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RELEASING HUMAN POTENTIAL

A Study of East Harlem-Yorkville School Bus Transfer

Prepared By

The East Harlem Project

and the

City Commission on Human Rights of New York
(formerly Commission on Intergroup Relations)

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR
of
EAST HARLEM PROJECT

In November 1960, the staff of the East Harlem Project sought to identify the factors which stimulated parents' consent for children to participate in the Board of Education transfer program to relieve overcrowded East Harlem schools. A secondary and unstated aim of the program was to promote racial integration in a predominantly white school in Yorkville.

EHP's intention was to gain new information that would increase its ability to help people help themselves, and to highlight some of the questions that would develop as the study progressed.

This study would not have been possible without the support and assistance of CCHR staff members Cyril Tyson, Harold Goldblatt, Miss Florence Gromien, Norman Steinlauf, and a former member, Miss Antonia Pantoja.

Within the local community, Mrs. Angelina McKenzie and Mrs. Millie Hudson—both parent leaders—conducted the questionnaire under the staff leadership of Miss Marta Valle.

Three local principals—Mrs. Blanche Murphy (P.S. 159), Mr. Herman Satlow (P.S. 121), and Mrs. Alice Rooney (P.S. 183)—were helpful, as were Mrs. Josephine O'Brien, then Assistant Superintendent of Districts 5, 7, and 9, and Anthony Sorvillo, school-community coordinator for these districts. These people were instrumental in developing a successful transfer program.

Finally, this study will have served an important function if

- (a) It refurbishes the efforts of parents to foster opportunities for the educational stimulation of their children and to continue their efforts to work on behalf of better schools.
- (b) It sensitizes the administrators and staff of "sending" schools to a recognition of the potential that lies dormant in the "gray areas" of our urban complexes.
- (c) It reminds the Board of Education and the city fathers of their special responsibility to educate the "more-difficult-to-educate" despite their own and society's handicaps.
- (d) It helps to emphasize that the future of our democracy rests, in the last analysis, on the opportunities created for individuals to contribute toward its betterment.

Preston Wilcox



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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STANLEY H. LOWELL
Chairman

MADISON S. JONES
Executive Director

ROBERT F. WAGNER
Mayor

August, 1962

Dear Friend:

Since its inception the Commission on Human Rights (formerly Intergroup Relations) has sought to advance the concept and practice of equal and educational opportunity and to facilitate the integration of the city's schools.

Acting under the broad mandate of Local Law 55 of 1955--which created the agency and outlined its powers and duties--the Commission has engaged with increasing frequency in cooperative programs with the Board of Education, community groups and other organizations. The Commission has sought to clarify questions in this field to channel energies in helpful directions and to serve as a catalyst.

This study is the result of one such cooperative effort. It was prompted by the busing of children from one school to another. It happened that the children were members of minority groups. It also happened that they came from de facto segregated schools to an under-utilized school in a predominantly white neighborhood.

We think this study provides insight into the parent's perception of his child's integration experience, and the beneficial result of such an experience--the sharing of the educational process with children of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

The Commission on Human Rights is pleased to have been able to assist Mr. Preston Wilcox, Director of the East Harlem Project and his staff, in an effort which casts at least one ray of light into an area hitherto unexplored. We should like to thank the parents and children--as well as the many others whose help made this study possible.

Sincerely,

MADISON S. JONES
Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

In 1959 the New York City Board of Education instituted a busing program to transfer minority group children from over-utilized, in most cases, de facto segregated, schools to under-utilized schools in predominantly white neighborhoods.

Success of the program has two dimensions--the numerical and the human. The number of participating children and the relief of over-crowding is one factor. However, we must evaluate the children's experiences as they share classes with children of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. In part, we believe, the evaluation may be met with this study.

As a follow-up to the initial transfer of children we conducted this survey in 1961 to determine some of the effects of the program, and to elicit information that would prove helpful in gaining greater interest and in making it more effective. Underlying the desire for statistics and facts we sought the key to the motivation--the drive that made people consent to the transfer of their children.

One of the most difficult challenges facing our 20th Century democracy is the need to provide top quality education--education to release completely the vast quantity of human potential which remains locked in so many areas of our city and nation. The ultimate test of a democracy is not merely the extent to which it accords to its members the right to equal services but also the extent to which it nurtures its members to contribute to its further progress.

* * * * *

This is a survey, then, of parents whose children participated in the transfer from East Harlem schools, P.S. 109 and 121, to P.S. 183 in Manhattan's Yorkville section.

What have we found? We found children who improved in many ways following transfer. In one, or two, just a handful of cases, there was little noticeable change, but in the majority of cases the children showed dramatic improvement in their school work, in their attendance and, generally, they showed renewed vigor and interest in school.

In light of the absence of a strong movement for the elimination of de facto segregation, we believe it is significant to note that the majority of parents who consented to the transfer, regardless of socio-economic conditions, were concerned about the educational attainment of their children--above all else.

While the findings tend to support the need for the program it appears that this alone will not create a totally satisfactory situation. Busing has created a desirable climate, to an extent through mixing of the races in predominantly white schools. But what of the children who are left behind? What of their educational opportunity? What of their schools? What are their chances?

We are of the opinion that if a broad-based improvement of the minority groups' standing in the community is to be achieved it will come from an expanded busing program; but it will also come from increased "two-way" intergroup relationships, from improved educational advantages for all, from the opportunity for better jobs, professions, and a sound economic climate.

BACKGROUND

Why Busing?

Faced with over crowded schools, shortened school periods, de facto segregation and community pressure for change--particularly from the Central Harlem area--the Board of Education initiated a "busing" program in February, 1960 to relieve overcrowding in selected East Harlem and Central Harlem schools. A secondary and unstated aim was to promote racial integration in "receiving" schools. The transfer program was designed to afford students in the third, fourth and fifth grades in selected "over-utilized" schools an opportunity to be transported by bus at public expense to selected "under-utilized" schools, provided their parents consented. Then, the criteria for participation in this program were as follows:

1. Attendance in the 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade of a selected over-utilized school.
2. Parental consent.

The Theatres of Action

The "sending" schools in this case were P.S. 121 and P.S. 109, Manhattan; the "receiving" school - P.S. 183 in Manhattan's Yorkville section. The sending schools are located in East Harlem--a racially diverse but predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican low-income, low status community. East Harlem--bounded by 96th Street, 125th Street, Fifth avenue and the East River--is characterized by its expanding public housing culture--seven housing developments are in operation; six are

under construction or in various stages of planning; public housing will accommodate one-quarter of the community's population. Most private investors in housing--and other fields--have avoided this area. Its fourteen elementary, six junior high and two high schools generally reflect the "changing" community; nine parochial schools continue to serve some of "the old residents."

Yorkville, southeast of East Harlem, on the other hand, can be characterized as a solid white, economically diverse community, to which private investment (via luxury housing) is steadily attracted. The community has begun to undergo physical change in the past ten years--but little ethnic change. Its public schools are under-utilized--as a result of community stability; the school age population grew up. Ten per cent of its population has been uprooted by new building.

Enter: Busing

At the time the busing program was initiated, P.S. 109 had an enrollment of approximately 1800. Its ten second grade classes, and eight of the ten third grade classes were on shortened or double sessions; i.e., the children in these classes were attending at odd hours, receiving less than the five hours education prescribed by law. Its ethnic composition was estimated to be 32 per cent Negro, 65 per cent Puerto Rican and 3 per cent other (predominantly white).

P.S. 121 had an enrollment of 1271. Two third-grade classes and seven second-grade classes were receiving less than a full day's education. Its ethnic composition was 27 per cent Negro, 71 per cent Puerto Rican, 2 per cent other.

P.S. 183 had an enrollment of 547 and a capacity of 733, with classes on full session. Its student body was 5 per cent Negro, 8 per cent Puerto Rican and 91.5 per cent other.

Against this background, the Board of Education drafted a plan to bus children from the over-utilized schools. The plan, only one technique used by the Board of Education to relieve school over-utilization, it was hoped, would help to relieve over-crowding and also give children in "sending" schools an opportunity to receive a full day's education.

At P.S. 109, 810 children in the third, fourth and fifth grades had an opportunity to participate in this program. A total of 59 children, or 7.3 per cent, received parental permission to transfer. Of these, 40 were Negro, 16 Puerto Rican and three Chinese.

Twenty-five or 2.18 per cent of the 650 children eligible at P.S. 121 actually participated. These included 18 Negroes and six Puerto Ricans. (Two later returned to their original school.)

Both schools are located on the grounds of the Washington Houses, and although their zones extend beyond the limits of the housing project, 48 of the 84 children came from the Washington Houses, a federally aided, low-rent project.

An earlier survey of the children who participated in the transfer related to their reading levels. Below are the findings:

	At P.S. 109	At P.S. 121
Reading above level	4	1
Reading on level	22	7
Reading below level	32	16
Non-English speaking	<u>1</u> unknown	<u>1</u>
	59	25

F I N D I N G S

The findings are divided into several categories as follows:

- A. Reason for giving consent to have children bused.
- B. Characteristics of the parents who gave their consent.
- C. Changes that occurred in the student-school relations in the opinion of the parents.
- D. Factors which supported the participation of children in this program both at the point of origin (the sending schools) and at the terminal point (the receiving school).

(A) Reason for Having Children Bused

Almost 75 per cent of the responses indicated that parents transferred their children because of the improved educational opportunities such a move afforded. Of the 101 responses listed by 63 parents, 42 related to a need for relief of over-crowding; 19 listed "superior" educational opportunity at P.S. 183; seven disclosed they were dissatisfied with present scholastic achievement; and seven listed "dissatisfaction with the sending school." Four parents failed to give any reason for consenting to the transfer.

Other reasons, such as the "chance to integrate"; a better education in a more integrated school; and "she did not like several classmates at P.S. 109" represented approximately ten per cent of the responses.

(B) Characteristics of the Parents

1. Placed a high value on education for their children.

One might infer that the parents whose children were involved in this program set high educational goals for their children.

All 67 respondents planned for their children to complete high school. Thirty-nine (39) definitely planned to have their children attend college, and ~~another~~ fourteen (14) had this in mind if other conditions were met.

This interest in education is further supported by answers which reveal that 20 of the parents--almost one-third of the total responding--attended parent meetings in both schools. Only 16 parents had failed to attend parent meetings at either school and 15 had failed to talk with their children's teachers. Fifty of the parents had, at least, attended high school, 21 were high school graduates and four had had some college training. These would tend to be the type of parents who want their children to attain a full education.

2. Other characteristics

The parents of children involved, again predominantly Negro, average 30-34 years of age. The great majority of the respondents were female--this despite the fact that in 52 cases the father was in the home. Of the 52 fathers, 41 were engaged in manual labor; only 11 had professional or white collar positions. Fifty (50) of the parents were born outside of New York City (25 in southern states, 7 elsewhere and 18 in Puerto Rico). Fifteen (15) mothers worked outside the home, five of them on a part-time basis.

Findings indicate that this group had the wherewithal to stimulate educational motivation in their children. In addition to the high value which these parents placed on education, as a vehicle to attain stable adulthood, they tended to be young in age and parts of total family units. These, too, were parents who had time to help their children with homework as 46 indicated.

(C) Changes that Occurred in the Opinion of Parents

Several questions alluded to changes in the attitudes of the children involved in the busing program. These questions related to conduct, attendance, interest in school, and work habits.

In reference to conduct, of the 22 changes observed by parents, 19 of the changes revealed improvement.

In reference to attendance, there were 13 changes reflected; all of which showed improvement.

In reference to interest in school, those who replied indicated that there was an increase in 47 instances and a decrease in only one instance.

In reference to work habits, change was reported in 52 instances, 51 reflecting improvement and only one showing a decline.

In summary, then,

1. The major changes occurred in the areas of work habits and interest in school.

2. The areas in which less change occurred were those relating to conduct and attendance.

We may conclude that those children who were bused from P.S. 109 and P.S. 121 were in general students of good conduct and good attendance records, whose interest in school and work habits underwent positive change as a result of their attendance at P.S. 183.

(D) Factors in the "Sending" and "Receiving" Neighborhood

Parental interest in education, the characteristics of the parents and the conduct and attendance of the children, served as strong incentives to the children for participating in this program. Other factors may have contributed to the decision to participate, or helped to contribute to the success of the experience.

1. Factors in the "Sending" Area

Fifty-five (55) of the parents indicated that friends of their children bused to P.S. 183. Forty-two (42) of the respondents indicated that it was mostly their idea to sign up for the transfer; fourteen (14) of the parents indicated it was mostly their child's idea.

These indicate that (1) there may have been peer group support for participating in the transfer, and (2) that parents in most cases shared the decision with their children.

2. Factors in the "Receiving" Neighborhood

Fifty-five (55) of the parents indicated they were well satisfied with the transfer; eleven (11) indicated they were "pretty well satisfied"; only five (5) indicated any disappointment.

PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Since a major purpose of this study is to increase EHP's ability to help people to help themselves, it is appropriate then to cull from the above findings some guidelines for the future. However, since this study was not done in a vacuum, any implications for future programs should arise both from an understanding of the school situation in East Harlem and an appreciation of the findings.

Those who know East Harlem are aware of the following:

1) Schools in East Harlem will remain over-utilized. Four public housing developments which will house families with school-age children are under construction or are being planned for the area. Five schools currently in various stages of planning or construction will provide "additional" school space, but not enough to change the outlook.

2) The possibility of increasing racial integration in East Harlem schools is unlikely, unless the housing patterns change considerably, or unless white children are bused into East Harlem schools.

3) One can reasonably suspect that the schools in East Harlem wear a stigma of being inferior to schools in all-white or mixed neighborhoods. (The Public Education Association's study in 1955 drew some conclusion about schools that were located in areas like East Harlem. ^{1/} One of the conclusions: where ethnic population distribution was predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican, schools tended to be inferior to schools whose ethnic

^{1/} Public Education Association. The Status of the Public School Education of Negro and Puerto Rican Children in New York City. (New York: P.E.A., 1955)

population distribution was predominantly white. The reasons: lower average reading levels, high rate of teacher turnover, over-utilized facilities, the age of the buildings, etc.

If the East Harlem schools do, in fact, wear the stigma of being inferior, it is not lessened by such programs as busing, re-zoning, and open enrollment, which aim at promoting racial integration. This stigma can affect student motivation, parental interest, teacher investment and community practices.

This situation exists, not because racial integration is an unsound goal, but because such programs have been designed to promote racial mixing in schools located outside of areas like East Harlem.

4) The Board of Education has accepted the responsibility and obligation for educational leadership in this delicate and crucial area (racial integration of our social structure.^{2/}) The Board of Education now affords children the right to attend integrated schools, when space and travel conditions permit, regardless of their residence. This move has had the inadvertent impact of casting a reflection on the caliber of schools in minority group areas.

5) There is evidence that a general upgrading of achievement levels occurs when children move from a segregated to an integrated educational setting.^{3/}

The prospect of continued overcrowding, the improbability of fostering integration in East Harlem schools, the stigma of inferiority,

^{2/} News Release, Board of Education, 8/31/60.

^{3/} Hansen, Carl F. Addendum: A Five Year Report on Desegregation In the Washington, D.C., Schools. (New York Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1960.)

the inference that East Harlem schools are sub-standard because of programs designed to attract children to schools in other neighborhoods, and evidence that a general upgrading in achievement occurs when children attend such schools, suggests that the "promised land" for the development of one's educational potential lies outside of areas like East Harlem. A concomitant suggestion is that any school whose population is predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican will suffer certain handicaps. This suggestion arises from points 2, 3, 4 and 5 discussed above.

Relating these conclusions to the findings from this study, it becomes obvious that programs designed to ensure educational progress, relief of overcrowding and the promotion of integration will tend to attract the more highly cultivated--either socially or intellectually--children out of areas like East Harlem. This departure from such schools by the leadership potential when supplemented by the transfer to private and parochial schools might serve to lower the potential of the schools in East Harlem and similar areas. 4/

The challenge to the Board of Education becomes that of raising the caliber of the sending schools, and at the same time implementing programs that will effect positive changes in the social viewpoints of parents and children throughout the city. If one can believe that Negroes and Puerto Ricans can gain by attending an integrated school--so must one believe that whites will gain by attending integrated schools. If one can believe that a predominantly "de facto segregated" white school can be a

4/ Board of Education, Toward Greater Opportunity; (New York Board of Education, 1960.) A statement on page 154 points out that 53,603 students left public schools to enroll in private and parochial schools during the prior three year period.

"good school," then, one must believe that a "de facto segregated" and predominantly Negro and Puerto Rican school can also be a "good school." If one can believe that one's potential has no ethnic dimensions--then one must behave in this manner.

Indeed, East Harlem is faced with a social dilemma--a paradox, if you will. On the one hand, it is being provided an opportunity to feel and to be like other communities by having the full and democratic right to an equal education accorded to those members who desire the experience. On the other hand, it may be drained of the potential that can help to lend greater value to the local schools. The impact of this dilemma on teacher recruitment problems, the parent-school relations, the pupil motivation and community esprit de corps is common knowledge. Those who chose to send their children out of East Harlem cannot help but sustain their distaste for the schools in East Harlem--those who must reject this opportunity nevertheless may reinforce their beliefs that their schools are inadequate.

But, one of the inherent weaknesses of social change is that as you solve some problems you create others. The question is: Are the problems you are creating greater than the gains derived? There is little doubt that the gains derived to the total community may offset the problems created by the transfer of children. Yet one cannot turn his back on the problems created.

What, then, are the program ideas that one can cull from this study?

1. Every effort should be made to enable families to take advantage of opportunities to transfer their children, i.e., if conditions prevail in which this choice is the most practical.
2. Efforts to involve students in such transfer programs should be predicated on improved educational opportunities. The fact that the majority

of the parents involved in this study placed a high value on education--and their resultant satisfaction--infers that their children were able to relate to their new classmates on an "interest" level--the common interest in education.

The Board of Education has seen fit to introduce pupil shifts as a way of promoting greater integration. Since the educating of the school--age population is its legal and primary function, one would suspect that although its only rationale for moving children to further their opportunities for a full education, the shifting of children in two directions--to and from the Negro and Puerto Rican areas--should and could be brought about if one could be assured of an improved education by doing so.

In effect, Board of Education programs designed to promote integration are a misnomer; they promote racial mixing--or desegregation. Integration appears as an interpersonal relationship between people from different ethnic backgrounds; no more--no less. It is not merely the mixing of black with whites or yellow with brown. It can occur only as people share the same interests--the same delicate and inner feelings about something dear to their hearts--theatre, sports, music, art--and education. When two people share a tennis court--or a textbook--they share experiences--their ethnic background becomes unimportant--as it really should be.

In summary, we commend the Board of Education for its efforts to increase opportunities for human integration--but we question the Board's failure to increase opportunities for improved education for all. Areas like ~~East~~ Harlem must continue to seek an answer to this question.

3. Areas in which "sending" schools are located should receive priority treatment--in terms of services, smaller class sizes, additional

guidance counselors, promotion credits for full-time and student teachers, extra Higher Horizon programs, more and smaller schools, special testing and research and heavier budgets.

By attracting human potential away from its roots, despite its statements to the contrary, the Board of Education is in effect stamping the "sending" areas as "second-class" and, perhaps, lacking in the all-important potential talent.

The pressure to transfer children out of ghetto areas comprising Negroes and Puerto Ricans stems not from a need to mix with others, but from the fact that schools in such areas are inferior when compared to schools in other areas.

It then behooves the Board of Education to set up a system of priorities so that schools in depressed and deprived areas are improved. To recognize the schools in the "sending" areas as inadequate and to do nothing about it is to rob them.

In East Harlem, the final test will not be found in the according of rights to certain educational services, but in the efforts employed to unleash the human potential that is there--awaiting the removal of its chains.

4. The need to continue the cultivation of positive relationships between schools and communities is evident. This recognition arises not only because of the above-mentioned factors relating to the community attitude toward local schools—but because of an appreciation of the fact that the responsibility for the promotion of educational betterment is a shared responsibility. Both the Board of Education and parents must work hand in hand to foster this improvement. One cannot remove the aura of inferiority feelings solely by mixing races and demonstrating achievement. It must also be done by helping communities demonstrate to themselves that they have something of value.

5. A complete study is needed, as a follow-up to the P.E.A. study five years ago. How much change has actually occurred with the predominantly Negro and Puerto-Rican schools? Has the improvement been centered mostly in "Higher Horizon" and "busing to escape" programs, or have there been some basic improvements in teacher recruitment, building quality, achievement levels? We recommend a full study, not only of the busing program, (from both the "sending" and "receiving" point of view), but also a study of the de facto segregated school. Is there a de facto segregated school to which white students could be transferred in the interest of their educational betterment?

East Harlem Project's Role

The East Harlem Project is a joint community service of the James Weldon Johnson Community Center, Inc., and the Union Settlement Association, representing over 75 years service to the people of East Harlem. EHP was organized in November 1957, and is financed by the Fred L. Lavanburg Foundation. Its goals:

1. To identify and meet urgent community needs.
2. To help people in East Harlem develop a capacity for coping with their own and their community's problems and to develop positive objectives.
3. To prove that ordinary citizens can study, understand and act together to ameliorate or solve problems of living with which they are confronted.
4. To locate leadership in individuals and in groups;
 - (a) stimulate and guide such leadership so as to strengthen it;
 - (b) increase in all the ability both to lead and to follow effectively, thoughtfully and creatively.
5. To create a sense of community life based on positive values;
 - (a) learn to live and participate together with a sense of pride and accomplishment;
 - (b) learn how to make an impact on their living situation-- and how to live together in maximum harmony.

It seeks to achieve these goals through service to tenant and parent groups--the rationale being that the common residence and common interest in children and education provides a bond for the cultivation

of a climate for people to work toward a resolution of common problems.

The EHP Project's established communication between parents and schools thereby hopefully enhances parental interest, student motivation and school standards.

At the time the busing program was announced, a staff person had been assigned to both P.S. 109, which now has a well-established parent association and P.S. 121, which was in the process of developing one.

The Project saw as its role that of making information available to parents to help them to make their choice. Parents were helped to direct their questions to principals, to hold meetings where questions on the program could be raised, and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages. The Project also attempted to stimulate both a positive reception in Yorkville and a positive approach by those parents who consented to have their children bused.

By coordinating the efforts of the local groups through the Board of Education's District Community Coordinator and by canvassing local Yorkville opinion through contacts with settlement houses, agencies and individuals in the area, a welcoming program was arranged. Parents who consented to send their children were invited to an assembly and a tour at P.S. 183 before busing went into effect. The Project urged all "sending" parents to participate in the tour and remained available to help parents explore problems that arose.

A meeting was held among all "sending" parents in East Harlem prior to the implementation of the program. Parents whose children had been bused earlier from Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn to Glendale, Queens, spoke and allayed some of the feelings local parents may have felt. At one point, a rumor developed that the local children would be placed in separate classes.

The Project decided against working with the local community in exploring this rumor. It was felt that if this rumor were proven to be false, local community action would have served only to increase apprehension and, perhaps, antagonism within the "sending" school children - and thereby risking the success of the program. The rumor was explored through Dr. Theobald's office with the aid of an executive of the United Neighborhood Houses and its Board President and proven to be false.

Finally, the success of the program has two dimensions—the numerical and the human. The number of children who participated and the extent to which overutilization was relieved is one factor. However, one must evaluate the children's experiences as they share classes with children from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The Project feels that each was equally important. To measure success solely by the numbers who responded, or by the atmosphere of acceptance is not sufficient.

It was hoped that this information could be obtained by collecting data relating to the characteristics of the adult group involved and by eliciting their opinions. Another step was thought to be that of getting parental opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of this program. Thus the study aimed to help increase our understanding about the factors which motivate people, and to explore methods of helping them to achieve what they want through socially-desirable channels.

Education and Research Units of CCHR

It was natural that the staff of the East Harlem Project sought out CCHR for consultation and assistance. The on-going involvement of the Commission's Education Unit with New York City's public schools has kept it

at the forefront in a key area--that of promoting fuller educational opportunities for members of minority groups. Its skill was evident, in the now-renowned busing program from Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn to Glendale, in Queens. Its seven point program for promoting racial integration within the city school system enjoys wide community acceptance. Finally, its Reserrch Unit engaged in the study of the self-images of children who experience integrated education, offered its services.

The Research Unit wrote the questionnaire in consultation with our staff, conducted six depth interviews and collated the finding.

Q U E S T I O N N A I R E

A N D

R E S P O N S E S

HAROLD GOLDBLATT, Director
Research Unit
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

APPENDIX I

1. WHAT SCHOOL DID YOUR CHILD ATTEND BEFORE THE TRANSFER TO P.S. 183?

44 Public School 109
23 Public School 121

IS THIS CHILD A BOY OR A GIRL?

41 A boy
27 A girl

(One parent who sent two children completed one questionnaire only).

2. WHAT CLASS WAS HE OR SHE IN AT THAT SCHOOL?

23 Third grade
14 Fourth grade
1 No information

3. WHAT CLASS WAS HE OR SHE ASSIGNED TO AFTER THE TRANSFER?

4. WHAT CLASS WILL HE OR SHE ENTER IN SEPTEMBER?

Findings here were not relevant to this study.

5. WHAT LED YOU TO SIGN UP FOR THE TRANSFER TO P.S. 183?

The parents were asked to answer this question in their own words, citing as many or as few reasons as they wished. These may have been dissatisfactions with the sending school or anticipations of advantages at the receiving school. The reasons they gave are classified below, in order of their frequency, with quotations from the parents' answers to illustrate the major categories.

Number of
Reasons
Given

(75)

I. EDUCATIONAL REASONS

(42)

a. Overcrowding or Overutilization

"The letter they sent me stated P.S. 109 was overcrowded. So I asked my daughter if she

would like to be transferred so some of the smaller children could go to class all day instead of half day and she said yes."

"He could go to school all day instead of the half day he was going. I didn't realize at the time he could probably go all day here once congestion was relieved."

"I wanted my other child to have a full day of classes."

"I wanted my daughter to go to school a full day."

(19) b. Superior educational opportunity anticipated at P.S. 183.

"My daughter would have a better chance of entering a good junior high school in Yorkville if she is trained in one of the Yorkville elementary schools."

"I wanted my daughter to get a better education."

"P.S. 109 is much more behind in work than P.S. 183."

"A better chance for my child."

(7) c. Dissatisfaction expressed with child's performance in school.

"He played hookey too much and did not take an interest in school."

"My daughter was allowed to play too much and she was not learning very much."

"His marks seemed to get lower and lower."

"He was not doing so well in school."

(7) d. Dissatisfaction expressed with practices in sending school.

"I felt that he did not have enough homework or work in school."

"Not enough math."

"Not enough books for all the children."

"He had five teachers in about two months."

(10) II. SOCIAL REASONS

"A chance to integrate."

"A better education in a more integrated school."

"She would be attending school in a better neighborhood where the children are better behaved."

"She would have the opportunity of meeting children other than those in the neighborhood and of acquaintances and relatives."

"She did not like several classmates at 109."

"Her cousin was also signed up and they are very close."

(16) III. MISCELLANEOUS REASONS

"The child wanted to go."

"He did not like 121."

"Lunch better at 183."

"Learn to travel."

"Teachers more patient."

(4) IV. NO REASON

"Parent did not know what she was signing."

6. WAS SIGNING UP FOR THE TRANSFER MOSTLY YOUR IDEA OR MOSTLY YOUR CHILD'S IDEA TO BEGIN WITH?

- 42 Mostly the parent's idea to begin with.
- 14 Mostly the child's idea to begin with.
- 8 Both
- 3 Other answers

7. SINCE THE TRANSFER HAS YOUR CHILD'S CONDUCT IN SCHOOL BECOME BETTER, WORSE, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME.

- 19 Better
- 3 Worse
- 44 Stayed about the same
- 1 No information

8. SINCE THE TRANSFER, HAS YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOL BECOME BETTER, WORSE, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME?

13 Better
0 Worse
53 Stayed about the same
1 No information

9. SINCE THE TRANSFER HAS YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST IN SCHOOL INCREASED, DECREASED, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME?

47 Increased
1 Decreased
19 Stayed about the same.

10. SINCE THE TRANSFER HAVE YOUR CHILD'S WORK HABITS BECOME BETTER, WORSE, OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME?

51 Better
1 Worse
15 Stayed about the same

11. WHEN YOUR CHILD WAS ATTENDING P.S. 109 or 121 DID YOU HELP HIM OR HER WITH HOMEWORK?

46 Yes
14 No
7 Didn't get homework

12. HOW ABOUT LAST TERM: DID YOU HELP WITH HOMEWORK FROM P.S. 183?

53 Yes
11 No
1 Didn't get homework
2 No information

13. FROM WHAT YOUR CHILD HAS TOLD YOU, WHICH SCHOOL DO YOU THINK HE OR SHE LIKED THE BEST: 109 or 121 or 183?

14 Sending school
40 Receiving school
13 Both the same

14. DO ANY OF YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD ATTEND P.S. 183?

55 Yes
11 No
1 No answer,

15. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHETHER THERE HAS BEEN ANY HARD FEELING SHOWN TOWARD THE BUS CHILDREN?

3 Yes, by some of the parents
8 Yes, by some of the teachers
7 Yes, by some of the children
55 No, not that I know of

16. DO YOU PLAN TO HAVE YOUR CHILD GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

67 Yes

17. DO YOU PLAN TO HAVE YOUR CHILD GO TO COLLEGE?

39 Yes, categorical
14 Yes, conditional
11 No
3 No answer

18. OF COURSE BOTH ARE IMPORTANT, BUT WHICH DO YOU THINK IS MORE IMPORTANT FOR YOUR CHILD: TO GET HIGH MARKS IN SCHOOL OR TO BE WELL LIKED?

43 To get high marks in school
14 To be well liked
7 Both
3 No answer

19. WHICH OF THESE NEWSPAPERS, IF ANY, DO YOU READ REGULARLY?

9 Amsterdam News	2 La Prensa
9 Herald Tribune	15 Journal-American
9 El Diario	1 World-Telegram & Sun
12 Mirror	18 New York Post
14 Times	0 Other
46 Daily News	1 None

20. DID YOU ATTEND P.T.A. MEETINGS AT 109 or 121?

21. DID YOU ATTEND P.T.A. MEETINGS AT 183?

- 20 Attended P.T.A. meetings at both schools
- 30 Attended P.T.A. meetings only at sending school
- 0 Attended P.T.A. meetings only at receiving school
- 16 Attended P.T.A. meetings at neither school
- 1 No information

22. DID YOU TALK WITH YOUR CHILD'S LAST TEACHER AT 109 or 121?

23. DID YOU TALK WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER AT 183?

- 24 Talked with child's teacher at both schools
- 27 Talked with child's teacher only at sending school
- 1 Talked with child's teacher only at receiving school
- 15 Talked with child's teacher at neither school

24. HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED AT YOUR PRESENT ADDRESS?

- 23 Less than five years
- 30 Five years
- 24 More than five years

25. HOW MANY ROOMS ARE THERE IN THIS APARTMENT?

26. HOW MANY LIVE IN THIS APARTMENT?

- 5 Less than 1 person per room
- 15 One person per room
- 47 More than 1 person per room

27. ARE YOU NEGRO, PUERTO RICAN, OR OTHER?

- 46 Negro
- 18 Puerto Rican
- 1 Other

28. ABOUT HOW OLD ARE YOU?

- 8 Under 30
- 31 Between 30 and 34
- 22 Between 35 and 39
- 5 Forty and over
- 1 No information

29. WHAT WAS THE LAST GRADE YOU ATTENDED IN SCHOOL?

4 No attendance
13 Elementary School
25 Some High School
21 High School Graduate
4 Some College

30. ARE YOU THE CHILD'S MOTHER, FATHER OR GUARDIAN?

59 Mother
7 Father
1 Both parents filled out questionnaire

31. WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

11 New York City
25 Southern state
7 Elsewhere in the United States
16 Puerto Rico
2 Foreign
6 No information

32. WHAT DOES THE FATHER DO FOR A LIVING?

4 Professional
7 White collar
41 Manual worker
8 Father not at home
1 Father deceased
6 No answer to question

33. DOES THE MOTHER WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME?

5 Yes, part time
10 Yes, full time
51 No
1 No answer

34. ONE LAST QUESTION: ALL IN ALL, HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW ABOUT THE TRANSFER?

50 Very well satisfied
11 Pretty well satisfied
3 A little disappointed
2 Very much disappointed
1 Undecided

APPENDIX II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARENTS

Ethnic affiliation: 46 Negro; 18 Puerto Rican; 1 Other

Age: 8 under 30; 31 between 30 and 34; 22 between 35 and 39;
five 40 and over; 1 no information.

Educational attainments: 4 did not attend school at all; 13 attended
elemertary school only; 25 attended high school but did not
graduate; 21 graduated high school.

Sex: 59 were mothers; 7 were fathers; 1 questionnaire was completed
by both parents.

Nativity: 11 were native New Yorkers; 25 were born in a Southern state;
7 were born in Puerto Rico; 2 were foreign born; 6 did not give
information.

Father's occupation: 4 professionals; 7 white collar workers; 41 manual
workers; 8 fathers not at home; 1 father deceased; 6 did not
answer the question.

Employment of mother outside the home: 5 work part time; 10 work full
time; 51 are not gainfully employed; 1 did not answer.

Residential stability: 23 lived at their present address less than
five years; 20 five years; 24 more than five years.

Persons, room ratio: 5 reported fewer than 1 person per room; 15 one
person per room; 47 more than 1 person per room.

APPENDIX III

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH SIX PARENTS

What do you think of the school situation in general?

In general, I'm critical. Before I moved here my children went to parochial school but I couldn't get them into parochial school during the middle of the year, so I registered them in P.S. 121. Everyone knows the parochial school is more advanced; they are stricter with the children. They have to learn what is set before them. They lost interest in school in 121. I had to prod them to get them to do their homework. The teacher explained to me that the children are graded. I realized that might be the reason: while she is helping one grade the others are left alone. My oldest son would say on coming home, "We just played." He didn't take school seriously any more. I don't know whether it was due to the system or to themselves. My youngest was getting only 4 hours and couldn't learn much in 4 hours. Since he went to 183 he did very well. I thought it was mostly the work that held their interest; they didn't buckle down in 121. That school didn't seem strict enough for me. When I went to school things were stricter. They say there is a shortage of books. But what books there are they don't bring home. So I can't make him study. Now you have to encourage the children. They tend to do very little. Unless the child likes to study they don't want to have anything to do with it.

I was pleased with the transfer. He seemed to take more interest in the school. He had to do more reading. He has had much more composition writing. He has gotten more home work, more book reports. Tests quite often. The teacher showed me they get a real full day's work in school. I've been more than satisfied since he goes the whole day than when he went for the 4 hours.

Mother: Born in N.Y.C.
High School Graduate
Father: A Welder

They sent me a note about school being crowded and the opportunity for transfer. They said she didn't need to go but she could go. She said she would like to go and I agreed to it. I let her change because she was older. I felt the younger ones were to young for the change. It's such a distance. She was getting along pretty good here (in sending school). But a few other friends were going. Just a little excitement going on the bus. Now since she has been there she has advanced more in school. Until she got in trouble with the teacher. The teacher made a comment about going back to Africa. But the principal said she misunderstood. (P) I don't want to talk about it.

Mother: Born in N.Y.C.
Some High School
Father: Mail Carrier

They are more advanced (in receiving school). Go all day starting from Kindergarten. When in this school they begin all day at the 5th grade. And their reading level is higher. They use big words. We had a time with the spelling. They have to join a library. And they have to read an entire book each week; the whole book. And for Friday they have to make a book report, sometimes on the person who wrote the book, sometimes on some person in the book, sometimes on another subject. But to do the report, they really have to read the book. In the old school the spelling was easier. This make it harder for her in this school. They have homework here. They are four subjects ahead in history in the new school. We all had homework to help her fill in. I asked a friend how she liked all this weekend work, and she says, "Don't ask!" It has me sweating. Before she wasn't interested in reading. They made her interested. She mixed up the subjects. On the whole, I'm real satisfied. I'm glad we did it, although we had many a tearful night here. We had to study up till 10 o'clock many a night. She was sleepy the next day. I went to see the teacher before school ended, and she said she isn't slow but she is behind in her subjects. Next term she will go to 6-1. I'm to keep up her reading the summer. She is slow in her reading compared to those who have been going to this school all day. As far as discipline is concerned, that part is fine. She must behave. That teacher is her mother while she is there. She has to do what she is told the same as if I told her. I didn't have any trouble anywhere as far as teachers are concerned. She won first prize in a race. She was so excited for a week. She felt she couldn't run but they wanted everyone in the activity. So I said, "Go along in," and she won.

She has a better opportunity to go to a better high school. The better high school you get out of the better your chances. I don't care how smart you are in a second rate school. When you meet up with children from the better high school they are more advanced. We went down there before the transfer. They showed us work the children had done. The principal was there. There was a special assembly for us. We were invited to any class we wanted to go to. The school gave flyers to the children to bring home.

Mother: Born in Ohio
High School Graduate
Father: White collar worker

They wouldn't let parents ride on the bus and the children in the younger grades are too young to go alone. I visited the school (183) frequently; it had a very nice principal. I visited the school before it opened. Saw the classrooms. One of my boys is a problem child. They notify me if he is bad; they cannot put a child out for behavior. One of my boys was a monitor; he acted up when I took a job. The teacher was very patient; I had a long talk with the principal. I told her I would go back on Welfare so the kids would not run wild and I would be out with the kids. They didn't ask us to join PTA but we donated to the cake sales. All schools teach differently. They have certain types of books for reading. She told me how I could help the child and it was wonderful of her to help me. They have free lunches. I wasn't left out. Wonderful teachers. Made me feel welcome.

Children love the school. Wonderful to me. The children did not get marks that they didn't deserve. Straight talking people. Teachers all wonderful. Took us into classroom. Showed us how they taught. I have no complaints.

Mother: Born North Carolina
Some High School
Broken home; on Welfare

Overcrowding terrible. Grateful that at last all her five children have outgrown half sessions. Was a great problem to get three or four at same time coming and going at different times. Bad for the children because by the time they had settled down to work it was time to go home, and no real education was obtained. Time simply wasted. Besides being unfair to children--especially those who are a little slow and need individual attention--such split sessions very hard on mothers. Although she herself no longer has the problem, very concerned for those who still suffer under it.

Opinion of 183

"I like it--I love it." Hard on children at first because changed in middle of term and therefore had so many things to learn. At first hard to convince her boy and girl they liked it. Not hard for the boy, because he was in higher class, but little girl had rough time because always wants to shine and she found herself handicapped at first in competition with other children who had had full-day education at 183. But she is finding herself. She recently won a contest at school and has for a week "been walking on air." "I'm satisfied (with 183). I'm happy about it." Qualified opinion by cautioning that she was speaking for self alone and that all other parents of busing children do not agree. At a meeting in June after close of term parents did much grumbling about P. S. 183 and some wanted to transfer children back. They were chiefly (solely?) parents of the 10 boys in one particular class (her son one of them, an association she is keen to break up) who have been chastised by the teacher and accused of disrupting the class. Parent's plaint is that the boys were picked on and treated as if they were "bad" instead of just unaccustomed to the discipline of the new school. Our respondent's view is that they must have been creating a disturbance if the teacher said so, that she had perfect right to complain, and that her children have never had any trouble. Much impressed by fact principal at 183 knows every child by name, even these new ones.

At 109 bedlam in halls. If you wanted to speak to teacher, she had to leave classroom to talk to you because class too noisy. At 183 parents may sit in classrooms and listen--quiet and orderly. Young and inexperienced teachers at 109.

What led you to sign up for permissive zoning?

More hours of work for him. Find something to get back his interest in school. Most parents transferred because of the hours, not because of the

school. I wanted him to have a full day of school. The son who was going all day, I let stay where he is. I was disgusted about his schooling and when this transfer plan came through it seemed to solve my problem about loss of interest rather than letting him wait it out. Here he gets to go on trips; there he didn't. There is more activity in this school. So far I'm very satisfied with the transfer.

* * * * *

They sent me a paper to sign. The boy didn't bring any paper home so he continues to go to 121. I didn't want her to go so far from home but it would spread out the other children in school; relieve the overcrowding. (P) If I had the choice between 183 or 198 I would prefer 198 - closer to home. I used to go to that school and some of my teachers are still there (121) (P) Much different. So crowded you can't go all day. More mixed then. Now it seems to me there are more Spanish than anybody else. The biggest thing now is it's so crowded.

* * * * *

School crowded. They weren't learning enough. With some of the kids gone they would be leaving more room for those left. (P) Some were afraid because they didn't want to trust the children to go without a guardian or if something went wrong with the bus. Some were working mothers and wanted the kids close to home. Some felt kids wouldn't be protected. (If 198 had been opened would you have preferred this or 183?). I wouldn't care what school they went to so long as it was an all day session.

* * * * *

Overcrowding is the only thing with me. Does not approve of way they are rezoning. Brand new school doesn't help the neighborhood because only two apartment houses on 97th Street being included and other children are being brought in from farther downtown and from as far west as Fifth Avenue, but not from above 97th Street, where the problem is greatest.

* * * * *

She felt that by taking her child out of overcrowded school would give another child better chance. Much better now. Not only better education but he is not on streets. Her 15-year-old daughter starts Commercial High School in September and the mother will try to arrange that the daughter is home in afternoon when son comes home from school. Mother so strongly disapproves of neighborhood she won't let boy out alone to hang around. Hard since she works. Despite frequent praise of former teacher at 121, insisted 183 nevertheless provides better education.

* * * * *

I heard about it at 109 through P.T.A. I was a member of the board of P.T.A. They were building a new school. We found out it wouldn't help us; then we asked questions about what could be done. We had to find out if there were enough parents interested. They sent a questionnaire home to find out; the bus company said the young children were too young. I wanted the younger one to go all day; when I saw they wouldn't take the younger, I thought if they take the older maybe there will be room left for the younger. The parents that didn't transfer expected to have a lot of trouble with race. But this school invited us in because they wanted more children to keep this school open. They made us feel real welcome. The principal said the kids must behave. She doesn't mind poor scholarship because she says everyone can't be smart but everyone can behave. They make the parent take the child out if behavior is bad; they sent the child back to 109.

In what ways is receiving school better?

P.S. 183 is stricter. They have better children. No running on the steps. School is spotless. They get much better service in this strict school. There is no sassing teachers. I have an unruly boy. His behavior is different in the new school. His shirt tail is never hanging out. He bought a comb. He has so much homework. He comes home and says, "Mama, I have a lot of homework; keep those kids off me." They seem to have settled down to being 8 and 9 year old boys. They teach differently in 183. All the children are racing to get better; the children are more interested. The child is made to feel he is a little better than the average. Because the child works hard and obeys and accomplishes he gets to feel a little better than the rest. (P) Cannot say 121 was better in any way.

* * * * *

More advanced since she went to 183. Less fighting in neighborhood down there. They get out of school right onto the bus and don't have time for disturbances. (P) Closer to home, she liked teachers here (121). Now she goes to summer school here. Mostly it was her idea to transfer. If she didn't want to go I wouldn't have made her. She was so anxious to go I let her go. She catches on quickly; she studies hard. So I let her go. I thought all the children in the 5th grade were transferring, not only those interested. That's why I let her change. Because she was going all day here. (P) She wants to be a nurse.

Do any of your child's best friends attend P.S. 183?

Yes. Girl especially has made one very close friend and invited to house. Son has not mixed well, sticking with "clan" of 10 from P.S. 109. She is worried about way boy is member of 10-boy "clan" (her word) from P.S. 109, all of whom were assigned to same class at 183 and have formed a close knit group, getting known to teacher as trouble makers and not making friends. Says these boys include some she didn't want him to play with at 109 and now that they are even closer she is quite unhappy. Says she let it go on this first term but before school re-opens in September

she is making it her business to go to the school and try to get her son transferred out of that class to break up the association. This situation has kept him from making new friends. The girl is only one from 109 in her class and has made out "fine," making friends and especially one close friend with whom she chats on the telephone, etc. Was invited to friend's home, but couldn't go. Probably will go another time.

From what your child has told you, which school does he or she like best?

When he first started he hated the receiving school. The school was strict; the teachers were mean and he hated it. But after a month he liked it. He says I miss 121; all my friends are there but I like it. Sooner or later they fall right in. I play with my kids all year around. When I play I play, but when I say "Move" to them, they move. I keep strict home discipline. They keep a bank account in the new school. They didn't have a bank system in P.S. 121. They put part of their earnings in the bank that they get from baby sitting, washing clothes, running errands for the supermarkets. I was brought up on a farm; the rule there was never give kids the feel of money. I tell my kids I'll raise their allowance when their conduct improves.

* * * * *

P.S. 183. She likes this school as far as work is concerned, but she misses her friends. There is always something new here. But at 109 she often didn't feel like going because she always knew what would happen. When she was home lunch time she could play with her friends. She sees them summer time. But since she transferred she can't see them until after school. By the time she finishes her school work it's too late to play. And weekends she has homework to do.

Have you attended P.T.A. meetings at P.S. 183?

Yes, several. At first the parents seemed a little snobbish. But it happened so fast they couldn't do anything about it. But the principal and teachers made us feel welcome. Teacher put my boy in front of her desk because he is talkative. She hit him once and I went to the principal and we talked it out. Since then there has been a big change in his conduct. His conduct held him back from 6-1. He is hurt by his naughtiness, held back. The monitors report him. Have spoken to other parents about school and they complain that at 121 their children were in 1 classes while after the change they are in 2 or 3 classes. But I say they are given a test. I say the reading level of these kids in 121 is terrible. You have to help your child. I read to my children and I make them read back to me. The parents should help the children more. When my children do homework I check it over. The teachers compliment me on it. In 121 they don't want you to help the child because then he will be ahead of the rest, but in 183 they let you have books. This school is behind. They never completed the library.

* * * * *

Yes. Had two meetings. They don't meet every month. She is ardent attender of all and any meetings relating to school, even when she is very tired at end of day. Scornful of uninterested parents who don't attend meetings and then complain bitterly to her on outside. She says she tells them, "That's your problem." She fights for her children, and they should fight for theirs. She has kept up her contact with P.T.A. at 109 at request of other parents and principal because so few always bear burden of work.

Did you attend any P.T.A. meetings at your child's former school?

Yes. Parents not interested. Kept starting P.T.A. but never did much. Met only about three times a year. Said that she didn't try to get active in P.T.A. in part because "knew child would be transferring and not worth it." (Seemed groping for excuses for not having been more active in P.T.A. even through apparently did attend some. Apologetic and defensive.)

How long have you lived at your present address?

Five years. When moving five years ago, from West Side, she deliberately sought neighborhood where children would go to school where all races were mixed. Was bitterly disappointed to discover school Negro-Puerto Rican with only handful of "whites". On first day she took son (older boy) to school she had to press through boys and girls out on street whose manners and attitudes appalled her. (Commented that they didn't get out of way on sidewalks, or apologize, etc.) She felt she could not possibly let son attend school alone yet he was too old to want her to go with him. Protested vigorously to have him go to another school, principal agreeing with her reason, and succeeded, through friends, in getting him permission to attend Wagner. Worked out fine. Therefore on alert for these two younger ones to get similar break. (Older boy mentioned was junior-high age.)