and faculty from what had once been the city's Colored School Number 3, located in Williamsburg, to a small storefront several blocks away.<sup>5</sup> The school, renamed Public School 69 in 1887, was the last of Brooklyn's formerly Colored schools to still be (unofficially) designated for Black children and educators. It had the sole remaining Black head principal in Brooklyn and was sharing its large, relatively new, and, by all accounts, very fine building with a regular district school.<sup>6</sup>

Moving the Black students and faculty of PS 69 to the storefront made sense, according to Brooklyn's Board of Education, despite the apparent inadequacy of the proposed new site, because there were 200 White children in overcrowded classrooms or on half-day schedules who could use the space reportedly occupied by only 20-50 Black students in regular attendance at PS 69.<sup>7</sup> The *Eagle* agreed, and seemed prepared to write the school's obituary. Begun earlier in the century as a mouthpiece for the Democratic party, the newspaper was now a strong Brooklyn booster – concerned with (and invested in) Brooklyn's civic and real estate development. The *Eagle* had also long demonstrated an interest in Brooklyn's schools, frequently devoting considerable space to detailed reporting on the Board of Education. In more recent years, the newspaper had been paying increasing attention to the education of Black students, but it had done so through the lens of its projected readership – patrician, somewhat forward-looking, native-born White Americans who benefited from Brooklyn's existing social, political, and economic institutions.<sup>8</sup>

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In this context, the *Eagle* acknowledged that concerns about the fate of Black educators at PS 69 were valid, given that teaching and administrative jobs often did not follow Black students to regular district schools, but the newspaper maintained that the time for segregated education was in the past. The numbers spoke for themselves, according to the *Eagle*: Once Black families had the option, they seemed to prefer integrated schools and classrooms; student attrition, as families chose to enroll their children elsewhere, had caused the closing or restructuring of each of Brooklyn's (formerly known-as) Colored schools, to the benefit of all.

In recent years, scholars have begun to acknowledge the dynamic relationship between schooling and the spatial development of specific cities or metropolitan areas, demonstrating the ways that schools, and the policies governing them, have served to stimulate or reinforce segregation and inequality in both housing and education.<sup>9</sup> These works demonstrate that rather than *reflect* existing neighborhoods, schools were often used to establish them – frequently at the behest of real estate developers who could market and sell property based on the promise of segregated schooling, and often long after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision prohibited racially segregated schools.

This article explores the relationship between schools and urban development through a slightly different lens, by examining the demise of Brooklyn's "Colored" schools, as they transitioned from formally segregated institutions, to schools-of-choice that maintained identities as sites for Black children and educators, to regular district schools with enrollment boundaries and mostly White students and faculty. We draw on a unique primary source that provides residential data for students enrolled in Brooklyn's oldest and largest designated-Black school over a nearly two-decade period. Mapping this residential data across time and in relation to the shifting demographic and geographic contours of the city allows us to explore the school's enrollment patterns in spatial terms and, when combined with data from more traditional historical sources such as school board records and newspaper accounts, helps situate Black families' school choices within the broader political and social environment. We argue that "choice" on the part of Black families only partially explains the demise of designated-Black schools in Brooklyn. When considered in the context of the city's changing spatial arrangements, it is clear that White interests also played a role in the closing of these

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institutions, as White families and developers sought, and ultimately acquired, control over formerly-Black spaces.

The historiography of school desegregation in the wake of the *Brown* decision includes a well-chronicled story of White resistance and the attendant costs often paid by Black families and educators, including the closing of schools, the loss of jobs, and the burdens endured by Black students as they at times traveled long distances to be poorly treated and inadequately educated in White-controlled and White-run schools.<sup>10</sup> Historical scholarship on school desegregation pre- *Brown* is far more limited, especially so for the nineteenth century, but here, too, scholars have documented a combination of White resistance and the tolls paid by Black communities, even as many Black parents and civic leaders fought for equal access to neighborhood schools.<sup>11</sup> Research on both eras has found evidence of Derrick Bell’s “interest convergence” thesis – the notion that when school desegregation *did* occur in the United States, it was only because the interests of Black communities “converged” with those of White policymakers.<sup>12</sup> In the context of the late nineteenth-century, when northern school desegregation largely occurred through legislative action rather than judicial decisions, Davison Douglas argues that while antisegregation statutes adopted by White lawmakers may have reflected some “Reconstruction-era racial idealism,” other concerns – such as “a desire to capture black votes in closely contested elections, and the high costs of dual schools” – often played a role as well.<sup>13</sup> Our study suggests an additional perceived benefit of school desegregation for White families, property owners, and city boosters at a time of rapid urban development – access to and appropriation of Black spaces, including, in the case of Brooklyn, much in-demand school buildings, and well-situated neighborhoods. In addition, our research demonstrates how spatial analysis at a micro level can help illuminate the relationship between school enrollment policies and residential patterns, strengthening the case for further examination of the role of schooling within the broader history of urban development.<sup>14</sup>

### **Schooling, Housing, and the Nineteenth-Century Color Line**

When W.E.B. DuBois famously wrote that the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the problem of the “color line,” he highlighted the ways that race divided America – socially, economically, politically, and

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physically. Writing that in the South the color line kept people in two separate worlds in places like theaters, hospitals, schools and churches, DuBois also described the residential color line in its various forms: as a straight line separating where most White people resided from where most Black people lived, as a “broad band of blacks” encircling White residences, or as “little settlements or nuclei of blacks ... sprung up amid surrounding whites.”<sup>15</sup>

As DuBois well knew, the so-called color line may have been more obvious in the South at the turn of the last century, but its presence was also felt north of the Mason-Dixon line. There, too, Black and White Americans often prayed in separate churches, sent their children to separate schools, and, increasingly, lived in separate neighborhoods.<sup>16</sup> In fact, while studies of northern segregation in the United States tend to take the Great Migration as their starting point, and highlight how segregation increased with the size and proportion of the Black population, the roots of the northern color line were established well before the influx of African Americans to the region in the 1920s.<sup>17</sup> Recent research by John Logan and colleagues utilizing housing data at a micro-level reveals the different spatial forms that the residential color line took across the urban North in the late antebellum and postbellum eras, when the Black population in most cities was well under 5 percent of total residents.<sup>18</sup> Viewed at the ward or census-tract levels, housing data from the period suggests broad racial integration across the region, but smaller-scale analyses make clear that residential segregation in the urban North echoed DuBois’ descriptions of the South – sometimes on a street, block, or even building, level. Moreover, Logan and colleagues’ analyses demonstrate that race superseded class, occupation, migration status and other social characteristics that may have influenced housing patterns: “Blacks lived in black neighborhoods because of their race.”<sup>19</sup>

Scholars of early African American history provide substantial evidence to support these findings. Indeed, the historiography of Black America has long demonstrated that racial segregation existed across the urban North in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and was a product of discriminatory labor, housing, and business practices, as well as the result of violent persecution. Yet this body of literature also documents the ways in which adherence to the color line could at times lead to the development of thriving Black neighborhoods that

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offered their residents some level of physical security as well as sense of community and autonomy – and often access to schools.<sup>20</sup>

The historiography of the color line in Brooklyn is similar to that of the broader field. Scholars have documented the presence of men and women of African descent in Brooklyn from the early years of colonization, and have noted that with the inclusion of the enslaved, in the late eighteenth century the Black population constituted roughly a third of all residents of what is today considered Brooklyn. Historians have also recognized the existence of relatively autonomous Black communities and settlements in nineteenth-century Brooklyn, as well as the presence of a small Black elite concentrated in Brooklyn's downtown.<sup>21</sup> Yet even as they acknowledge these early developments, for the most part histories of Brooklyn emphasize racial segregation as a 20<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon and focus on the ways that racially and economically-isolated Black neighborhoods were created and reinforced in the decades following the Great Migration. Harold Connolly, for example, in his 1977 landmark study *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, notes that ward statistics from the late 1800s revealed “a rather broad distribution of blacks throughout the city” of Brooklyn.<sup>22</sup> Yet Connolly also details the ways that early Black life in Brooklyn was geographically concentrated. Similarly, the 1977 guide for an exhibition at the New Muse Community Museum of Brooklyn, *An Introduction to the Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn*, argues that “as late as 1900, there was no real sense applied to the idea of a Black community. In general Brooklyn was an expansive integrated community.”<sup>23</sup> Yet many chapters in the guide describe the several neighborhoods in which most Black Brooklynites were, in fact, concentrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and detail the social and material importance of the city's Black institutions – including its schools – to the broader Black community. Robert Swan's chapter on “The Black Belt of Brooklyn” even asserts that the neighborhood now known as Fort Greene became the “hub of Brooklyn's Black community” following the erection there of Colored School Number One in 1847.<sup>24</sup>

More recent scholarship on Brooklyn has followed a similar pattern – acknowledging the existence of Black neighborhoods and geographic communities in earlier eras, but focusing on how Brooklyn's Black population became much more concentrated and segregated beginning in the 1920s.<sup>25</sup> The one exception to this is Judith Wellman's *Brooklyn's Promised Land: The Free Black Community of Weeksville, NY*, which

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details the history of Weeksville, a nineteenth century Black settlement located in what is considered central Brooklyn today. While acknowledging the physical, legal and economic oppression Black Brooklynites often faced, Wellman focuses on Weeksville as a spatial as well as social community, maintaining that its “residents defined what was important to them – physical safety, education, economic self-sufficiency, and political self-determination.”<sup>26</sup>

Schooling figures prominently in the history of Black Brooklyn, as it does in the history of Black America more broadly. The rich and growing body of literature on the history of Black education in the United States documents the importance of education to Black families and leaders, the role of Black educators in schools and communities, political battles over access to schooling and school funding, and debates within various African American communities over the relative merits of integrated schools versus separate institutions.<sup>27</sup> In the late nineteenth-century, a period historians consider a nadir in Black civil rights as legal protections promised during Reconstruction were withdrawn across the country and replaced by formalized means of disenfranchisement as well as violent racial oppression, efforts to desegregate schooling in the urban North were often met with local resistance – despite court orders and legislative acts to the contrary.<sup>28</sup> In Detroit, for example, the school board ignored state law and court decisions for over a decade before eventually allowing Black students to enroll in regular district schools. In other towns and cities, school officials established segregation through a combination of racially gerrymandered attendance zones and policies that allowed White children to transfer to all-White institutions. Still other cities created residential color lines through restrictive housing practices, establishing Black neighborhoods and schools simultaneously.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, however, other cities and towns ended school segregation during this period; cities with small Black populations, like Oakland and San Francisco, found the operation of separate Black schools prohibitively expensive and closed them. Other cities, in states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, complied with desegregation laws by closing their Black schools in the late eighteen-hundreds, only to re-establish segregated schooling decades later as their Black populations grew and White support for integrated settings diminished. And while some Black families and community members pursued school desegregation through courts and

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legislation as well as in practice, others sought to maintain separate institutions, preferring the educational environment of Black schools and the instruction of Black teachers to integrated schools and an all-White teaching force. In cities like Dayton, Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh, some Black teachers and families in the late nineteenth century either actively opposed school desegregation laws or sought to re-open Black schools after they'd been closed.<sup>30</sup>

The closure of Brooklyn's designated-Black schools fits within this larger uneven narrative of the de- (and often re-) segregation of schooling in the late nineteenth century urban north. The New York context was somewhat unique in that while most northern states interpreted their civil rights laws banning racial discrimination in public institutions as prohibiting legally-segregated schools, New York's highest courts had determined that separate schooling did not constitute discrimination as long as Black students had equal access to their own institutions.<sup>31</sup> In practical terms, however, the existence of Black-designated schools staffed by Black teachers was not unusual for the period, nor was their eventual closure and/or restructuring. Yet our unique data set offers a new perspective on the schools' history and a better understanding of the role the city's spatial development and White interests played in their demise. Indeed, while previous scholars have investigated the founding of Brooklyn's "colored" schools, political battles over their maintenance and dissolution, and the schools' importance to members of Brooklyn's Black community, none have really considered Brooklyn's designated-Black schools and the policies governing them in relation to the spatial development of the city.<sup>32</sup> In this study we explore the demise of Brooklyn's "colored" schools from a spatial perspective, analyzing student admissions data through the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technologies that allow us to consider spatial factors such as distance between students' homes and their schools, as well as the changing racial composition of Brooklyn's neighborhoods, alongside the schools' political and social histories and the Board of Education's shifting enrollment policies. While many questions remain, our findings suggest that the enacted schooling "choices" the Brooklyn Board of Education granted Black families during this period cannot be understood separately from the White interests that shaped and constrained them.

**Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brooklyn and Its Schools**

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Our study focuses on the years 1882 to 1900 – the period for which we have enrollment data from Brooklyn’s Colored School Number One, later renamed Public School 67. This eighteen-year span also covers a time of enormous demographic, geographic, and political change for urban America in general and the city (and then borough) of Brooklyn specifically. Sometimes considered the nation’s first “commuter suburb,” by the late nineteenth century Brooklyn was the fourth largest city in the country and a hub of commerce and industry.<sup>33</sup> Many of the city’s residents were immigrants. In 1860, 42 percent of Brooklyn’s population was foreign born – primarily hailing from Ireland, but as the century progressed, more and more new immigrants were from Germany, and, to a lesser degree, Italy and Russia.<sup>34</sup> The opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 made Brooklyn even more attractive to the middle and working classes, who sought better housing at more affordable prices within commuting distance of lower Manhattan; a decade after the bridge opened Brooklyn’s population had surged to nearly 900,000 (from 570,000 in 1880).<sup>35</sup> Figure 1 shows the boundaries of Brooklyn in 1882 and 1900, as well as the population distribution at the century’s end. *[Insert Figure 1 here]*

As the city of Brooklyn grew, so too did demand for seats in its schools. A headline in the *Eagle* in the fall of 1883 referred to Brooklyn’s educational capacity in relation to its student population of over 66,000 as simply “Inadequate.”<sup>36</sup> The school population was growing by the day with increases in immigration, migration, and the city’s own geographic expansion. By the end of the century, Brooklyn had annexed the towns surrounding it to become contiguous with Kings County, taking on the boundaries we know of as Brooklyn today. Much of this new land was rural, but it included some schools, and often more students than those schools could accommodate.<sup>37</sup> Records from 1896 show that there were roughly 133,000 students enrolled in Brooklyn’s schools, about 5,300 children who had been refused admission due to space limitations, and around 12,000 enrolled in half day sessions for space reasons.<sup>38</sup> In 1898 Brooklyn ceased to exist as an independent city and officially became part of the consolidated City of New York; Brooklyn’s Board of Education, however, continued on in semi-autonomy until it was subsumed by a city-wide school board in 1901.

Within this context of both massive and rapid expansion, Brooklyn’s late nineteenth-century Black population was small in both absolute and relative numbers. As Craig Steven Wilder details in *A Covenant*

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*with Color*, at the end of the Civil War only about 5,000 of Brooklyn's 250,000 inhabitants were Black; the city's population more than quadrupled by the end of the century, but its Black residents remained proportionally steady at about 1.5 percent of the city's total residents (roughly 20,000 in 1900).<sup>39</sup> Yet while not large in number, Brooklyn's Black citizens included a core elite that enjoyed economic and, to a lesser degree, political success.<sup>40</sup> Between their churches, Black-run businesses, nightlife and schools, Brooklyn's Black neighborhoods often attracted educated Black Americans from elsewhere – including from New York City (Manhattan), just across the river. In fact, many Black New Yorkers whose homes and businesses were targeted during the Draft Riots of 1863 sought refuge in Brooklyn and stayed, impressed with the relative security and standard of living its Black neighborhoods offered.<sup>41</sup>

One such refugee was Philip A. White, a successful pharmacist who made Brooklyn his home and who, in 1882, became the first African American appointed to the Brooklyn Board of Education. At the time of his appointment, the city of Brooklyn had four “Colored Schools” – three of which had been established by Black citizens prior to the creation of a centralized Board of Education, and all of which were staffed primarily by Black teachers and principals and located in neighborhoods with concentrations of Black residents. Figure 2 shows the four schools' locations and the racial composition of the city of Brooklyn in 1882. Colored School Number One (CS 1), the oldest and largest of the city's Colored Schools, was originally located in downtown Brooklyn, although by 1882 it had long since moved closer to what would later be called the neighborhood of Fort Greene, where it occupied a small and reportedly dilapidated building “hemmed in by the Jail and Morgue and a carpet cleaning establishment,” and described as “not fit for a stable.”<sup>42</sup> In the fall of 1883 CS 1 relocated to a new “beautiful brick structure,” built especially for the school, just a few blocks away.<sup>43</sup> The area of Fort Greene was known for its concentration of a Black middle/professional class, as well as a smaller group of fairly well to-do Black elite, and “dominated the residential, social, political, and religious life of Black Brooklyn” through the early 1900s.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, however, because of its location on a hill, its general proximity to ferry services and the new bridge, and its growing and generous housing stock, Fort Greene was becoming increasingly popular with middle and upper-class White families as well; the streets closest to Fort Greene Park were home to some of the most exclusive addresses in the city.<sup>45</sup> [*Insert Figure 2 here*]

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Colored School Number Two (CS 2) was located in what had once been the village of Weeksville, a Black rural settlement on the outskirts of Brooklyn that by the 1880s had become more centrally located as Brooklyn grew around it. CS 2 had begun its life in nearby Carrville, another Black settlement, but had moved to a new building, near where today's neighborhoods of Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant meet, in 1853, "on what would become Weeksville's most important public block."<sup>46</sup> In earlier eras, CS 2 had been the only school in the vicinity, and was often attended by White students (at times reportedly half its student population was White).<sup>47</sup> By the 1880s, the area around CS 2 had become more developed and increasingly popular with the White middle class and new immigrants – even more so later in the decade once an elevated train line made travel to downtown Brooklyn and New York City a reasonable commute – and the city had built new schools intended for White children.<sup>48</sup> The building that housed CS 2, meanwhile, was viewed as outdated and unsafe, and Black leaders in the neighborhood were pushing for it to be replaced.<sup>49</sup>

Colored School Number Three (CS 3), discussed briefly above, had fallen under the jurisdiction of the Brooklyn Board of Education when the city of Brooklyn annexed Williamsburg in 1855. When the school was first established, the area around it had been relatively undeveloped, but by the 1880s Williamsburg, like much of Brooklyn, was becoming more and more populated, especially with new immigrants from Germany. CS 3 had been rebuilt in 1879 and was now located in reportedly "one of the finest buildings of its kind in Brooklyn."<sup>50</sup> Much less is known about Colored School Number Four (CS 4) than the other three schools, largely because it was never as well established. First founded in the 1860s in response to demand for more seats in CS 1, CS 4 was located in downtown Brooklyn, although it moved at least once, closed and reopened, and in its last iteration was housed as a separate classroom within a regular district school (Public School Number One).<sup>51</sup> Taken together, Brooklyn's four Colored schools enrolled somewhere between 650 and 750 students a year, representing only a portion of the eligible Black youth in the city.<sup>52</sup>

The very existence of the Colored Schools was controversial in late nineteenth century Brooklyn, and many thought that Phillip White, an avowed integrationist, would seek the schools' closure once he joined the Board of Education. Instead, he sought and achieved a compromise. When White was appointed by Brooklyn's newly-elected reform mayor Seth Low, it was in response to almost two decades of Black Brooklynites'

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demands for representation on the board that governed all of Brooklyn's some 64 schools.<sup>53</sup> The recently-established *New York Globe*, a Black newspaper published in New York City by Brooklynite Thomas Fortune, took up the call in 1881 and expressly linked Black representation on the Brooklyn Board of Education to the goal of school desegregation, arguing that "the public schools of that city should be common, in fact as in name."<sup>54</sup> In 1882, however, just months prior to White's appointment, the *Globe* suggested that at the very least a Black Board member could ensure equality in funding for the Colored Schools and represent Black Brooklynites' interests.<sup>55</sup> The *Eagle*, which had increasingly taken an interest in the state of the city's Colored Schools, agreed, arguing at the time of White's appointment that while whether or not the schools should continue to exist was "an open question," Black families had a right to be heard on the matter, "and to be heard all the time." The *Eagle* also argued that in having separate schools for Black students, the city had a responsibility to make sure their interests were represented on the Board:

To say that since we do not appoint Germans or Irishmen or Americans because of their nationality we ought not to select a negro because of his birth, does not meet the case for we do not maintain distinctively American, German, or Irish schools, but we do maintain distinctive schools for colored children.<sup>56</sup>

With the exception of Black students, children in Brooklyn were expected to attend their local, common, school, which was determined based on geographic boundaries that created "districts." Each district school was supervised by a committee comprised of three of the centralized board's 45 members. While Brooklyn's Board of Education controlled school budgets and issued city-wide edicts on instruction, most governance decisions, including hiring, were made by the district committees – either directly or through their recommendations to the full Board. The Colored schools had no district designation and no geographic boundaries for attendance, but each was similarly supervised by a 3-person local committee. Once White, who had been selected by Brooklyn's Black elite to represent them on the Board, was appointed, he became a member of each of the committees that oversaw the Colored Schools, thus having some direct say over hiring and other day-to-day aspects of the education of Black Brooklynites.<sup>57</sup>

White's appointment made Brooklyn the first major American city to seat an African American on its Board of Education, and was hailed by Black leaders in New York and beyond, even as many of those same

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individuals decried the city's racially-discriminatory school enrollment policies.<sup>58</sup> Those policies were upheld in 1883, when Brooklynite Simon King lost his suit against the city's Board of Education demanding that his daughter be permitted to attend her local district school (Number 5) instead of CS 1, which was located several blocks further away from their home.<sup>59</sup> At a Board of Education meeting not long after the ruling, White expressed disappointment, arguing that it was a "blow" to Black students when they were "compelled to run about the city looking for a school into which they could be admitted."<sup>60</sup> White himself had sought to enroll his own children in a district school in 1876, and his appeal had garnered considerable attention at the time due to his great wealth and the pale complexion of his offspring.<sup>61</sup> But White was also aware that Black Brooklynites were not unified in support of school integration. The existence of separate schools for Black youth often divided Black communities across the North, as some fought for the right for their children to attend schools with White children, while others viewed Black-run schools as a source of pride and a way to ensure jobs for educated Black men and women.<sup>62</sup> In Brooklyn, the city's Colored Schools were perceived by many Black residents as sites of political power and self-determination, as well as high-quality institutions specifically geared toward the educational needs of Black children. The schools drew well-educated Black men and women from around the country as teachers, many of whom played important leadership roles in the city. At the same time, however, many community leaders – Black and White – considered segregated schools as both symbolic and material evidence of the racial oppression and second-class status visited upon tax-paying citizens, and demanded that all students be permitted to attend their local, district schools.<sup>63</sup>

Still other Brooklynites agreed with both positions, maintaining that Black-run schools were important for the community but so was equal access under the law. This was the position Philip White took in December of 1883, when he brought a resolution to the Board to end racial discrimination in Brooklyn public schools. Noting that Black citizens were expected to bear arms and pay taxes, White argued that their children should be allowed to attend the same schools as their White neighbors. After some debate, White's resolution passed 21 to 14. At the same meeting, however, White opposed a resolution, which had been presented as a challenge to him and others who supported the end of required segregation, abolishing the Colored schools. In explaining his opposition to closing the Colored schools, White acknowledged that the separate schools were

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popular with many Black families and that enrollment rates were unlikely to be affected by the Board's decision to cease racial discrimination in school admissions.<sup>64</sup>

White's stance frustrated his opponents on the Board as well as the *Eagle*, which covered the Board meeting in great detail and wrote an angry editorial criticizing White. Characterizing any effort to "wipe out what may be termed the color line" as the work of "not more than half a dozen of our more talkative local negroes" who were not motivated by the best interests of Black children, the newspaper asked why the formal color line needed to be "obliterated" if White himself admitted that attendance patterns were unlikely to change. While White claimed that some Black students had to travel great distances in order to receive an education, the *Eagle* dismissed this argument, stating that it was well-known that "Colored children, living at a considerable distance from the schools organized in their name, have been received on the same footing as their white neighbors."<sup>65</sup>

This was a far cry from the newspaper's own assessment a year earlier, when it had written in the context of the King lawsuit:

As a rule, the colored child must travel outside of the ordinary school district in which it lives in order to attend a colored school at all. There are, for instance, but three colored schools in the entire City of Brooklyn, and there are over fifty schools open to white children. All other things being equal, distance from a school tends to lessen school attendance, and lack of attendance or infrequency in attendance tends to impair the efficiency of a school.

In addition to these spatial constraints, argued the *Eagle*, the segregated system created basic inequalities. The school closest to the Kings, Public School 5, was a "first class school," with an experienced professional at its head, well-paid teachers, and over 1200 students, explained the *Eagle*. Colored School Number One, on the other hand, was led by a "very deserving colored man" who was nonetheless paid half the salary of a White principal. Moreover, with less than 300 students enrolled, CS 1 could not have graded classes. Instead, students of different levels were mixed together and the principal taught the highest group, along with his other duties – creating inefficiencies that the newspaper equated with an inferior education. The *Eagle* was not ready to declare that such inequalities necessitated ending school segregation, but the newspaper maintained that the disadvantages Black students encountered should be acknowledged.<sup>66</sup>

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The *Eagle* remained consistent in its belief in the clear superiority of the regular district schools a year and a half later, as it disparaged the elimination of the so-called “color line” in education. After the Board’s vote desegregating the city’s district schools in 1883, the newspaper, like many on the Board, predicted that the adopted resolution marked the demise of the Colored schools, as Black families would clearly prefer to send their children to regular district schools.<sup>67</sup> White himself predicted that the Colored schools would likely be abolished within two decades, arguing that the “American people are becoming too much enlightened to tolerate them much longer.”<sup>68</sup>

By some measures the predictions of both White and his opponents were not too far off. When the State of New York passed a law in 1900 ending the existence of segregated schools in cities and towns, only one of Brooklyn’s formerly Colored schools remained – Number 3 (renamed PS 69), now located in the Williamsburg store front, with only about 60 students.<sup>69</sup> Brooklyn’s other schools that had once been officially designated for Black children were already gone. Colored School Number 4 was disbanded when the new and larger building for Colored School Number 1 opened in 1883.<sup>70</sup> Weeksville’s Colored School Number 2, renamed Public School 68 in 1887 when the Board officially removed the “Colored” designation from the three remaining schools, had combined with Public School 83, a district school with which it was sharing a building, in 1893.<sup>71</sup> In merging students and staff – including a Black administrator who supervised white teachers – PS 83 likely became the state’s, if not the nation’s, first truly integrated school, although Black students were in the minority.<sup>72</sup> Colored School Number 1 in Fort Greene, renamed Public School 67, had been the largest and best-known of the city’s designated Black schools, and was often held up as an exemplar of what a fine segregated school could accomplish. However in 1899, as we discuss in greater detail below, CS1/PS67 was reorganized into a district school with enrollment boundaries and almost all students living beyond those boundaries were discharged. As a result, by 1900 the school’s student population was reportedly 80 percent White; it was no longer considered a “Colored” school in any way.<sup>73</sup>

We explore here what happened in the intervening years between the passage of White’s 1883 resolution and the demise of Brooklyn’s Colored Schools. Was the closing and/or dismantling of designated-Black schools the result of Brooklynites’ enlightenment, as Philip White had predicted, or the market effects of

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Black families' choices, as many of his fellow Board members anticipated? Scholars who have taken up this question in the past tend to portray the end of Brooklyn's Black schools as the result of both forces – Black families choosing to enroll their children in district schools, combined with reduced White resistance to their presence. Martha Hurst, writing in 1975, explains: “The relatively small, scattered communities of Blacks seemed stable enough not to threaten the racial balance of the local public schools” during this period, and thus “both Whites and Blacks became less fearful of integrated schools.”<sup>74</sup> By 1890, she notes, more Black students were attending district schools than were attending all three of the (formerly known as) Colored schools combined. Carleton Mabee, in his study of the history of Black education across New York State, reflected that school officials in Brooklyn “had moved far toward desegregation in their schools by a curious combination of inconsistent means – both by direct integration moves and by retaining separate schools as long as blacks seemed to want them, and as long as they served the purpose of employing black teachers who otherwise would be unemployed.”<sup>75</sup> Our analysis, which relies on residential data mapped across time as well as more traditional historical sources, suggests that the explanation that Brooklyn's Colored schools closed because of natural market forces embodied by individual Black choices and White tolerance is only partly correct. This narrative inaccurately frames Black families' choices as relatively unconstrained, and discounts the role that White interests played in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century demise of Brooklyn's designated-Black schools.

### **Mapping Students across Space and Time**

Our analysis uses residential data for students newly enrolling in Brooklyn's Colored School 1/Public School 67 from 1882 to 1900 to explore shifting school enrollment patterns in the context of school policy and spatial and racial development. Mapping student addresses, school locations, and district boundaries across time and in relation to the racial composition of Brooklyn uniquely illuminates the story of the demise of Brooklyn's Black-designated schools. Specifically, the maps we created, taken together with newspaper accounts and official Board of Education documents and proceedings, make clear that White interests – and often White property interests in particular – played an important role in the closing and/or restructuring of Brooklyn schools that had been designated for Black students with Black educators at their helm.

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The residential data we use in this study are from a CS 1/PS 67 admissions book, which, along with a visitor log and record of student discharges from the same period, was found in a school closet in 1976 and has since been relocated to the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.<sup>76</sup> The admissions book contains 2,503 handwritten entries, and provides the admittance date, name, age, residence, and other information for each new enrollee. We excluded seven percent (175) of entries because of incomplete data; of the 2,328 remaining entries, we used Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology to place 97% (2,263) of student addresses, including 37 outside of the city of Brooklyn.<sup>77</sup> We were also able to use the mapped addresses to calculate distances between newly enrolling students' homes and CS 1/PS 67 and to compare these distances across time. We offer a more complete explanation of our research methods and data sources in an appendix to this article.

The CS 1/PS 67 admissions book provides an exciting snapshot of almost twenty years of enrollment data, but it also has some important limitations. The book's entries are likely not a complete and perfect record of newly enrolling students. The number of yearly entries does not correspond exactly to new admissions numbers reported in the Brooklyn Board of Education's annual reports, and we have no way of accounting for the discrepancies. Moreover, the book does not include information on returning students, only each year's new enrollees. Nonetheless, what is recorded represents a fairly consistent proportion of the entire population of the school in any given year – on average 38 percent – and for the most part follows the same patterns of enrollment as other sources.<sup>78</sup> *[Insert Figure 3 here]*

Given somewhat conflicting claims about the popularity of late nineteenth century Colored Schools, the distance students traveled to attend them, and Black students' access to regular district schools in their neighborhoods, we were interested in both descriptive findings – where did students enrolling in CS 1/PS 67 live in relationship to the school and was there any change over time? – and potential causal explanations – were Board of Education policy changes and/or other factors reflected in enrollment patterns? We were also interested in understanding student enrollment in CS 1/PS 67 in relation to Brooklyn's spatial development, and in particular in relation to its shifting residential color line. Figure 4, which shows newly-enrolled student

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addresses across time, offers an overview of our main findings, which we discuss in greater detail below. In summary, we found that while students attending CS 1/PS 67 tended to live close to the school, most lived even closer to a regular district school. Across time this spatial distribution shifted as students newly enrolling in CS 1/PS 67 tended to live closer and closer to the building, a shift which corresponded to policy changes making it easier (at least theoretically) for Black students to enroll in their neighborhood district schools. But we also found that the policy change with the most impact on students' enrollment in CS 1/PS 67 actually *limited* Black families' choices by reorganizing what once had been a Black-designated school into a White one. *[Insert Figure 4 here]*

First, at a purely descriptive level, it is clear that the vast majority of students enrolling in CS 1/PS 67 during this period lived quite close to the school. From 1882 through 1898 (after which PS 67 became a regular district school with enrollment boundaries) the mean distance from newly-enrolling students' homes to CS 1/PS 67 was 0.7 miles, while the median distance was just 0.4 miles. A few outliers from distant locations like Jamaica, Queens and Coney Island help explain the difference between the two statistics. Overall, 80 percent of students lived less than one mile from the school, and 59 percent lived within half a mile. This finding supports claims made at the time that Black students who lived far from the Colored schools were generally admitted to their district schools, although it was probably also the case that some Black youth were refused admission to their district school, could not travel to a Colored school, and therefore were unable to access a public education during this period.

We are unable to compare distances between students' homes and CS 1/PS 67 to norms for the period. White students were expected to attend their district schools, but the distance they traveled to do so clearly varied. Depending on where they lived in relation to district boundaries, students' district schools were not always the closest school to their homes, and because the district lines were often in flux (and sometime overlapped as Board policy struggled to keep up with the rapidly expanding number of schools), students did not always attend their district schools.<sup>79</sup> In addition, White students living in less populated parts of Brooklyn often had to travel beyond their immediate neighborhood to access grammar-level classes.<sup>80</sup>

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Moreover, distances between students' homes and their schools were only one factor in their travel experiences. Roads could be unpaved, in poor condition, or non-existent. And sometimes travel distance may have mattered less to families than safety conditions. Before CS1 relocated, some Black parents had complained of their children being "ill-used" on their way to and from school; in 1890 parents at CS2 objected to the danger posed by a "steep path" their children were forced to climb, while two years later White parents in the same neighborhood argued that their children should not be "compelled to cross railway tracks" to access an education.<sup>81</sup> In the fall of 1869 a school board member offered some perspective on both distance and travel conditions students sometimes endured, by explaining that while the Board officially opposed White students attending CS 2, some of the smaller White children living in the Weeksville area were "unable to walk a mile and half through the muddy, unpaved lanes of that region" to their district school and thus enrolled in the closer, Colored school instead.<sup>82</sup> While some older students appear to have ridden street cars to get to school, this mode of transportation could be prohibitively expensive, or dangerous, or both – and was often not available. Noting that the schools within a half a mile distance of their homes were overcrowded and could not accommodate additional students, for example, residents from southern Flatbush seeking a new school in their neighborhood in 1896 argued that as it stood, "those children who are enabled to go to school will be only those who have sufficient strength to take the long walks of from a mile to a mile and a half, as, even if their parents could afford it, it is impossible to ride from this section of the ward" to the nearest school with space for their children.<sup>83</sup>

Yet while we cannot make comparisons about the distance between home and school for students attending CS1/PS67 and students attending other schools, we can note that CS 1/PS 67 was located in a relatively population-dense part of Brooklyn with many nearby schools. Indeed, our second descriptive finding is that while most students attending CS 1/PS 67 lived nearby, over 80 percent lived even *closer* to a regular district school. This was the case for Theresa King, whose father sought to send her to PS 5, which was five blocks closer to their home than CS 1.<sup>84</sup>

Our third finding is that Board policies do appear to have shaped Black families' school choices through time. Although overall enrollment numbers at CS 1 remained relatively stable after the Board's 1883

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decision requiring principals to “receive all colored children that may apply for admission on the same terms they do white children,” new enrollees tended to live closer to CS 1/PS 67 as time went on.<sup>85</sup> Figure 5 illustrates this spatial shift over time, highlighting the impact of specific changes in Board policy. From 1882 to 1898 (the time period for which it remained a school of choice without enrollment boundaries), the proportion of newly-admitted students living within half a mile of CS 1/PS 67 increased significantly, and the average distance from students’ homes to CS 1/PS 67 gradually decreased. The effect was not immediate or extreme, but it does seem that once the Brooklyn Board of Education gave Black families the option to send their children to district schools, many Black parents chose to do so. [Insert Figure 5 here]

It is likely that Board policies would have had an even greater impact on enrollment patterns at CS 1/PS 67, however, had they been followed more consistently by White principals. Indeed, our fourth finding is that even after the Board voted to end discrimination in student admissions, Black families’ school enrollment choices remained constrained. Specifically, not all district schools welcomed new Black enrollees, and some even explicitly refused to admit them. In fact, the Board was forced to affirm its 1883 resolution in 1888, after the principal of Public School 70, located near Weeksville, denied a Black child admission, noting that technically the 1883 resolution had expired and had not been renewed.<sup>86</sup> The Board of Education soon formally amended its Rules and Regulations to correct this error, but even so Black students continued to be turned away from district schools.<sup>87</sup>

This is not to suggest the Board resolutions ending racial discrimination in school admissions did not matter. As Figure 5 demonstrates, the proportion of newly-enrolled students who lived very close to CS 1/PS 67 increased significantly after both the 1883 and 1888 resolutions. We don’t see a similar reduction in the mean distance newly-enrolling students traveled because of an increase in the number of new students who lived very far away.<sup>88</sup>

Finally, our fifth finding is that the starkest change in CS 1/PS 67’s enrollment patterns cannot be attributed to Black families’ choices, but rather to a Board policy that *eliminated* school choice for many Black families. This change occurred after 1898, when the Board of Education made PS 67 a district school with enrollment boundaries and required students who lived beyond those boundaries to transfer to their local

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schools. After this reorganization, addresses for new enrollees shifted dramatically: 96 percent of new students lived less than half a mile from the school, and the median distance from students' homes to PS 67 was just 6 hundredths of a mile.

This marked change in the spatial distribution of PS 67's newly-enrolling students was clearly not the result of Black school "choice." In fact, the school's reorganization was undertaken with the explicit purpose of making it a predominantly White school, and was done not at the behest of Black Brooklynites, but despite their significant opposition. The Board took this action after several years of controversy regarding the school and its long-revered principal, Charles Dorsey, who had been at its helm since 1863. Concerns about the quality of PS 67 were voiced by the Board's one Black member, at this point Samuel Scottron, who, along with several White Board members, argued that the school was poorly run and provided a substandard education.<sup>89</sup> The Board's Committee on Teachers, of which Scottron was a member, conducted an investigation and claimed that Black students attending district schools fared better on city exams and were more likely to be admitted to high school than the students who attended PS 67. Moreover, with declining student enrollment and small class sizes, opponents claimed that the school was too costly for the city to maintain.<sup>90</sup>

Prior to this time Dorsey and his school had been widely lauded – especially after moving into the new location in 1883. In a profile in the *New York Freeman* (formerly known as the *Globe*) in 1887, for example, lawyer and journalist T. McCants Stewart, who later replaced Philip White on the Brooklyn Board of Education, credited Dorsey with "securing a new school building and raising the standard of the school to a grade as high as any of the other schools of Brooklyn." Dorsey, he continued, had "sent several scholars to the high school, graduating in the Spring of 1887 a higher percentage of his class than any other school in the city." Moreover, the "Professor," as Dorsey was affectionately known, had "educated many of the rising and progressive men and women of Brooklyn."<sup>91</sup> Dorsey and McCants were good friends, and later shared a home, so it is likely that this profile was not completely objective; at the same time, however, it seems unlikely that McCants would have grossly misrepresented the school given that many of his readers would have been well-acquainted with it. It is possible that over time, as Dorsey aged, the quality of his school slipped. Indeed,

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Scottron moved to dismiss Dorsey as part of PS 67's reorganization, claiming that the principal was incompetent and that serious charges of misconduct had been leveled against him. Yet while much was insinuated, real charges never materialized, and Dorsey maintained the support of most of Brooklyn's Black elite.<sup>92</sup>

Whether Brooklyn Board of Education members sincerely believed PS 67 was of low quality or not, it was clear that they intended to eliminate it as a distinctly Black school, and viewed its low student enrollment as an endorsement of their plan. Scottron noted that while only 200 Black students attended PS 67 on a regular basis, at least 500 Black students attended nearby schools instead. "This shows," he explained, "that colored parents prefer to send their children to other schools instead of to a colored school, which they believe is not kept at as high a grade as the ordinary schools."<sup>93</sup> These "ordinary schools," were district schools, with enrollment boundaries and predominantly White students and faculty. The *Eagle* reiterated this view of White schools as superior when, in the fall of 1898, after the (forced) retirement of Dorsey and a reorganization that had made PS 67 a "branch" of nearby Public School 12 with only intermediate grades, the paper reported that work in the school remained unsatisfactory. It was believed, the *Eagle* explained "that the restrictions of the school to colored children is primarily the reason for the lack of good results."<sup>94</sup> In truth there were no restrictions against White students enrolling in PS 67, but it was viewed as a designated-Black school, with mostly Black faculty and a predominantly-Black student body. The school's local committee soon proposed making PS 67 a district school with enrollment boundaries as a way to do "away with its distinctive characteristic as a colored school." The reorganization was intended to improve the school's quality, by getting "rid of" the children from "Coney Island, Canarsie, East New York, and even as far away as Jamaica" who reportedly attended school irregularly and therefore drove down academic standards.<sup>95</sup>

The plan apparently succeeded. While it is impossible to draw any conclusions about the school's quality, PS 67 certainly lost its identity as a school for Black students; new enrollees the following year were almost entirely from enumeration districts with few to no Black families, and within two years the school was reportedly 80 percent White.<sup>96</sup> Board members like Scottron and others may have truly believed that this reorganization was in the best interest of Black children, but they acted against the wishes of the Black families

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whose children were still enrolled there, as well as in opposition to many of Brooklyn's Black elite.<sup>97</sup> Given the *Eagle's* stance the following year about the resulting rise in property values, it is difficult not to view the reorganization of PS 67 as an explicit effort to maintain or even expand White residences and property holding in the area. Figure 6 offers a close view of the area right around PS 67 in 1900, which was comparatively much Whiter than the rest of the school district, and remained so for many years. White families in the area now had a mostly-White school for their children, with White teachers and principals, in a relatively new building, with the possibility of attracting even more White families in the future. [Insert Figure 6 here]

The *Eagle*, of course, was not alone in its belief that the presence of designated-Black schools was harmful to the value of nearby properties. Earlier in the decade a group of White property owners had made the same claim in opposing the building of a new home for PS 68 (formerly Colored School Number 2) in what used to be Weeksville. The Board had already promised a new structure for PS 68 and had identified the site, when a group of White petitioners asked that the school instead be used for White students, who were in need of more space themselves. A school built for the "exclusive use of colored children," they maintained, would necessarily depreciate the value of their nearby property.<sup>98</sup> The petitioners' logic, as the highly-respected Reverend Rufus Perry declared at a meeting of Black Brooklynites held in response to the petition, would prevent designated Black schools from being built in any neighborhood, as such schools would purportedly lower property values wherever they were located.<sup>99</sup> Perry and his compatriots, including some White property owners who attended the meeting in support of PS 68, urged the Board to move forward with its plan to build a new school for Black children, as the existing structure was deemed old, dilapidated, and dangerous.

Yet while the new building was erected, it was never used for PS 68 exclusively. Instead, after first sharing the new building, PS 68 and PS 83, a district school that already enrolled some Black students, merged in the spring of 1893. In this context, however, the story of the schools' integration, which has been told in great detail elsewhere, takes on a somewhat different meaning.<sup>100</sup> While it is clear that many advocated for the merging of 68 and 83 out of a belief in the benefits of racial integration and the symbolic and material harms of designating certain schools for Black children and educators, it is also clear that an integrated school was more palatable to (at least some) nearby White property owners than a school that was intended for the exclusive use

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of Black students. In addition, many White families seemed eager to access the new school building. Certainly the “mixed” nature of the school did not please everyone, but it did not seem to keep too many White students and families away; a local committee member who had at first opposed the schools’ consolidation but ultimately embraced it noted that while PS 83 had enrolled only 325 students the previous fall, by March of 1893 there were more than 1,100 enrolled – only 175 of whom had been students at PS 68.<sup>101</sup>

All three of Brooklyn’s remaining Colored Schools, then, were closed or reorganized in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century at least in part for the perceived material benefit of White families and property owners. In the case of Colored School Number 3/Public School 69, which we discussed at the beginning of this article, the changing racial composition of the neighborhood helps provide some context for its ultimate demise as the area became progressively Whiter over this time period and the building occupied by CS 3/PS 69 was in demand. Even before the Brooklyn Board of Education voted to admit Black students to regular district schools in 1883, the Board had already reduced CS 3 to the intermediate level and ordered students in the older grammar grades to transfer to schools closer to home.<sup>102</sup> During debate over White’s 1883 resolution to open all district schools to Black students, one Board member referred to CS 3 as a “white elephant” (an expensive burden) because of its low enrollment; within the year efforts were underway to restructure it into a district school. Proponents of CS 3, however, both Black and White, argued that the school offered a high quality education, and that statements to the contrary were thinly veiled attempts to secure the new building for White children (and specifically for the new German immigrants who were settling in the area). One Black defender of the school, a Reverend Manning, stated that his own daughter had been ill-treated at a district school while she had flourished at a Colored one, and argued that “if the Board of Education would appoint a colored truant officer for the colored schools the attendance would be considerably larger.”<sup>103</sup>

When CS 3, renamed PS 69, was ultimately relocated in 1899, it was against the wishes of Scottron, the sole Black member of the Board of Education, who had been restructured out of the school’s local committee in order to accomplish the move. While Scottron had been at the forefront of the effort to restructure PS 67 and had moved for Principal Dorsey to be fired, he sought to protect both PS 69 and its longtime principal, Catherine Clow, from a similar fate. Scottron disparaged the school’s proposed new

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location – “I can truthfully say that no worse site could have been chosen for colored children”; even the *Daily Eagle*, which seemed to support the move as a step toward closing PS 69 entirely, noted that it was “yet to be developed” how the storefront could be “divided into class rooms so as to comply with the rules of the School Board regarding light and ventilation.”<sup>104</sup> Two years later, when PS 69 was officially closed, it had only 63 students on its rolls; because of a state law standardizing teacher and principal salaries across the now consolidated New York City, it had become the “most expensive school in the public system in Brooklyn.”<sup>105</sup> It is unclear, however, how much of PS 69’s attrition can be attributed to low demand on the part of Black families, how much was a response to the school’s new location and conditions, and how much was the result of concurrent changes in the racial contours of Brooklyn. As Figure 7 indicates, Williamsburg’s relative Black population decreased during this period, while Black residences grew proportionally elsewhere in Brooklyn.

[Insert Figure 7 here]

In recommending the school’s closure, Brooklyn schools Superintendent Edward Ward claimed that the children of PS 69 were “suffering ...physically, mentally, and morally” from the school’s poor conditions, and that they were “practically growing up without any education worth mentioning.”<sup>106</sup> Notably, the closure of PS 69 corresponded with the retirement of Catherine Clow; the remaining teachers were to be transferred along with students to a new district school a few blocks away.

## **Conclusion**

It is not our intention, in highlighting the role that White interests played in the closing of Brooklyn’s designated-Black schools in the late nineteenth century, to disregard the efforts of the many Black civic leaders who pursued racial integration as a means of securing and affirming social and political equality. For Black parents like Philip White, Simon King, and others, who fought for the right to send their children to their neighborhood schools, the end of racial discrimination in Brooklyn’s school admissions was hard-fought and widely-celebrated. Nor do we want to overstate the degree to which the so-called “color line” in Brooklyn’s public schools was eradicated with the closing or reorganization of designated-Black institutions. While it was many decades before Brooklyn once again had identifiably “Black” schools, racial separation in schooling was enforced in other ways. In 1920, for example, White students of Girls High School, located not far from what

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had once been Weeksville, voted to ban their Black classmates from participating in the school dance. The incident was well publicized because one of the six Black students attending the school was W.E.B DuBois' daughter, and the student vote was soon overturned.<sup>107</sup> Nonetheless, the episode highlighted the ways that Black Brooklynites remained at the precipice of second-class status and how schooling could be used to enforce racial inequalities even in desegregated settings.

Indeed, in many ways the closing of Brooklyn's designated-Black schools can be viewed as another form of racial disenfranchisement. As a group Black Americans during this period were steadily losing many of the legal rights they had acquired during Reconstruction. In the South Black Codes and Jim Crow laws restricted African Americans' access to economic, social, and political autonomy, while White mob violence and Black lynchings were on the rise across the nation, and urban centers saw the early development of a racially-differentiated juvenile justice system that served to divert a growing number of Black youth from access to a public education.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile segregated Black schools were subject to both violent attack and gross underfunding, even as the Supreme Court's *Plessy* decision affirmed the legality of "separate but equal" education.<sup>109</sup> In this context, the various policy decisions that led to the closing of Brooklyn's designated-Black schools were not acts of explicit racial oppression, but neither were they the embodiment of Black political self-determination. In the cases of Colored School Number One/Public School 67 and Colored School Number Three/Public School 69, the schools were reorganized and/or closed against the expressed wishes of local Black leaders and families. A sticking point for both schools was the fate of their Black principals, who were disparaged as incompetent and eventually forced into retirement, negotiated in both cases as part of the schools' reorganization or closure. The integration of PS 68 and 83 also came at a cost to Black educators in the loss of a principalship.<sup>110</sup> While there were some Black administrators who supervised White teachers in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Brooklyn, the borough's schools did not have another Black head principal for many years – most likely decades.<sup>111</sup> This loss of positions of authority and leadership was anticipated by Black and White civic leaders on both sides of the debate, and was repeated in debates over the closing of Black schools throughout the North in the decades that followed, as unofficial school segregation was increasingly challenged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>112</sup> These civic leaders may have been surprised, however, by what

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transpired in Brooklyn, as the borough's schools became increasingly racially segregated while Black families became more and more alienated from the education system – shut out of the governance process even as their children approached the racial majority.<sup>113</sup>

Our focus in this article was the demise of Brooklyn's Colored Schools in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which we explored in part through the lens of spatial development. When viewed in the context of the changing geographic and racial contours of Brooklyn, it is clear that White interests played a role in the schools' closing and/or reorganizations. White families sought access to the buildings occupied by Black schools and a claim to the neighborhoods that surrounded them. While many White parents were willing to send their children to school with Black students, for the most part they did so only when the schools themselves were unmistakably in White control. The *Daily Eagle*, meanwhile, celebrated the supposed geographic dispersal of Black families following formal school desegregation in Brooklyn, focusing on the reported rising property values in neighborhoods Black families vacated. Yet the benefits appeared one-sided; White homeowners in some of the city's tonier neighborhoods resisted residential integration. As Figure 8 makes clear, Brooklyn's Black population started to become more concentrated elsewhere in the borough.<sup>114</sup> [Insert Figure 8 here]

It is tempting to view this history of the relationship between Brooklyn's school desegregation policies, the closing of its Black-designated schools, and the spatial and racial development of its neighborhoods, as an historical antecedent to today's urban gentrification. Yet while there are clearly some parallels, the social and economic processes across the two centuries are in many ways distinct.<sup>115</sup> A better case can be made for the similarities between the closing/reorganizing of Brooklyn's Black-designated schools in the late nineteenth century and the recent closing of mostly-Black and Latinx schools in cities across the United States. In both eras predominantly (but not exclusively) White politicians and administrators used technical arguments about the supposed poor educational quality and under-utilization of schools to justify the closing of institutions highly valued by those closest to them. And in both eras these seemingly rational arguments eclipsed larger questions of power, race, and inequality in the spatial and educational development of their cities.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Find Mixed Classes Best; Colored People Would Strongly Object to a Return to Separate Schools.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [for the rest of the manuscript listed as *BDE*] September 25, 1899, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> On the history of the *BDE*, see: Raymond Schroth, *The Eagle and Brooklyn: A Community Newspaper 1841-1955*, (Westport, CT, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> “Find Mixed Classes Best,” p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper we use the term “Black” to refer to people identified as of African descent. Primary source documents utilize several different terms, including “black,” “colored,” and “Negro,” which we maintain in quoted material. We use the term “colored” in relation to schools that were formally designated as such (i.e. “Colored School Number One”).

<sup>7</sup> “Plan to Oust Mrs. Clow Meets with Opposition.” *BDE*, September 21, 1899, p. 3; “School Board in Session.” *BDE*, October 4, 1899, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> While the *Eagle*’s actual readership was considerably more diverse, the newspaper tended to cater to an imagined notion of Brooklyn’s past. The *Eagle*’s increased interest in Black schooling may have reflected the views of St. Clair McKelway, its editor from 1886 through 1915, who had reportedly been active in promoting the education of Black youth in the South and remained a supporter of Booker T. Washington. Schroth, *The Eagle and Brooklyn*.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Benjamin. “Suburbanizing Jim Crow: The Impact of School Policy on Residential Segregation in Raleigh.” *Journal of Urban History* 38.2 (2012): 225-46; Ansley Erickson. *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and its Limits*. (Chicago, 2016.); David G. Garcia. *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Residence, and the Struggle for Educational Equality* (Oakland, CA, 2018); Kevin Fox Gotham. *Race, Real Estate, and Uneven Development: The Kansas City Experience 1900-2010* (Albany, NY, 2002); Andrew Highsmith and Ansley Erickson, “Segregation as Splitting, Segregation as Joining: Schools, Housing and the Many Modes of Jim Crow.” *American Journal of Education* 121.4 (2015): 563-595; Matthew G. Kelly, “Engineering Inequality: Public Policy, School Finance, and the Roots of Educational Inequality in California, 1850-1950.” Unpublished Dissertation

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(PhD), Stanford University, 2018. Matthew D. Lassiter, “De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth,” in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, ed. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino (New York, 2010), 25–48; Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> On the costs of desegregation paid by Black communities, see: for example: David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Dionne Danns, “Northern desegregation: A tale of two cities.” *History of Education Quarterly* 51.1 (2001): 77-104; Michael Fultz. “The displacement of Black educators post-Brown: An overview and analysis.” *History of Education Quarterly*, 44.1 (2004); 11–45; John Rury and Shirley Hill, *The African American Struggle for Secondary Schooling, 1940-1980* (New York, 2012). On White resistance to desegregation, see: Charles Bolton. *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980*. (Jackson, 2005); Matthew Delmont. *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Berkeley, CA: 2016); Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, 2006); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*. (Chicago, 2002); Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA, 1985). This is not to suggest that there have been no material benefits to school desegregation. See, for example: Rucker Johnson. *Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works* (New York, 2019); Amy Stuart Wells, et. al. *Both Sides Now: The Story of Story of School Desegregation’s Graduates* (Berkeley, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Zoe Burkholder ““Integrated Out of Existence””: African American Debates over School Integration versus Separation at the Bordentown School in New Jersey, 1886–1955.” *Journal of Social History* 51.1 (2017): 1-33; Zoe Burkholder; *An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North* (New York, forthcoming); Davison Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation 1865-1954* (New York, 2005); Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State from Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse, NY, 1979). David Ment. *Racial Segregation in the Public Schools of New England and New York, 1840-1940* (Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1975).

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<sup>12</sup> Derrick Bell, “Brown and the Interest Convergence Dilemma,” in Derrick Bell, ed. *Shades of Brown: New Perspectives on School Desegregation* (New York, 1980): 90-106.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, p. 10. For historical scholarship supporting the interest convergence thesis in the context of school desegregation post-Brown, see, for example: Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); Patricia Randolph Leigh. “Interest Convergence and Desegregation in the Ohio Valley.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 72, no. 3 (2003): 269-96; Stephen Samuel Smith, *Boom for Whom? Education, Desegregation and Development in Charlotte* (Albany, NY, 2004). For historical scholarship building on and extending the notion of interest convergence, see: Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis*; Kenzo Sung, “Accentuate the Positive; Eliminate the Negative”: Hegemonic Interest Convergence, Racialization of Latino Poverty, and the 1968 Bilingual Education Act.” *Peabody Journal of Education* 92.3 (2017): 302-321.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the works cited above, see: Jack Dougherty, “Shopping for Schools: How Public Education and Private Housing Shaped Suburban Connecticut.” *Journal of Urban History*, 38.2 (2012): 205-224; Matthew Lassiter. “Schools and Housing in Metropolitan History: An Introduction.” *Journal of Urban History* 38.2 (2012): 195-204; John Powell, Gavin Kearney and Vina Key, eds. *In Pursuit of a Dream Deferred: Linking Housing and Education Policy* (New York, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, 1903/1982), p.190.

<sup>16</sup> DuBois’ own study, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, 1899) documented the existence of the color line in that city.

<sup>17</sup> For example: Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Thomas Sugrue. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> John Logan and Benjamin Bellman. “Before *The Philadelphia Negro*: Residential Segregation in a Nineteenth-Century Northern City.” *Social Science History* 40 (Winter 2016): 683-706; John Logan et. al., “Creating the Black Ghetto: Black Residential Patterns Before and During the Great Migration.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 660 (July 2015): 18-35; John Logan et. al., “Mapping America in 1880 – The Urban Transition Historical GIS Project.” *Historical Methods* 44,1 (2011): 49-60.

<sup>19</sup> John Logan et. al., “Creating the Black Ghetto,” p.11.

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- <sup>20</sup> Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago, 1981); Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago, 2003); Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community 1720-1840* (Cambridge, 1988); Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930*. (Champaign, 1976); Karl Taeuber and Alma Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change* (Chicago, 1965); Joe W. Trotter, Jr. "African Americans in the City: The Industrial Era, 1900-1950." *In The New African American Urban History*, Kenneth Goings and Raymond Mohl, eds., 299-319. (Thousand Oaks, 1996); Joe W. Trotter Jr., "Shifting Perspectives on Segregation in the Emerging Postindustrial Age." Unpublished paper, presented to "The Future of the African American Past," conference sponsored by the American Historical Association and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2016; Joe William Trotter Jr., Earl Lewis, and Tera Hunter, ed., *African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York, 2004); Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge, MA, 2002)
- <sup>21</sup> See, especially, Craig Steven Wilder. *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York, 2000).
- <sup>22</sup> Harold Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn* (New York, 1977), p.21.
- <sup>23</sup> *An Introduction to the Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn*, Charlene Claye van Derzee, ed., (Brooklyn, 1977), p.21.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert Swan, "The Black Belt of Brooklyn," in *An Introduction to the Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn*, Charlene Claye van Derzee, ed., (Brooklyn, 1977), p.99.
- <sup>25</sup> Suleiman Osman. *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York, 2011); Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (New York, 1994); Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*.
- <sup>26</sup> Judith Wellman *Brooklyn's Promised Land, The Free Black Community of Weeksville, NY* (New York, 2014), p.1
- <sup>27</sup> James D. Anderson. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988); Ronald E. Butchart. *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010); Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*; Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); V.P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950*. (Philadelphia, 1979); Hilary Moss, *Schooling Citizens*:31

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*The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago, 2009); Rury and Hill, *The African American Struggle*; Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*, (Chapel Hill, 1996) and “Valued Segregated Schools for African American Children in the South, 1935-1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics,” *Review of Educational Research*, 70.3 (2010): 253-85; Heather Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*; Rayford Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York, Dial, 1954).

<sup>29</sup> Chicago, for example, integrated its schools in 1865, but some neighborhood groups used aggressive tactics to prevent or evict Black residents in the late nineteenth century. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Marsha Hurst, “Integration, Freedom of Choice, and Community Control in Nineteenth-Century Brooklyn,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 3.3 (Fall 1975): 33-55; Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State from Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse, NY, 1979). David Ment. *Racial Segregation in the Public Schools of New England and New York, 1840-1940* (Dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1975); Robert J. Swan. “A Synoptic History of Black Public Schools in Brooklyn,” in *An Introduction to the Black Contribution to the Development of Brooklyn*, Charlene Claye van Derzee, ed., (Brooklyn, 1977); Wellman in *Brooklyn’s Promised Land*, does consider Colored School Number 2 in relation to the development of Weeksville specifically. See also: Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*, p. 63; Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*; David McCullough and Jim Kallett. *Brooklyn ... And How it Got That Way*. (New York, 1983). Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, p. 1228.

<sup>36</sup> “Inadequate: The School Accommodations of the City.” *BDE*, October 11, 1883, p.2.

<sup>37</sup> “School Accommodation: Providing for the Children of County Towns – What a New Bill Proposes.” *BDE*, March 29, 1883, p.4

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<sup>38</sup> A. Emerson Palmer. *The New York Public School; Being a History of Free Education in the City of New York* (New York, 1905).

<sup>39</sup> Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*, p.118

<sup>40</sup> The Brooklyn Republican party in the postbellum era gave its Black members some symbolic appointments and candidacies, although, as discussed below, the appointment of a Black man to the Board of Education seemed to have material effects as well.

<sup>41</sup> Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows*; Wellman, *Brooklyn's Promised Land*; Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*.

<sup>42</sup> "Education: Regular Meeting of the Board." *BDE*, May 5, 1880, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> "Opened with Becoming Ceremony." *BDE*, November 23, 1883, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> Swan, "The Black Belt of Brooklyn," p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> "Flurry in Ft. Greene Place, Because a Negro Has Bought a Three Story House: Aristocratic Neighbors in a Panic." *BDE*, October 1, 1894, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Wellman, p. 148.

<sup>47</sup> "A Tempest in Weeksville: Colored Folks Object to a White Teacher." *The BDE* February 24, 1869, p. 2; "The Color Question in the Schools." *BDE*, October 19, 1869, p.3; "Board of Education: An Interesting Meeting Yesterday." *BDE*, March 3, 1869, p.2. See also, Wellman, *Brooklyn's Promised Land*.

<sup>48</sup> Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*.

<sup>49</sup> "Over a Million Needed for New Public School Houses." *BDE*, December 5, 1888, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> "Color Line: Causing a Stir in the Eastern District." *BDE*, February 25, 1884, p.4.

<sup>51</sup> "Board of Education: Civil Rights and White Schools." June 6, 1866, p.2; "Education: Estimate of the Money Required for the Support of the Schools during 1876." *BDE*, May 5, 1875, p.2. "Education: Regular Meeting of the Board." *BDE*, March, 3, 1880, p.2; "Education: The Evening Schools to be Kept Open during the Month of January, 1876." *BDE*, December 8, 1875, p. 2; "Inadequate," 2.

<sup>52</sup> Reports of student enrollment numbers vary. David Ment, in *Racial Segregation*, reports enrollment rates of 613 in 1882 and 759 in 1883 (p. 174). Our own calculations from Brooklyn's Board of Education records are 660 students enrolled in the city's Colored schools at the end of 1882 and 751 at the end of 1883.

<sup>53</sup> Hurst, "Integration, Freedom of Choice, and Community Control"; Mabee, *Black Education*; Wellman, *Brooklyn's Promised Land*.

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in, “The Colored Folks and Our Local Public School System.” *BDE*, December 22, 1881, p. 2. Many issues of the *New York Globe* (later called the *New York Freeman* and then the *New York Age*) have been lost to history. We draw on this important source when available; as in this case, the *BDE* sometimes reprinted long excerpts or full articles from the *New York Globe*.

<sup>55</sup> “Mayor Low’s ‘Partial Promise’: To Appoint a Colored Man on the Board of Education.” *BDE* (reprinting from *the Globe*) (May 21, 1882), p.3.

<sup>56</sup> “Appointments to the Board of Education – the First Colored Member.” *BDE*, July 11, 1882, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> “Appointed: The Committee of the Board of Education.” *BDE* (August 8, 1883), p.3. Prior to the Board’s creation in 1843, Brooklyn’s Colored or “African” school had briefly been governed by three publicly-appointed Black trustees. For discussion of earlier governance structures of Brooklyn’s Colored schools, see: Carleton Mabee. “Brooklyn’s Black Public Schools: Why Did Blacks Have Unusual Control over Them?” *The Journal of Long Island History*, 11 (1975): 23-38; Robert J. Swan, “Did Brooklyn (N.Y.) Blacks Have Unusual Control Over Their Schools? Period: 1815-1845” *AfroAmericans in New York Life and History* 7:2 (July 1983).

<sup>58</sup> “Dr. Philip A. White.” *The New York Globe*, December 22, 1883; Richard T. Greener. “Dr. White’s Signal Service.” *The New York Globe*, January 19, 1884.

<sup>59</sup> Mabee, *Black Education*; Ment, *Racial Segregation*.

<sup>60</sup> “Obliterated: The Color Line in the Public Schools.” *BDE*, Dec 12, 1883, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> “Education. The Admission of Colored Children into Schools Established for White Children.” *BDE*, November 15, 1876, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Zoe Burkholder ““Integrated Out of Existence””: African American Debates over School Integration versus Separation at the Bordentown School in New Jersey, 1886–1955.” *Journal of Social History* 51.1 (2017): 1-33; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*; Mabee, *Black Education*.

<sup>63</sup> Hurst, “Integration, Freedom of Choice, and Community Control;” Mabee, *Black Education*; Ment, *Racial Segregation*. Wellman, *Brooklyn’s Promised Land*.

<sup>64</sup> “Obliterated,”2.

<sup>65</sup> “Colored Children in the Public Schools.” *BDE*, December 12, 1883, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> “The Color Line in Our Public Schools.” *BDE*, March 26, 1882, p. 4.

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<sup>67</sup> “Colored Children in the Public Schools,” 2.

<sup>68</sup> “Obliterated,” 2.

<sup>69</sup> “Davis Law Plays Pranks with Teachers’ Wages.” *BDE*, September 30, 1900, p.12.

<sup>70</sup> Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings*, (September 4, 1883), p. 518.

<sup>71</sup> Colored Schools 1, 2, and 3 were officially named Public Schools 67, 68, and 69, respectively, in 1887, but they were still referred to as “Colored” schools in many of the Board’s official documents and proceedings. Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings* (June 7 1887), pp.543-545.

<sup>72</sup> Mabee, *Black Education; Ment, Racial Segregation*. Wellman, *Brooklyn’s Promised Land*.

<sup>73</sup> “Hartwell Reinstated by Justice Hooker.” *BDE*, October 15, 1900, p.6

<sup>74</sup> Hurst, “Integration,” 48.

<sup>75</sup> Mabee, *Black Education*, 225.

<sup>76</sup> *Colored School No. 1 Records*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

<sup>77</sup> We were unable to place 3% of included entries either because the street name was not in our streets datasets or the house number was too distant from already geocoded addresses for us to be confident of its location.

<sup>78</sup> Both of these sources also exhibit some inconsistencies in how records were kept. The annual reports do not track the same data for every year, but they do include the “number of students on register at the end of the year” for all years in the period studied except 1897. The admissions book changed from recording entries chronologically to alphabetically in the spring 1898, which coincides with an anomalously large number of entries from a single month (April 1898); this could be a sign of errors due to the change in recordkeeping system.

<sup>79</sup> Brooklyn Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1894, p. 141.

<sup>80</sup> “Controversy Concerning School No. 44: Mr. Simis Invitation Courteously Declined by Superintendent Maxwell,” February 14, 1899, p.6; “All Shut Out: Non Resident Children from School No. 11.” *BDE*, November 1, 1889, p.8.

<sup>81</sup> “How They Live: The Colored People of Brooklyn and Their Ways.” *BDE* January 14, 1883, p.1; “For Colored Scholars. Negro Citizens Make a Demand of the Board of Education.” *BDE* November 7, 1890, p.1; “Want Better School Facilities. For the Section Near Ralph and Atlantic Avenues.” *BDE* March 30, 1894, p.7.

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<sup>82</sup> “The Color Question in the Schools,” 3. See also: “A Tempest in Weeksville,” 2; “Board of Education,” 2; “Shall White and Colored Children Attend the Same Colored Schools?” *BDE*, February 5, 1873, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> “Must Have A School.” *BDE* March 28, 1896, p.5. See also: “Crowded Flatbush Schools. Urgent Need of Better Facilities in the Twenty-ninth Ward. Many Children Kept at Home.” *BDE*. July 16, 1895, p.7

<sup>84</sup> “Color Line. Drawing it in a Public School.” *BDE*, December 24, 1881, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings*, (December 11, 1883), p. 683.

<sup>86</sup> “Drawing the Color Line: Rejecting One Public and Accepting Another.” *BDE*, September 8, 1888, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings*, (September 11, 1888), p. 631; “Colored Scholars: Criticism on the Action of the Board of Education.” *BDE*, November 4, 1890, p.5; “They Want No. 68 Abolished: A Big Fight on Hand in Favor of Colored Children.” *BDE*, September 14, 1892, p.2; “Last of the Color Line: White and Negro Schools to be United.” *BDE*, March 8, 1893, p.5.

<sup>88</sup> The mean distance students traveled actually increased after 1888, as there were more students traveling from faraway neighborhoods. Most of these students’ addresses were in Jamaica, Queens, where some Black families were boycotting the Colored School in an effort to gain access to its district schools. Threatened with arrest for failing to comply with compulsory education laws, some families chose to send their children over nine miles to attend PS 67. Carleton Mabee. “Control by Blacks over Schools in New York State, 1830-1930.” *Phylon* (1960-), vol. 40, no. 1, 1979, pp. 29–40. Mabee, *Black Education*. In addition, Brooklyn annexed several towns in Kings County during the 1890s. At least one of these towns, Flatbush, had its own Colored school that was closed upon joining the Brooklyn public school system, and another, New Lots, had previously had a Colored school that appears to have been closed before annexation. We don’t know if any of the other towns had Colored schools, but they had Black residents, and some families appear to have chosen to send their children to Brooklyn’s PS 67 when given the opportunity. Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings*, (July 3, 1894), p. 522; “A Black Case. The Indignation of an Ignoramus Illustrated.” *BDE*, January 7, 1874, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Scottron was the third Black member of Brooklyn’s Board of Education. After White died in 1891, T. McCants Stewart was appointed to replace him. Scottron succeeded Stewart in 1894. Hurst, “Integration.”

<sup>90</sup> Brooklyn Board of Education, *Proceedings*, (April 6, 1897). See also: Hurst, “Integration,” and Mabee, *Black Education*.

<sup>91</sup> T. McCants Stewart, “A Successful Educator,” *New York Freeman* (June 25, 1887).

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<sup>92</sup> “Scottron sued for libel: Dorsey Claims \$50,000 damages from the Board of Education Member.” *BDE*, March 27, 1897, p.16. “Stand by Principal Dorsey: Brooklyn’s Colored Citizens Consider Him Capable and Upright.” *BDE*, March 24, 1897, p.12.

<sup>93</sup> “Principals Dorsey’s Case” *BDE*, May 4, 1897, p. 16.

<sup>94</sup> “65,000 in Night Schools.” *BDE*, October 15, 1898, p.2.

<sup>95</sup> “Will Reorganize No. 67,” *BDE*. December 6, 1898, p.16.

<sup>96</sup> “Hartwell Reinstated by Justice Hooker,”<sup>6</sup>. An enumeration district is a now-obsolete term for a geographic unit used by the census, representing an area small enough for one census-taker to cover.

<sup>97</sup> “Appeal to the Mayor: Colored Citizens Do Not Want Scottron Reappointed.” *BDE*, May 26, 1897, p.5.

<sup>98</sup> “A Boys’ School: Separate Organization Decided Upon Yesterday.” *BDE*, October 8, 1890, p.1.

<sup>99</sup> “Are Indignant: Colored Citizens Make a Vigorous Protest” *BDE*, October 29, 1890, p.6.

<sup>100</sup> See: Mabee, *Black Education*, and Wellman, *Brooklyn’s Promised Land*.

<sup>101</sup> “Angry at Mr. Simis. An Indignant Taxpayer Denounces the Mixed School System.” *BDE*, March 16, 1893, p. 4. “School No. 83 is All Right. Mr. Simis Says Consolidation is Far from Ruinous.” *BDE*, March 18, 1893, p. 10. Mr. Simis also estimated that 100 of the new enrollees were the result of new district lines.

<sup>102</sup> “The Schools: Important Meeting of the Board of Education.” *BDE* (March 21, 1883), p.2.

<sup>103</sup> “Color Line,” 4.

<sup>104</sup> “Plan to Oust Mrs. Clow Meets with Opposition.” *BDE*, September 21, 1899, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> “Last Negro School to Close.” *BDE*, June 6, 1901, p.10; “Davis Law Plays Pranks,” p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> “Ms. Currie’s Case Given to School Board.” *BDE* (June 5, 1901), p.5.

<sup>107</sup> Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*.

<sup>108</sup> Geoff K. Ward. *The Black Child-Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*.

<sup>110</sup> After much discussion the principal of PS 68, Georgiana Putnam, was assigned as a department head overseeing White teachers in the consolidated school. She was soon charged with incompetency by local committee members who presented no evidence and who later changed their minds about dismissing her. “White and Colored Schools

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Made One: What Will Now Become of Miss Georgiana V. Putnam?” *BDE*, March 10, 1893, p.10; S.R. Scottron, “In Miss Putnam’s Behalf.” *BDE*, September 1, 1893, p. 8; “Miss Putnam a Winner in the Long Fight in the Board of Education.” *BDE*, November 17, 1893, p.5.

<sup>111</sup> Mabee, *Black Education*. See also, Cristina Collins, *Ethnically Qualified: Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920 - 1980* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Burkholder, “Integrated out of Existence” and *An African American Dilemma*; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*.

<sup>113</sup> Brooklyn was famously a site of Black community activism in pursuit of local control of schooling in the 1960s and 70s, and even today families living not far from where the original Colored Schools were once located report that their neighborhood schools fail to meet Black children’s specific educational needs. Heather Lewis, *New York City Public Schools from Brownsville to Bloomberg: Community Control and its Legacy* (New York, 2013); Daniel Perlstein, *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism* (New York, 2004); Jerald Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, CT, 2004). Eliza Shapiro. “I Love My Skin!’ Why Black Parents Are Turning to Afrocentric Schools.” *New York Times* (January 8, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/08/nyregion/afrocentric-schools-segregation-brooklyn.html>

<sup>114</sup> “The Color Line. Drawn on Classon Avenue over a New Resident.” *BDE*, July 12, 1890, p.6; “Flurry in Ft. Greene Place, Because a Negro Has Bought a Three Story House: Aristocratic Neighbors in a Panic.” *BDE*, October 1, 1894, p.1.

<sup>115</sup> Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn*

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Eve L. Ewing. *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago’s South Side*. (Chicago, 2018).