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Shifting Landscapes of Power and Privilege: School Closures and Uneven Development in Philadelphia

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Shifting Landscapes of Power and Privilege: School Closures and Uneven Development in Philadelphia

by

Ariel H. Bierbaum

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in

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University of California, Berkeley

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ABSTRACT

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Carolina K. Reid, Chair

In 2013, the School District of Philadelphia closed ten percent of its traditional public schools. Citing poor academic performance, declining enrollments, and fiscal constraints, the District deployed school closure as an education reform strategy. Other districts mirror Philadelphia's efforts, closing from five to fifty percent of their public schools. This dissertation examines how public school closures, sales, and reuse can be seen not only as education reform policy, but also as urban policy, transforming the physical, social, and political fabric of a city. This dissertation thus extends the work on the education-related impacts of school closures, and demonstrates the salience of school closures from an urban policy and planning perspective.

Using Philadelphia as a case study, I draw on theories of frame analysis and use ethnographic methods to explore the discourses of closure that circulate among policy makers, residents, and the broader public. I conducted seven months of fieldwork in Philadelphia, including 118 interviews with City and School District staff, residents, and non-profit leaders, and participated in City, School District, and neighborhood association meetings. I look not only at the closure decision-making process, but also follow the trajectory of school buildings from vacancy to the transformation of schools into capital assets to the reimagining of school reuse. Examining the discursive frames of school closures, sales, and reuse is a first step at grappling with the racialized tensions and material consequences of this policy intervention.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide an introduction to the issue of and current empirical research on public school closures, and background on the City and School District of Philadelphia. Chapter 3 situates the Philadelphia case in a larger national context by examining newspaper media coverage in 13 cities across the country. Coverage fosters a conflictual and dichotomous framing of closures, reducing plural meanings of schools to two competing and singular arguments: arguments for closure, based in rationality and technical expertise and arguments opposing closure, based in emotionally laden messaging. Media are predominantly sympathetic to the problem definition and causal interpretations of school closure proponents. Newspaper media do not maximize their role as a democratic institution, and neglect the disproportionate and racialized impact of closures.

In Chapter 4, I move to the Philadelphia case. I use Philadelphia's school closures as a revelatory case to shed light on the multifaceted values that schools have to neighborhoods, planning, and urban governance. Schools are valued economically, socio-spatially, and symbolically, and this extreme case expands the scope of these values currently found in the literature. Economically, schools are an employment center, often for neighborhood residents; assets or liabilities that contribute to school district fiscal solvency; and redevelopment sites and vehicles for private profit making. Socio-spatially, closures reveal how school buildings have potentially negative value, as attractive nuisances in the absence of stewardship. Schools are key physical landmarks in the urban fabric, serving as nodes on pathways throughout the neighborhood, shaped by individual perceptions of safety and community. Symbolically, closures stand in for larger processes of neighborhood change, triggering or exacerbating fears about gentrification or continued disinvestment. Decisions about schools represent a larger and historically racialized relationship between particular communities and the public sector, one that is defined by systemic respect or disrespect. In Chapter 5, I build on the values identified in Chapter 4 and describe the three discursive frames of school closures that emerged from my research: *closure as crisis management*, *closure as loss*, and *closure as oppression*. Each one places schools in a different spatial context – from the a-spatial market (*crisis management*) to the school site and/or neighborhood (*loss*) to broader citywide patterns of re/development (*oppression*). This variation is tied to different notions of time, which foreground the past, present, and future in divergent ways.

Chapter 6 concludes with reflections on the racialized nature of school closures, sales, and reuse, and on directions for practice and research. My findings demonstrate that to understand the consequences of school closures, research needs to examine not only the moment of closure, but also the subsequent sales and reuse of school buildings. "Placing" schools in this way situates this education reform policy in its spatial context, and reveals how school infrastructure is urban infrastructure, playing a central role in urban change. This study also illustrates the importance historicizing school closures, and considering links to past and present place-based policies that have sought to improve poor neighborhoods, yet have had racist impacts. This study documents how the administrative boundaries of the school district and school attendance catchment areas define people's mental maps of their neighborhoods, and challenges planners to consider school district or school attendance boundaries as a spatial unit of analysis. The tensions over perceived lines of accountability, political action, and resistance around school closures, sales, and reuse also suggest more reflection and attention by practitioners to bridge cross-sector silos and reconsider silo-ed public engagement processes. This research reveals the ways that schools are sites of contestation in the politics of place. It helps further understanding of the geographic and geopolitical boundaries that are tied to school sites and school districts. It enhances planners' conceptualization of and work at the nexus of place and schools. From an urban policy or planning perspective public school closures, sales, and reuse call for a recalibration or assessment of interventions in neighborhoods, cities, and regions.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Schools as Domains of Urban Change

The landscape of Philadelphia is changing. Like many large cities, Philadelphia is experiencing shifts across commercial, residential, and public spaces. Racial inequalities in income, employment, and educational attainment are mirrored in the simultaneous physical revitalization of some neighborhoods and deterioration of others. The catalysts of these changes are complex yet familiar – private and public efforts shuffle flows of money and people, resulting in uneven patterns of investments and disinvestments across the city. In some neighborhoods, a new site of action has joined more familiar housing and commercial revitalization: public schools.[1]

In March 2012, the School District of Philadelphia proposed closing thirty-seven – just over 15 percent – of the district's 242 traditional public schools. Citing poor academic performance, declining enrollments, and fiscal constraints, the District has deployed school closure as an education reform strategy. Other districts mirror Philadelphia's efforts. Cities like Oakland, Chicago, and Kansas City, MO have closed anywhere from five to fifty percent of their public schools. Paradoxically, closed school buildings sit in the same neighborhoods that urban policy and city planning efforts have targeted for place-based interventions to alleviate poverty and build opportunity. While plans envision new mixed-income, mixed-use communities, closed school buildings sit empty, their futures opined on editorial pages or monetized as "resale value" in city and school district documents.

Outside of journalistic accounts (see e.g., Chapter 3), these mass school closures are not well documented. Empirical work on closures is scant, and largely focuses on education-related impacts.[2] From an urban policy or planning perspective, school closures have a salience that is even less well understood. While planning and urban policy research has focused on economic and social inequalities facilitated by housing, transportation, and labor policies, educational inequality or issues like school segregation have been neglected or treated as an outcome of these other factors (Kitzmiller 2012; Vincent 2006; Vitiello 2006). I argue that school closures present a new imperative for planning researchers and practitioners; closures reveal how schools are not only shaped by larger urban transformations, but also recast education policy as a key element of urban change and planning.

I consider schools as not only educational spaces, but also as elements of the social, political, and physical infrastructure of cities (for more elaboration see Chapter 4). The provision of public education is simultaneously an educational, social, political, and *spatial* process. I define closure as a situation in which school districts shut down an educational program, relocate all students and school site personnel to other locations, and shutter the school building.[3] Thus,

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[1] My research focuses on public schools, rather than all schools (public, private, parochial). While certainly there are spatial dimensions to non-public schools, the nature of the public provision of education to all stakeholders is my primary concern. Semantically, I use the terms "school," "public school," "traditional public school," and "district-run school" interchangeably.

[2] School closure scholarship looks at both urban and rural closure and consolidation. Herein, when referring to school closure, I am exclusively discussing urban school districts.

[3] Other studies do not necessarily use the condition of the building as a criterion, but rather define a school as a particular program with specific faculty, staff, and students. The building does not define the school; the school could be shut down but the building would remain open for another school program to move in. Because my

school closures literally change the socio-physical landscape of cities. They are themselves moments and catalysts of neighborhood change that are under-recognized in urban planning and decision-making. School closures offer a "physical, political, and discursive space" to understand how policies enacted through educational and urban arenas "[manifest] as material landscape changes" and affect lived experiences in neighborhoods (Hackworth 2007, 13). School closures are a new domain to observe particular configurations of public and private institutions, politics, social relationships, and physical development in a moment of intra-city inequities that previously emerged primarily across urban-suburban jurisdictional divides.

My study extends current scholarship on school closures and at the nexus of planning and education by examining the spatial dynamics of open and closed schools. It looks not only at the closure decision-making process, but also at the aftermath of closure, following the trajectory of school buildings from vacancy to the transformation of schools into capital assets to the reimagining of school reuse. Focusing on the complete trajectory of closures, sales, and reuse requires a multi-scalar (from local school site to neighborhood to city) and multi-sector (school district, city, state, and federal agencies) analysis. This approach to the study of school closures, sales, and reuse foregrounds the complex and blurred boundaries between urban and education policy-making and advances understanding of the role of education and schools in neighborhoods, cities, and regions.

1.2 Case Site and Research Focus

Using Philadelphia as a case site, my dissertation interrogates the intersection of public school closures with other planning and investments in urban revitalization to understand to what extent this collection of policies fosters or hinders equality in investment, public service provision, and opportunity for residents. Philadelphia has experienced 40 years of population decline, yet today faces twin challenges of growth and gentrification in some neighborhoods and poverty and disinvestment in others. The School District of Philadelphia has suffered drastically declining enrollment in district-run schools and increasing reliance on market-based reforms, state takeover, vast budget shortfalls, and the expected impacts thereof to facilities and instruction – persistent achievement gaps,[4] old buildings in poor conditions and lots of extra space. Under these conditions, in 2013, school district decision makers ultimately closed ten percent of its public schools in one year. These closures disproportionately affected lower income and predominantly African-American neighborhoods (Good, Forthcoming).

In this city of neighborhoods, reaction to the closure of these neighborhood centers was emotional, and opposition mounted among parents, advocacy organizations, and neighbors. At one public hearing a parent testified:

> *I want you all to go and look up the word gentrification. This is not about test scores. This is not about your schools closing. This is about buildings being sold to developers for condominiums in your neighborhoods…This is about pushing you out of your neighborhoods.*

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interests (in part) lie with the spatial dimensions of closure, I am limiting my definition of closures to school buildings that have ceased to be operational for at least the immediate school year following the closure.

[4] "Achievement gap" refers to the disparity in academic performance, usually measured on standardized reading and math tests across students of different demographics. In the United States African American and Latino students do significantly worse on these performance indicators than their White and Asian counterparts.

In her impassioned three-minute public testimony, this mother countered the district's claims that closures are about improving academics or district fiscal health. Rather, she argued, they are about neighborhood change and the school district acting as an agent of gentrification who helps catalyze displacement of low-income communities of color across the city.

Her provocative statements motivate this study: Could a school district – whose primary mission is the education of students – intentionally act as an agent in the domain of urban policy? Is this idea widely held? Even if this is not the district's intent, how can we understand school closures not only as an education reform policy, but also as a kind of urban policy linked to other patterns of investment and disinvestment across a city?

This dissertation research answers these questions by examining Philadelphia's school building closures, sales, and reuse vis-à-vis the policy apparatus that inspires, enables, and/or fosters these uneven patterns. Specifically, I am interested in the discourse of closure that circulates among policy makers, residents, and the broader public. As Ladson-Billings argues, "the way a problem is defined frames the universe of reasonable public actions. Given our limited ability to address every problem that confronts the society, problem formulation takes on added proportions" (2009, xviii). Further, she argues that any one policy issue – such as education – can not be understood in isolation, but rather must be "linked to broader issues like national defense, economic competitiveness, or crime" (2009, xviii). Examining frames of the problem of school closures, sales, and reuse is a first step at grappling with the tensions inherent in the multi-sector, multi-scalar issue of school closures.

I draw on theories of frame analysis to understand the building blocks of how people make sense of the complexities of urban and school change (Goffman 1974; Schon and Rein 1995; Yanow 2000). Frames are implicit stories that convey a particular view of reality. They knit together lived experience, point to selective facts to define problems, and circumscribe the options for action or intervention (Ball 1993; Schon and Rein 1995; Rein and Schon 1993). My analytical approach focuses on policies and public processes around the issue of public school closures. Many actions of local, state, and federal government agencies (today and historically) "discursively constitute, code, and order the meaning of place through policies and practices" in ways that privilege certain actors over others and that determine material conditions on the ground in neighborhoods and cities (Weber 2002, 524). I follow scholars (Gowan 2010) that marry frame analysis with ethnographic methods to understand how the "discursive logics" deployed by officials become embodied in the lived experience of residents and are manifest in material consequences in neighborhoods. I reflect on the racial dynamics of school closures, sales, and reuse, using Racial Formation Theory to understand the simultaneous "structuring and signifying" of this policy choice in Philadelphia as a "racial project," which constitutes a "common sense" way of understanding the world, social and political relations, and racial identities (Omi and Winant 1994, 68).

In the following chapters, I examine the frames of schools and school closures across the country and in Philadelphia to assess the extent to which school closures can be recast as urban policy, and to consider the implications for racial equity and segregation. While I have selected Philadelphia as a case study site, the relevance of my research is much broader. Philadelphia's education reform efforts – including school closure – mirror those of many urban school districts. Likewise, growing spatial inequality in Philadelphia is resonant in other large post-industrial cities struggling with the twin challenges of neighborhood decline and deep poverty in some areas and gentrification in others. By studying the complex intersections between school

closures, urban policy- and decision-making, and resident experience, my analysis will contribute to understanding of the relationship between urban and educational policymaking in a post-industrial American city.

1.3 Current State of School Closures Research

Before unpacking the discourse and experience of closures nationally and in the Philadelphia case, I first contextualize school closures: How common are closures? Are closures a new strategy for districts? If not, what is different today than in the past? Why do districts say they need to close schools? What are the impacts of closures on families, teachers, districts, and cities?

1.3.1   Catalysts for Closures

Closures are not new; school districts are dynamic entities, and have opened and closed schools for decades as ways to manage changing student enrollment and educational priorities. Large numbers of schools were built to accommodate the baby boom after World War II; 25 years later, however, the nation saw precipitous declines in the birthrate for a range of reasons including the advent of contraception and delayed marriage and childbearing (Andrews 1974; Dean 1981). Additionally, urban areas experienced out-migration of residents to suburban areas because of economic restructuring and local, state, and federal housing, transportation, and educational policies (Baum 2010; Highsmith and Erickson 2015; Jackson 1987; Lassiter 2012; Sugrue 2005). These demographic trends and migration patterns converged, resulting in more space in school buildings with fewer children to fill that space. Recessionary cutbacks of the 1970s also meant less district resources to manage and maintain these buildings (Johnson 1978; Lerman 1984; Valencia 1985).

The 1970s were also a time of experimentation with school desegregation strategies. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case, ruling that state-sponsored racially segregated public schools were unconstitutional. In the years following the *Brown* decision, many districts made facilities-related decisions as part of and with considerations for state- and federally-mandated desegregation plans. Districts were mindful of the ways that closing certain schools would exacerbate or spur segregation in particular schools. For some districts, school closures presented an opportunity to integrate schools by moving children (usually Black) to a school with predominantly White students or by repurposing closed school buildings as an integrated school site (Dean 1981). However, these and other desegregation decisions could also lead to further enrollment declines, hastening white flight from urban centers to still-segregated suburban areas (Baum 2010).

The decline of urban centers persists through today. As in the past, the economic, social, and political factors are complex, and the outcome is declining public school enrollment, the under-utilization of buildings, and decreased public education funds. This story of decline is important, and reveals how school closures may actually represent a late-stage repercussion of shrinking cities (Oswalt 2005; Pallagst et al. 2009; Haase et al. 2014). But this aggregate picture of decline masks complex intra-city dynamics. Many of these places are experiencing trajectories of decline and deep poverty in some areas of the city coupled with pockets of revitalization and gentrification in others.

In contrast to mid-twentieth century "white flight" to suburbs, even while experiencing net population loss, many cities today are also seeing an "inversion" of flight *into* cities, fueled by middle and upper income, often White empty-nesters and millennials (Ehrenhalt 2012). The growing population of middle-class families (Billingham and Kimelberg 2013; Cucchiara 2013; Posey-Maddox 2014) and the arrival of "DINKYs" (Double Income No Kids *Yet*) has renewed city leaders' interest in educational infrastructure as they hope to not only attract, but also retain these residents through life cycle changes that have historically meant flight to the suburbs.

Some initial studies suggest that policies supporting these populations are at the expense of incumbent, lower-income residents of color. Limited scholarship has empirically and theoretically grappled with the relationships between these simultaneous yet opposite trajectories in cities and urban public schools (Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, and Cucchiara 2014). In Chicago, neighborhoods "that were home to low-income communities of color are the focus of public–private partnerships, gentrification complexes, privatization, and de-democratization through mayoral takeovers of public institutions and corporate-led governance bodies" (Lipman 2008, 121). In Philadelphia, a business improvement district (BID)[5] partnered with the school district to improve select public schools in the BID's catchment as a way to further downtown revitalization, raising questions about the equitable distribution of limited educational resources (Cucchiara 2013).

In addition to these urban demographic and policy shifts, the current educational policy context contributes to declining public school enrollments. Just as managing students and facilities is not new to districts, nor are debates about how to improve school quality and student outcomes; they date from as far back as the advent of public education in the Progressive Era (Katz 1987; Tyack and Cuban 1995). However, today's education debate takes place in a different political and economic context than the past.

First, schools are more segregated today than they were in the years immediately following the *Brown* decision. With persistent metropolitan segregation and fragmented school districts, urban schools have seen a growing concentration of low-income students of color with needs far beyond basic education (Ayscue and Orfield 2016). Racially segregated, high-poverty schools are generally under-resourced, have higher suspension rates, employ less experienced teachers, and have higher teacher turnover (Carter, Welner, and Ladson-Billings 2013; Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley 2012; Orfield and Lee 2005; "K-12 Education: Better Use of Information Could Help Agencies Identify Disparities and Address Racial Discrimination" 2016). Students attending these schools are more likely to drop out and have lower academic performance, compounding the effects of living in a poor neighborhood (Berends and Penaloza 2010; Goldsmith 2009; Logan, Minca, and Adar 2012; Lucas and Berends 2002; Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley 2012; Owens 2010).

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[5] BIDs are "private organizations, usually sponsored by local businesses, authorized by state legislation and local municipalities to levy taxes on properties within a specific geographic area in exchange for additional services to that area…they play a key role in shaping urban policy, influencing municipal decision around tax, zoning, transit, and development issues" (Cucchiara 2013, 29). BIDs rose in popularity across the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, and placed public responsibilities security and street cleaning into private hands. BIDs are one manifestation of market logics in urban policy that assume that smaller, local, and market-based private entities can more efficiently and effectively provide public services than the government. Critiques of BIDs, as with many other privatization efforts focus on the loss of equity and accountability, as BIDs are structured to respond to their members – paying businesses – and are not subject to the accountability measures of government agencies.

Education policy has tried in different ways to address these challenges. Today's education policy responds to and fosters heightened skepticism of government intervention, increased reliance on market-logics for the provision of public services, and intensified political polarization. Camps emerge with different theories and mechanisms of change. Some focus on the role of teachers and teacher preparation ("professionalism model"), others look to the power of parental choice and results-based accountability ("market model"), and still others are most interested in organizing parents and community members to generate solutions to challenges in education ("grassroots democracy model") (Henig and Stone 2008). While these models circulate simultaneously, across federal policy circles, in many large cities, and among influential philanthropic actors, the market model seems to be winning out and setting the terms of the debate (Reckhow 2013).[6]

The market model sees school district bureaucracies as ossified and an impediment to educational improvement. As an alternative, this model promotes a decentralized model of governance informed by market logics. Teacher and school site autonomy frees educators from cumbersome, centralized regulations, allowing them to implement innovative curriculum. A longer school day enhances learning. Results-based accountability systems allow school site leaders to hire and fire teachers at will. Schools are either "winners" or "losers," where losers face staffing changes, decreased funding, or closure and winners are rewarded with more resources for expansion or replication.[7] School administrators thrive as entrepreneurs. Parents are customers who make use of their "exit" power – "voting with their feet" – to demand changes to educational offerings (Hirschman 1970). They are positioned as rational-choice actors, maximizing personal preferences in the "marketplace" of public education. (Henig and Stone 2008; Reckhow 2013) In its reliance on individual choice and quantifiable metrics, the market model obfuscates the race-based inequities in public education provision (Good 2016; Gulson 2011).

Charter schools become one avenue for parents to express their choice and ostensibly create competition among school sites to improve their offerings. Charter schools are publicly funded but privately operated (by either non-profit or for-profit entities) schools.[8] State legislation determines the specific structure of charter school governance and financing, and so there is quite a bit of variation by state. Overall, these schools must be open to all students and meet certain standards for student performance, but are otherwise freed up from certain district policies and procedures; they develop curriculum, hire/fire teachers, and manage their facilities independently of the public school district.

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[6] This market model is part of what some call a neoliberal approach to urban governance. This governance assumes a "generalized set of government failures" that serve as "the central justification for the roll back of [government] intervention[s]" such as public housing, education, and other social welfare programs (Hackworth 2007, 10). The gap left by this roll back requires the subsequent "roll out" of market-based interventions in their stead (Peck and Tickell 2002). Neoliberalism is thus a "hypermarketized style of governance (ie government *through and by* the market) that denigrates collective consumption and institutions" that purports that markets are "superior allocative mechanisms for the distribution of public resources" (Weber 2002, 520).

[7] At the 2014 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Mark Gleason a major player in Philadelphia's education reform movement commented, "So that's what portfolio is fundamentally. … you keep dumping the losers, and over time you create a higher bar for what we expect of our schools" (Strauss 2014).

[8] While today charter schools are associated with market-based approaches and a disaggregation of a school site from its local neighborhood, this was not always true. Historically, some charter schools included a very place-based connection from the local community control movement. (J. T. Scott 2012; Stulberg 2016b)

When parents leave public schools for charter schools, they directly contribute to declining enrollment in and underutilization of public school buildings. Charter schools also may deepen patterns of school segregation (Frankenberg and Lee 2003; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, and Wang 2011; Garcia 2008; Rapp and Eckes 2007). Finally, charter school enrollment directly and negatively impacts school district funding. When families choose to send their children to charter schools, those students' their per-capita funding move with them, exacerbating the fiscal challenges districts face.[9] Tight finances put local governments and school districts into a scarcity mentality that presents further cuts and "austerity measures" as inevitable (Hinkley 2015). Declining enrollments and funding for public schools has led to fewer dollars for building maintenance and rehabilitation. With buildings underutilized and in poor (often dangerous) condition, district decision makers argue that closures are the obvious and inevitable intervention.

Closures thus represent both an instrument and a consequence of the market model of educational policy promoted at all levels of government.[10] Districts use closures as a way to weed out "loser" schools. But the conditions of these "loser" schools have at least in part been catalyzed by preceding reforms; two decades of charter school enrollment and systematic disinvestment have resulted in declining public school enrollments, funding cutbacks, and increased concentrations of students with the highest needs in traditional public schools have resulted to poor achievement results. The market model has received significant criticism because of the way these policies commoditize education, making a market out of an inherently unquantifiable relationally based enterprise. My research on not only school closures, but also the sales and reuse of school buildings, puts this idea of commoditization in sharp relief. My study documents and analyzes the ways that these processes literally create real estate assets out of educational spaces and position school districts as real estate brokers and developers.

1.3.2 School District Decision-making and Public Process

In past and current waves of closure, districts use a combination of metrics in deciding which schools to close. Districts may more strongly emphasize certain criteria over others, depending on their specific needs and context. For example, one review of 60 districts conducted in 1974 found that a majority of districts considered enrollment and building age, and the impacts on desegregation efforts (Andrews 1974, 15). Only two considered educational impacts, and a

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[9] As of 2014, a majority of states are providing less per-student funding today than they did in 2007 before the recession. Meanwhile, federal funds to local schools have been cut, notably Title I funds, which support districts with large numbers of low-income students (Leachman and Mai 2014).

[10] The introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act in 2001 represented a reassertion of federal involvement in local level decision-making. NCLB is name of the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Congress originally passed ESEA as part of the War on Poverty programs in 1965 with the explicit goal to close the gaps in educational achievement between low-income students and their middle- and upper-income counterparts. The Act authorizes federal education spending and stipulates particular requirements for states and local school districts. Congress reauthorizes ESEA every five years, with adjustments made to the scope and specifics of funding allocations and requirements. NCLB also incentivized particular kinds of local level decision-making as strategies to "turn around" low-performing schools. In 2009, the federal government provided funding to "fully and effectively implement" one of four "intervention models," including "restarts" or conversion to a charter school and "school closures" in which a school is shut down and students are enrolled in "other, higher-performing schools in the district" (Kutash et al. 2010, 21). These federal fiscal incentives become key drivers and these turnaround strategies seem to be the only inevitable alternative for decision makers in the face of severe fiscal constraints and the other herculean challenges of urban public education.

minority of districts considered neighborhood impacts such as property values (Andrews 1974, 15). A few years later, the state of Illinois developed a computer simulation to assist in closing decisions. This effort looked not only at building conditions and utilization and also sought to make the decisions that would minimize impacts on students, district resources, and neighborhoods (Dean 1981). Notably, academic performance was not a prevalent concern.

Unlike the criteria in the 1970s and 1980s, today's closure decisions are largely focused on the causes of closure – building condition, enrollment and utilization, and academic performance. Anticipating or modeling impacts, and making decisions to mitigate negative outcomes is less important or absent. More important are how to "right-size" the school district, which requires an estimation of the appropriate number of school buildings for projected student population and a calculation of current budget constraints and potential savings. (Deeds and Pattillo 2014; Dowdall 2011; Irwin and Seasons 2012)

The reliance on quantifiable metrics is a familiar strategy in government as a way to bring "technical expertise" and "rational" decision-making to a values-driven and emotionally laden process. However, determining criteria and priorities among criteria is also subjective (Bondi 1989; Dean 1981; Deeds and Pattillo 2014). Closure decision-making processes are highly political, contentious, and reflective of local power dynamics.

Studies of recent school closure processes contextualize district decision-making in today's landscape of marketized education reform and other "neoliberal" policy approaches characteristic of urban governance today (Basu 2004; Basu 2007; Witten et al. 2003). They find deep frustration from students and parents towards school districts that bypass authentic participation and democratic decision-making (Kirshner and Pozzo 2011; Pappas 2012; Witten et al. 2003). Kirshner and Pozzo (2011) find that processes are fraught with contentious narratives and measures of the criteria for school closure. Similarly, identifying schools for closing is highly interpretative, racialized, and intrinsically tension-fraught process (Deeds and Pattillo 2014; Good 2016; Valencia 1984).

1.3.3   School Closure Impacts

Despite the promotion and increasing prevalence of closures as an education reform strategy, empirical studies on its efficacy are decidedly mixed. Studies have largely focused on district fiscal impacts and the effects on students' academic outcomes and psychosocial well-being. Much of this empirical work finds that closures inflict harm to the vulnerable students and families they are ostensibly trying to help.

Districts often argue that closures will contribute to district fiscal health. They argue that by closing dilapidated schools, districts will save money in ongoing operations and maintenance. These claims (or hopes) for financial gains appear to be overstated, however. An early study found that projected cost savings were overstated (Andrews 1974). More recently, one of the few studies looking at the district fiscal impact found that average annual savings after closures were under $1 million per building (Dowdall 2011). Personnel are generally accepted as the largest proportion of district budgets, but layoffs do not often accompany closures because teachers are reassigned to other still-open schools. Further, some districts do not account for increased transportation costs for students traveling to reassigned, often further afield, schools (Research for Action 2013). Districts also hope for a one-time cash infusion by selling vacant school buildings, but sale prices for school buildings have been well below district projections. Most

buildings are sold, leased, or reused by charter schools. Other reuses include housing, community uses, and, in some cities, movie theaters and recording studios. Many buildings do not attract buyers; buildings that sit longer become dangerous, deteriorate, and are subject to vandalism, leaving districts on the hook to pay for ongoing security and maintenance (Dowdall 2013).

Studies have found that school closures disproportionately impact low-income students and students of color (Research for Action 2013; Valencia 1984). These studies have assessed a range of student academic and psychosocial outcomes, and the impact on schools receiving reassigned students. In general, forced mobility from one school to another can be detrimental to student learning and classroom dynamics (Rumberger 2003; Rumberger et al. 1999; Osher, Morrison, and Bailey 2003; Hartman 2003; Hinz, Kapp, and Snapp 2003). Longitudinal data on students experiencing closures is not readily available, and most studies have found that in the short-term closures result in negative impacts on student test scores, sense of belonging, stress levels, and attendance (Kirshner and Pozzo 2011; Lipman and Person 2007; Lipman and Person 2007; Research for Action 2013; Sunderman and Payne 2009; de la Torre and Gwynne 2009; Valencia 1985). The negative impacts on academic performance of moving schools because of closures may diminish after the first year of a new placement (Engberg et al. 2012). Students who are reassigned to higher quality schools may have positive outcomes associated with their closure and reassignment (Carlson and Lavertu 2015; de la Torre et al. 2015). However, reassignment to a higher quality school is far from guaranteed (de la Torre and Gwynne 2009). Finally, a recent study has documented the ways in which school closures and subsequent student reassignments have led to increased racial segregation in schools (Siegel-Hawley, Bridges, and Shields 2016).

1.3.4   Gaps in Understanding

Research to date has shown that the touted benefits of school closure – including increased revenue and better student outcomes – are far from guaranteed. Yet few studies have examined how school closures are linked to other patterns of urban development, especially those aimed at mitigating inequality. Gaps persist in understanding the relationship between closed schools, neighborhoods, broader metropolitan change, or spatial manifestations of current governance practices in cities and school districts.

By defining the community of study institutionally, researchers have focused on impacts on parents, students, and teachers at closed or receiving schools, neglecting the spatial implications of shifting circuits of education through school closures. While education scholars have shown that school closures represent only the latest in a long line of market-based reforms, they fail to connect these reforms with the political economy of the urban markets in which public schools operate.[11] The lack of attention to geographically defined physical and social relationships of schools and their places in the school closure literature is notable, considering the vast bodies of scholarship that otherwise link schools and education (see e.g., Chapter 4).

My work moves beyond these prior considerations of individual school or district interventions, and seeks to bring an urban policy lens to the existing cannon of education reform

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[11] This is a departure from earlier research on impacts, which assessed neighborhood crime rates, property values, and population shifts before and after closures, with mixed results (Andrews 1974; Dean 1983; Johnson 1978). Others made claims that closures hurt political support for school funding and other education initiatives (Dean 1981).

policy research. Inspired by educational researchers who emphasize the need to understand the broader contextual factors (e.g., poverty and segregation) that influence educational systems (Anyon 1997; Lipman 2011; Noguera 2003) and drawing on interdisciplinary work on the "geography of opportunity" (Briggs 2005; Squires and Kubrin 2005), I examine how school closures are embedded within larger contexts of decision-making about neighborhood investments.

To understand the impacts of school closures, we need to situate this education reform within the history of place-based anti-poverty policies that have sought to improve poor neighborhoods (Halpern 1995; Katz 2013). In fact, school closures may represent the latest act in a protracted effort of urban demolition – dating from slum clearance at the turn of the 20th century through blight removal and Urban Renewal in the 1950s – in which officials advanced the demolition of neighborhoods of color in the interest of revitalization. Like Urban Renewal, closures may very well result in dubious impacts on existing residents. These efforts today may not have explicitly racist motivations; the consequences, however, are undeniably born by marginalized communities of color.

1.4 Research Questions and Dissertation Roadmap

This dissertation research aims to understand school closures vis-à-vis patterns of uneven development and the policy apparatus that inspire, enable, and/or foster these shifts. Before elaborating on my approach, I want to take a bit of space to clarify what this dissertation *is not*. First, this is not a study or an evaluation of the closure decision-making process in Philadelphia. As I will describe in Chapter 2, I entered the field one year after schools had been closed, nearly 18-24 months after the decision making process "wrapped." Many scholars have examined and continue to investigate protests of and opposition to school closures and the links to race, political identity, and citizenship. Rather, I am interested in broader discourse and connections to urban policy making and planning. I am also interested in the physical persistence of school buildings in neighborhoods – under the case of vacancy and/or reuse and what this persistence can tell us or how it affects neighborhood identity and dynamics. Thus, I am also looking at the sales and reuse process following the decision-making process.

Second, this is not a study or evaluation of impacts on students, parents, teachers, or neighborhoods. Excellent research and evaluation has delved into these impacts in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, and elsewhere. This work will continue as more longitudinal data become available to understand the longer-term impacts on students, schools, and neighborhoods. Because of my methodological and time limitations, my research captures the experience of closures, sales, and reuse, and the extent to which that experience is articulated as one tied to larger neighborhood or citywide development and planning issues. In this way, I am not interested in closure, sales, or reuse as isolated moments but rather as a part of a larger set of the dynamic processes of urban change.

Finally, this study is not an assessment or re-mapping of opportunity structures across the metropolitan area. Certainly future analysis of school openings and closings coupled with other data on housing, transportation, and jobs could create such a map. This current study focuses on the broader implications of the geographies of opportunity, and starts from the premise that we need to understand ethnographically people's perception of neighborhood and school change in order to set the stage for other kinds of analysis like opportunity mapping.

In this study, I am interested specifically in the discourse of closure that circulates among policy makers, residents, and the broader public. I draw on theories and methods of frame and interpretative policy analysis to examine the framing of school closures, sales, and reuse. Following Fischer and Forester, I see policy making as "a constant discursive struggle over the criteria of social classification, the boundaries of problem categories, the inter-subjective interpretation of common experiences" (1993, 1). Framing provides a way of "selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading, and acting" (Rein and Schon 1993, 146). How professionals and lay people frame school closures vis-à-vis broader plans and policies in the city "socially constructs the situation, defines what is problematic about it, and suggests what course of action are appropriate to it" (Rein and Schon 1993, 153). The coherence created through particular frames is "intimately involved with relations of power and the exercise of power, including the concerns of some and excluding others, distributing responsibility as well as causality, imputing praise and blame as well as efficacy, and employing particular political strategies of problem framing and not others" (Fischer and Forester 1993, 7).

This study is thus a first step at grappling with the tensions inherent in the multi-sector, multi-scalar issues of school closures, sales, and reuse. It considers the racialized nature of these processes by responding to Omi and Winant's call to identify and analyze "racial projects" along four dimensions: in politics; "at the macro-level of racial policy-making, state activity, and collective action;" " at the micro-level of everyday experience;" and historically over time (Omi and Winant 1994, 58). I use a case study method that considers neighborhoods and schools as only one of many embedded scales of social processes, and deploy ethnographic methods to document the micro-level of everyday practices and interactions. I also situate the Philadelphia case in a larger national context by specifically examining another major signifier – newspaper media coverage – to consider the ways in which school closures, sales, and reuse is constructed as a racial project.

Chapter 2 provides a description of my methods and sets the Philadelphia context. First, I share details of my case study method, describing my geospatial analysis, interviews, and participant observation. Then, I provide background on the school district, looking at student demographics and enrollment, building conditions and utilization, and governance and financing. Next, I describe the school district closure and sales policies and processes. Finally, I detail some of the city planning efforts that are happening simultaneous to the school district closing schools. The City Planning Commission has been conducting area-planning processes across the city as part of its Philadelphia 2035 general plan update process. I use two of these planning districts – Lower North and South – as an entry into my fieldwork. I am particularly interested in the ways that planners and others reconciled vision for growth and development (as seen in the Philadelphia 2035 district plans) with the systematic and racialized disinvestment in education, epitomized by the 2013 school closure decisions.

I then move onto three substantive chapters in which I ask three interrelated questions that span meta-level framing, policy development and implementation, and lived experience, detailed below.

1.4.1   News Media's Democratic Functions in Public Education

Public debate about the benefits and costs of school closures has not been limited to the halls of school buildings or agendas of school board meetings. The controversial nature of closures has

inspired extensive coverage in local and national news media. Examining this media coverage can reveal the multiple and sometimes competing discourses of education reform that circulate the public realm. This discourse affects public perceptions and policy-making, influencing how the public and policy makers define problems, identify causes, pass judgments, and propose solutions for public policy issues (Entman 1993; Jacobs 2006; Schon and Rein 1995; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Vliegenthart 2012; Watts, Frick, and Maddison 2012; Wettstein 2014). Additionally, analysis of media coverage can reveal how political battles play out as well as the power dynamics underlying controversial policies (Castells 2009). Media framing has had particular salience in the education policy arena, but no studies have looked at media framing of school closures across multiple cities or over time.

Chapter 3 situates the in-depth Philadelphia case in a national context by asking: How do newspaper media frame public school closures? I examine national and local newspaper coverage of public school closures in thirteen cities between 2005 and 2013. I find that news media coverage fosters a conflictual and dichotomous framing of closures, reducing complicated and plural meanings of schools to two competing and singular arguments: Proponents deploy rationality, data, and technical expertise to mange an inevitable and dire crisis. Opponents express their concerns through emotionally laden messaging. Media are predominantly sympathetic to the problem definition and causal interpretations of school closure proponents. This analysis reveals how newspaper media do not maximize their role as a democratic institution, and affirms the findings of previous studies on media coverage of educational reform policy issues, especially the general tone of inevitability of closures and neglect of issues surrounding the disproportionate and racialized impact of closures.

1.4.2   The Nexus of City Planning and Public Schools

With a sense of the national conversation, in Chapter 4 I move to my in-depth case site, Philadelphia, to tackle the spatial implications of closures. I use Philadelphia's school closures as a revelatory case to shed light on the multifaceted values that schools have to neighborhoods, planning, and urban governance. Based on prior research on the city-school nexus, I develop a conceptual framework to capture schools' economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic values.

First, schools are valued economically. Schools improve individual earnings and social mobility through human capital investments. They also contribute to housing market dynamics and support neighborhood, city, and regional economic growth through workforce and economic development. School quality is tied to a city's tax base, and can play a role in neighborhood economic development as well. Second, schools' serve important socio-spatial purposes to neighborhoods and cities. As large pieces of physical infrastructure in neighborhoods, schools punctuate the urban fabric. They offer spaces for social interaction, community building, and political mobilization, and are a hub for social service delivery. Finally, schools' hold symbolic value, fostering collective identity and a sense of belonging.

But what happens when schools close? Does closure change a schools' perceived or actual value? This chapter addresses the question: How are schools valued in Philadelphia, and how do closures change perceived or actual value among policymakers and residents? It advances scholarship on school closure by looking at the implications of school closures for neighborhood residents, the city, and planning practice. Further, it contributes to research on the city-school nexus by situating school closures within the larger context of urban and neighborhood change and by considering schools as redevelopment sites.

1.4.3   The Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of School Closures, Sales, and Reuse

Chapter 5 uses the previous analysis of values to uncover the specific frames of school closures in Philadelphia. Specifically, it addresses the question: To what extent do residents and decision-makers in Philadelphia understand and experience school closure in relationship to broader urban shifts such as disinvestment and gentrification?

Using frame analysis, I find three "stories" of school closures: *closure as crisis management*, *closure as loss,* and *closure as oppression*. Each one places schools in a different spatial context–from a-spatial (*crisis management*) to the school site and/or neighborhood scale (*loss*) to broader citywide patterns of re/development (*oppression*). This variation is tied to different notions of time, which foreground the past, present, and future in divergent ways. Respondents articulated a braided nature between these temporalities and the spatiality with which they situated school closures. I argue that these divergent spatial and temporal perspectives contribute to tensions in the school closure decision-making, sales, and reuse processes, and offer a potential point of intervention for planners who seek to bridge the work of community development citywide planning with public education policy.

The centrality of schools as educational, social, political, and physical infrastructure in neighborhoods creates an imperative for planning scholars and practitioners to consider the consequence of this significant moment of physical and functional transformation. This dissertation bridges current research on school closures that defines the community institutionally (by school site) with the larger geographic scales of neighborhood and city.

Chapter 2. Methods[12] and Context

2.1 Case Study Approach

I use a qualitative research approach to "describe a system of relationships, to show how things hang together in a web of mutual influence or support or interdependence" (H. S. Becker 1996, 56)(Becker 1996, 56). My focus on the process and impacts of school closure lends itself to a case study research design. Case study methods are used to describe a the nature of phenomena, gain an in-depth understanding of a social process in its context, and reveal the meaning of this process for those involved (Yin 2009). A case study approach also allows me to capture a rich and holistic account of these processes not only at the present moment, but also as they are embedded in their historical, cultural, and socio-spatial context. I am interested in uncovering "the *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives" and the ways they connect "these meanings to the social world around them" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014, 11).

Unique conditions have converged in Philadelphia, making it a "revelatory case," that offers the opportunity "to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science inquiry" (Yin 2009, 48). First, Philadelphia has aggressively pursued school closures as part of its education reform agenda. In 2013, the School District closed nearly ten percent of its traditional public schools, raising important questions about education policy, neighborhoods, and structures of opportunity, especially in low-income, African American and Latino neighborhoods. In this oft-described "city of neighborhoods," neighborhood schools represent a great paradox. On the one hand, many parents choose to send their children out of the neighborhood or to charter schools for better educational opportunities, contributing to under-enrollment and underfunding of their neighborhood school. On the other hand, when these same schools are threatened with closure (by school district leaders citing data on under-enrollment and underfunding), neighborhood residents, parents, and city officials have come out in force, arguing that neighborhood schools serve as vital community anchors and are "a necessary foundation for efforts under way to revitalize" neighborhoods (Herold 2013). Students, parents, and neighbors have "grieved" for their closed schools, in one neighborhood going so far as to hold a memorial service in which students created "a shrine made out of flowers, photographs and stuffed animals, while writing messages for the school in chalk on the ground" (Klein 2013).

Second, the District's governance structure closely ties city funding and decision making to that of the school district. As a result, the city's efforts to develop its citywide comprehensive plan and 18 district plans will fundamentally shape and be shaped by these school reform efforts, blurring the lines between the domains of "city planning" and "education policy." This confluence of city and school policies allows me to explore the ways in which school closures are embedded in a larger urban context.

Third, in addition to these local efforts, the federal government is investing in neighborhood revitalization across Philadelphia. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded the city a Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) implementation grant for housing and neighborhood development in north Philadelphia. CNI emphasizes comprehensive neighborhood revitalization through coordinated investments in housing, jobs,

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[12] Here I describe my methods for my Philadelphia case study. Chapter 3 includes a detailed description of the sampling and analytical methods for the newspaper analysis.

and public education. However, this same area of the city is experiencing the highest density of public school closures with at least eight closed schools proximal to the CNI development area. These contradictory efforts – simultaneous investment and disinvestment – raise important questions about the goals, efficacy, and consequences of place-based government interventions, particularly given the role of schools as anchor institutions and sites of social and political capital building.

The relevance of my research is much broader than just Philadelphia. Many places are experiencing similar declines in state funding for public education and the rise of education reform policies locally and federally that promote the use of market logics in public service provision. School closures often happen in cities where some neighborhoods continue to suffer from disinvestment and decline and empty out while others experience gentrification. Like other cities, in Philadelphia, these contradictory demographic and economic shifts foster an uneven landscape of investment, public service provision, and opportunity for residents that yield intra-city inequities by race and class, including the differential and inequitable access to high-quality public schools. By studying the complex intersections between school closures, urban policy- and decision-making, and resident experience, my analysis will contribute to understanding of the relationship between urban and educational policymaking in a post-industrial American city.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

My data collection extends from March 2014 through August 2015, with four months of on-site fieldwork in Philadelphia. My data collection included: geospatial analysis of city and school district data, formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and participatory visual mapping.

I used geographic information systems to conduct geospatial analysis of school closures and neighborhood change. I U.S. Census data from the Longitudinal Tract Data Base at Brown University ("US2010: Longitudinal Tract Data Base" 2016). I also included city and school district data available from Philadelphia's open data portal ("OpenDataPhilly" 2016) and data from The Reinvestment Fund and the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank on neighborhood market and gentrification conditions.

To construct an inventory of closed school buildings, I triangulated data from the School District of Philadelphia, School Reform Commission meeting minutes, and newspaper coverage of closures. Through a Right to Know Request to the School District of Philadelphia, I received a list of surplus school property and school buildings that had sold since 2005. I reconciled this with the list of schools closed available as official record of School Reform Commission meetings between December 2012 and March 2013. Through this process, I identified 47 closed school buildings since 2005.[13] Eighteen of these have been sold and/or leased, 13 are empty with a sale pending, and 15 are empty with no sale pending. I mapped these 47 closed school

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[13] The number of schools closed in Philadelphia I cite in this study may vary from news coverage or other research. In its proposals, SDP considered a closure of a program *or* a building. My numbers reflect the number of school buildings that were closed. Thus, a school program that was shut down, but reconstituted in the same building would not appear in my list. For example, George Washington Elementary School was closed according to the district. Abigail Vare Elementary School was not closed by district definition. However, the Vare program with all its students, teachers, and staff was moved to the Washington building, and the Vare building was shuttered. For my purposes, Vare was closed because the school building was shuttered. Washington does not appear on my list because the building never sat vacant and always had a public school in operation.

buildings. As a way to understand city efforts at revitalization and reinvestment, I then layered the City Planning Commission's Planning Area Districts on the map (see section 1.4.2 for more details on Philadelphia's planning context).

I identified the two planning areas – Lower North and South – with the highest density of closed school buildings – Lower North and South. I conducted more in-depth analysis using the census data on each of these planning areas, and on the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the closed school buildings. I also focused my interview recruitment in these areas. I conducted 118[14] formal and informal interviews with respondents through a combination of purposive and probability sampling.

I contacted the leadership at key community organizations by telephone and/or email. To find relevant community organizations, I used the City's list of Registered Community Organizations (RCOs). RCOs are community-based non-profits, neighborhood associations, or political groups that have applied for and received official designation by the City Planning Commission. RCOs receive early notification about any proposed zoning changes or new development proposals in their jurisdiction. For certain projects, developers are required to meet with RCOs to present plans. RCOs can submit recommendations and/or approvals to the Zoning Board of Adjustments, City Council, and the City Planning Commission about these particular projects. ("City of Philadelphia: Registered Community Organizations (RCO)" 2016) I used publicly available contact information and activated dormant social ties for introductions to staff at relevant city and school district departments, quasi-public agencies, think tanks, citywide non-profits, and foundations.[15] I contacted buyers of closed school buildings by telephone and/or email.

In South Philadelphia, I left flyers for all households (n = approximately 400) in a one-block radius of each of four closed school buildings. I also activated dormant social ties with neighborhood non-profit leaders and block captains. I used snowball sampling to identify additional neighborhood residents, city and school district staff, and non-profit personnel from each of my interviews.

I conducted individual and group semi-structured formal interviews and informal interviews during participant observation in the neighborhood. My interviewees included neighborhood residents (adults, youth, parents, and non-parents), School District and City staff, teachers, citywide and neighborhood non-profit organization staff, and developers (see Figure 1).[16]

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[14] Fifteen of these interviews were with youth as part of a participatory visual mapping (PVM) project described below.

[15] Public agencies and non-profit organizations included: School District of Philadelphia school facilities department; the School Reform Commission; City Council; Mayor's Offices of Housing and Community Development, Education, and Economic Opportunity; the City Planning Commission; the Zoning Board of Adjustment; the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation; the Philadelphia Housing Authority; The Reinvestment Fund; the Philadelphia Research Initiative at the Pew Charitable Trusts; the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia; the William Penn Foundation; the Philadelphia School Partnership; and Public Citizens for Children and Youth.

[16] With the exception one developer, all non-"resident" respondents all lived within Philadelphia; their responses and reflections represented a mix of professional and personal reflection.

Figure 1. Interview Respondents by Type
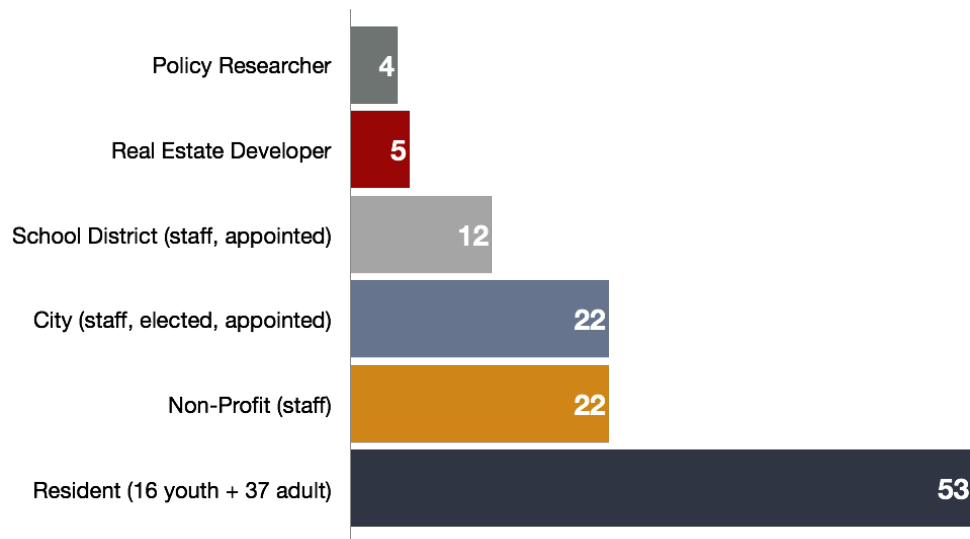
In addition to these interviews, in July 2015, I facilitated a participatory visual mapping (PVM) project with 15 high-school aged youth in South Philadelphia through a community-based summer program.[17] Youth were entering the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades in the Fall of 2015. In the 2014-2015 academic year, they attended a mix of traditional public, charter public, and private Catholic schools, both in the neighborhood and across the city. Youth identify as African American, Latino, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Filipino. Many are recent immigrants to the United States or first generation Americans. They and their families may have documented or undocumented status.

The PVM project met for eight days in July for three hours each day. Participants ate lunch and then engaged in structured mapping and/or photography exercises. Four sessions included yoga practice and guided meditations on themes related to neighborhood and place. Each day was structured by a specific lesson to build skills in cartography, critical thinking, and photography. Photography and photo elicitation interviews followed the PhotoVoice methodology (Wang and Burris 1997). Lessons also drew on community asset mapping exercises. The linking of yoga practice and guided meditation provided ongoing support for youth in issues of anger management and mindfulness. This provided a chance for youth to more successfully tap the affective dynamics of this exploration.

Through iterative mapping, youth geographically locate and identify assets, challenges, and opportunities for intervention in the places they navigate daily. Photography engages participants in visually documenting their communities and identifying key needs through photography. Photo-elicitation interviews and discussion allows for deeper reflection on the visual and spatial materials, and facilitates critical discussion on the youth's concerns and neighborhood issues. This combination of methods "offer a task-oriented practice that engages people in research about their own experiences" (Dennis et al. 2009, 467). The project draws on a number of modes of inquiry including mapping, photography, and photo-elicitation interviews and discussion. These multiple forms of data collection triangulate visual, narrative, and spatial information to holistically capture youth's lived experience in place. Through this PVM project,

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[17] These 15 youth are included in the totals represented in Figure 1.

youth shared their perspectives of their neighborhood, its changes, and the impacts of school closure on their experience in the neighborhood.

Living in the community also gave me the opportunity to participant observation in a number of venues throughout my fieldwork. In the Fall 2014, I lived into the South planning district and the Point Breeze neighborhood; in the Summer 2015, I lived in the South planning district in the East Passyunk neighborhood. In both places, I spent time with the neighbors in the evenings and on weekends, attended neighborhood association meetings, and volunteered at neighborhood and local school cleanup events. I attended neighborhood association and public safety meetings in both North and South Philadelphia neighborhoods. I also attended public meetings and hearings of the School Reform Commission, the Zoning Board of Adjustments, the City Planning Commission, City Council, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority. I attended meetings facilitated by developers who had purchased the closed school buildings and participated in a charrette about the closed schools sponsored by the Community Design Collaborative in November 2014.[18] In the summer 2015, as part of a research consultancy, I attended working group meetings convened by community development corporations around issues of neighborhood revitalization in North Philadelphia.

Throughout my fieldwork, I wrote analytical memos on my interviews and observations. Most formal interviews were audio recorded, although in some cases interviewees asked not to be recorded, the recording device failed, or the rapport with the interviewee was weak, leading me to only take notes. Following informal interviews and participant observation, I wrote up notes within two hours. I transcribed audio-recorded interviews. I coded transcripts and field notes using MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. I developed a set of deductive codes as "descriptive" or "provisional" coding (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014), and iterated on these themes using a combination of deductive coding (based on prior research on school closures) and inductive coding (drawing directly from interviewees responses).

2.2 Setting the Context

Philadelphia's history dates to 1682, when William Penn laid down one of the country's original grid systems. This system provided the framework for the City's over 150 neighborhoods, which today are home to over 1.5 million residents across 143 square miles. Philadelphia rose as a political center and eventually as a major manufacturing center in the late 19th through mid 20th centuries.

In the mid-20th century, with a nationwide decline in manufacturing and trends towards deindustrialization of the country's northeastern and Rust Belt cities, Philadelphia lost considerable amounts of jobs. This era also saw federally subsidized suburban development, resulting in significant population loss. These demographic shifts across the region were highly

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[18] The design charrette was called Reactivating Vacant Schools and hosted by the Community Design Collaborative, a non-profit community design center in Philadelphia. The Community Design Collaborative provides pro bono design and planning services to local community groups. This design charrette was organized around the reactivation of two school sites, the old Frances Willard School and the W. Hall Stanton School. I participated on the team that worked on the Stanton school that is located in the Lower North planning district. The team included volunteer architects, community members, non-profit providers, and community development corporation leaders. A panel of city and school district leaders, developers, and housing finance experts concluded the day with reflections on the school closures, school reuse, and the teams' proposals. A write-up about the day can be found on the Collaborative's blog: http://www.cdesignc.org/blog/2014/11/24/ideas-for-reactivating-vacant-schools.

racialized and class-based. Plans for highway development – both those that came to fruition and those that did not – devalued formerly stable neighborhoods, inspiring further flight particularly of Jewish and other white ethnic residents. These migration patterns left behind an eroded tax base to support lower income predominantly African American communities. At the same time, public housing development concentrated African Americans in particular neighborhoods in North, South, and West Philadelphia.

The 1960s and 1970s saw continued decline, particularly in the aftermath of the urban riots. The 1980s through today fared no better, with many corporate headquarters leaving Philadelphia for less expensive suburban locations. Persistent poverty, segregation, crime, and diminished resources for public education have limited progress, especially for lower income communities and communities of color.

The efforts of city government to stabilize and revitalize itself to compete against the suburbs and other regions took advantage of financing and policy tools available with some success in the 1990s and early 2000s. While the 1990s and 2000s have brought resurgence to Philadelphia, much of the revitalization is reaped by the downtown neighborhoods adjacent to the central business district, Center City. But overall, Philadelphia's story for the past 60 years remains one of shrinkage – population decline, loss of industrial manufacturing and other employment, and deep poverty. Philadelphia is home to over 40,000 vacant parcels of land, and some unknown number of vacant buildings.

Philadelphia's struggle with deindustrialization, white flight, and declining resources to support an increasingly needy population is not a unique story. In cities across the United States, federal policies enabled investment in suburban areas at the expense of inner city areas. Urban Renewal, ostensibly a program to support urban areas, actually served to further disrupt inner city communities and serve the interests of private developers and downtown business district development. Likewise, Philadelphia's pattern of shrinkage mirrors many legacy cities.

2.2.1   The School District of Philadelphia

The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth largest district in the country. I arrived in Philadelphia at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year; communities had been living with closed school buildings from the 2013 tranche of closures for a full year, and the district managed 219 schools, as compared with 245 schools, two years earlier.[19] At that time, just under 200,000 students enrolled in district-run and charter-run schools (see Table 1).

Table 1. School District of Philadelphia Schools and Enrollment 2014-15 (Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education)

	District-Run	Charter-Run
Schools	219	91
Enrollment (preK-12)	134,241	64,449

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[19] I use my year of fieldwork 2014-15 as the baseline for school, student, and other city demographic descriptive statistics, when available.

The student demographics do not mirror the demographics of Philadelphia's total or under 18 population (see Figure 2). There is a much larger multiracial Under 18 population than in the public schools. The public (and charter) schools educate a disproportionate number of African American children, compared with the proportion of these children in the city overall.

Figure 2. School District of Philadelphia Student and City of Philadelphia Racial/Ethnic Demographics 2014-2015 (Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)
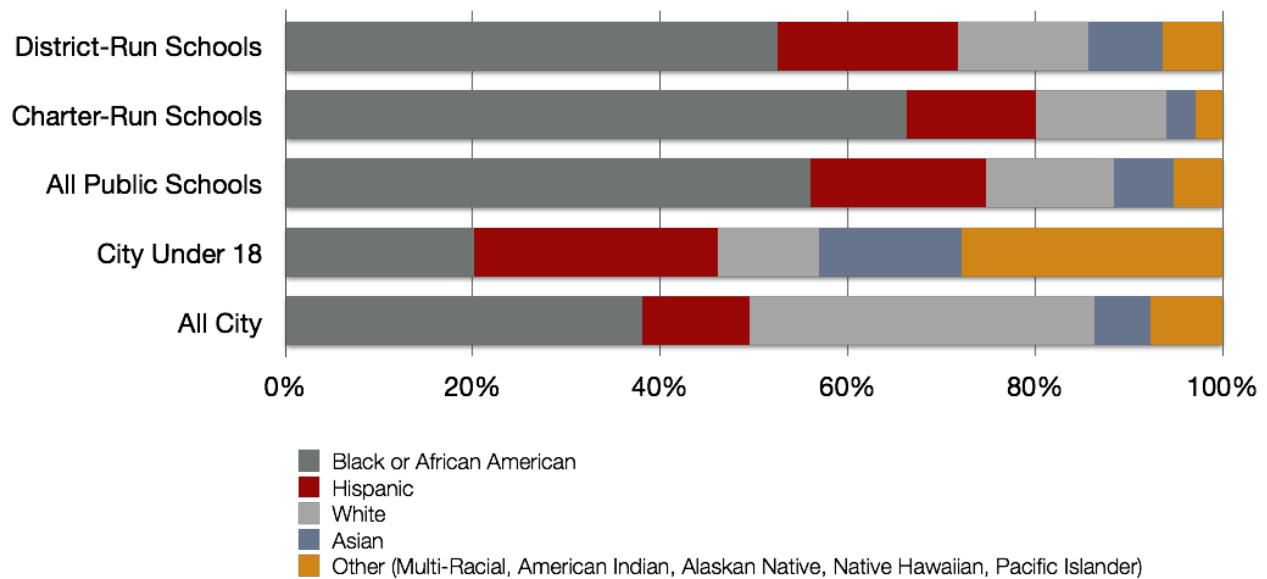
In addition to serving a majority students of color, the School District also serves students that overwhelming come from families living in poverty. The median household income in Philadelphia (in 2014 inflation adjusted dollars) is $37,460.[20] According to the Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, nearly 13 percent of the population lives in "deep poverty, earning less than half the federal poverty level" and one in every 2.5 children live in poverty (City of Philadelphia 2013, 11). In 2014, when the school district moved to its universal feeding program,[21] approximately 80 percent of Philadelphia's students qualified for free or reduced priced lunch (School District of Philadelphia 2014).

Studies have shown that children living in poverty perform less well on academic achievement tests (Reardon 2011). Philadelphia's students are no exception. In the 2014-15 school year, only 17 percent of students were proficient or advanced in Math, 32 percent proficient or advanced in English Language Arts.[22] Economically disadvantaged students scored

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[20] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

[21] Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) is the imperfect, but generally agreed-upon metric to measure poverty levels in schools. Previously, to determine eligibility for FRPL, families were required to fill out applications reporting their income and public benefits. Those that fell below income thresholds qualified. In recent years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which manages FRPL, has initiated a number of programs that allow districts to limit paperwork and provide universal feeding programs. This reduces the stigma of FRPL and ensures that all students are fed breakfast and/or lunch as a part of school readiness and preparation.

[22] Students are tested in grades 3 through 8 and 11. Results are actual results as reported by the School District of Philadelphia to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the 2014-15 school year. http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/d/district-performance/repository-of-data/sy2014-15-pssa-key

lower on both tests, as compared to their non-economically disadvantaged counterparts (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. School District of Philadelphia Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment 2014-2015 by Socioeconomic Status (Source: School District of Philadelphia)
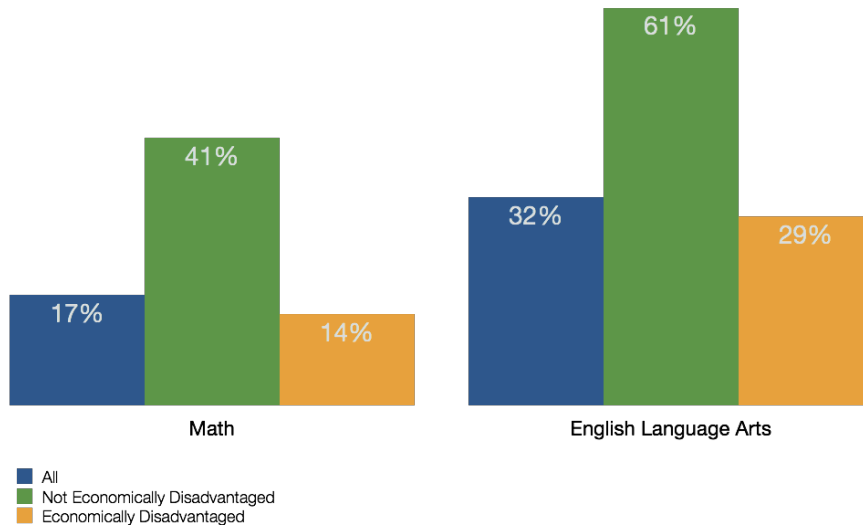
Philadelphia also struggles with a racial achievement gap, where African American and Latino students score lower than their White and Asian counterparts (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. School District of Philadelphia Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment 2014-2015 by Race/Ethnicity (Source: School District of Philadelphia)
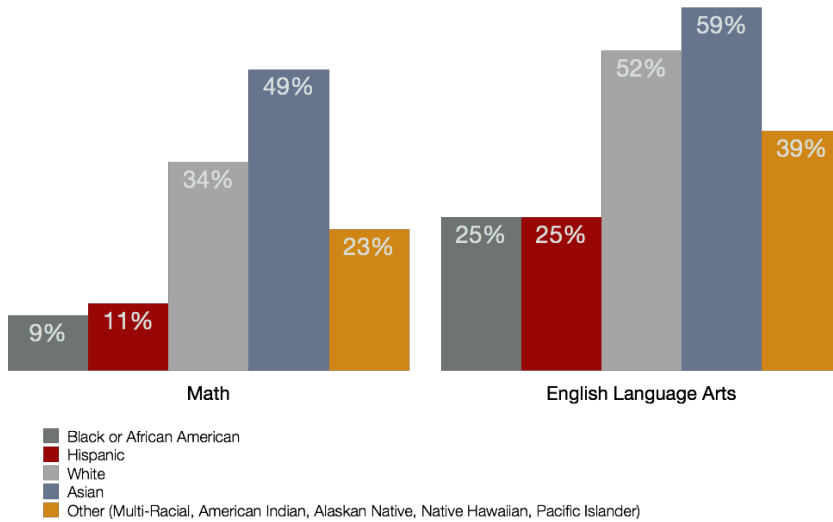
Compounding academic performance challenges, the School District has experienced declining enrollment over the past decade. Declining enrollment is a function of both increased declines in the city's population, including its school-aged population; between 1970 and 2010, the City lost approximately a quarter of its residents, and nearly half its school-aged population (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. City of Philadelphia Population Change 1970-2010 (Source: U.S. Census)
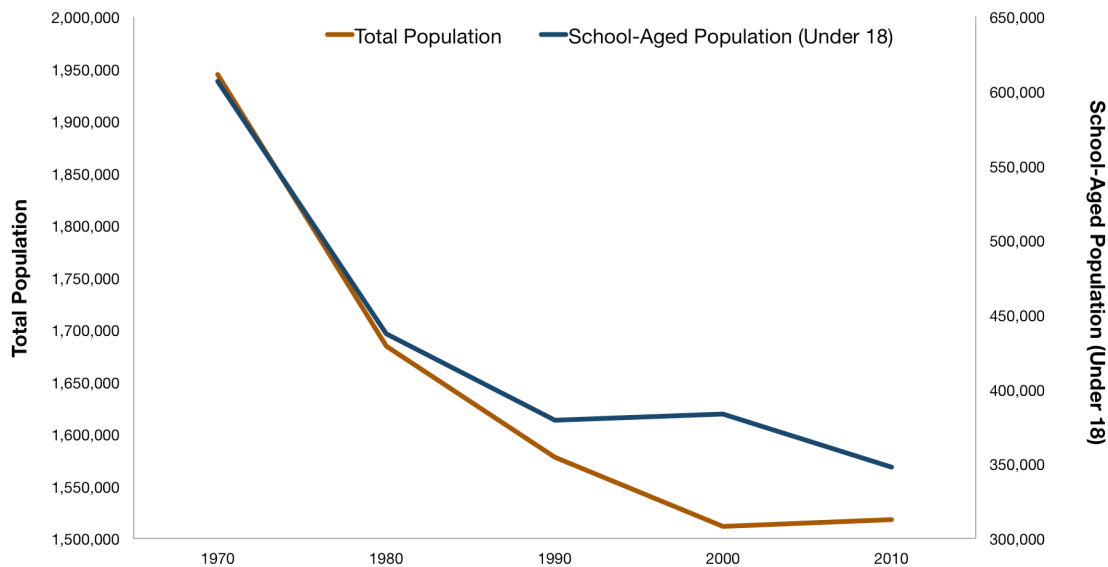
Further exacerbating the loss of school-aged population, has been the rise of charter school enrollment, which has more than tripled in the past decade (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. School District of Philadelphia Enrollment 2003-04 through 2013-14 (Source: School District of Philadelphia)
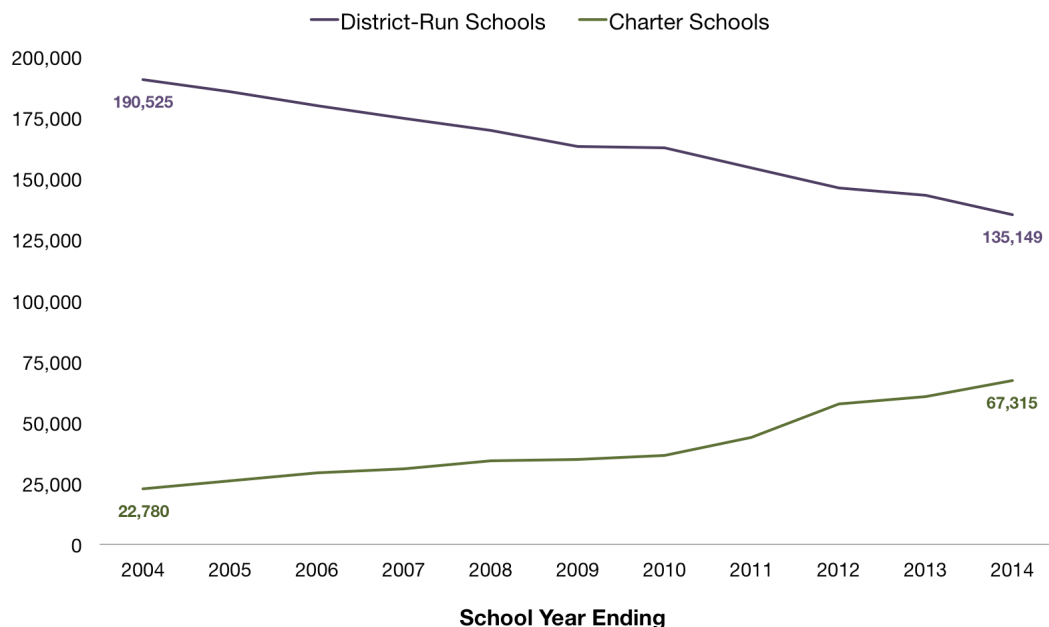
Declining enrollment has led to under-utilized school buildings. In 2011, SDP had 70,000 "empty seats" across the district. Enrollment declines and school building utilization have never been uniform across the city; some neighborhoods gain population while others lose and many experienced racial and ethnic turnover.[23] An analysis completed in response to the district's 2013 proposed closures found that neighborhoods in the Northeast section of the City saw 100 percent utilization, while those in other parts of the city ranged from 55 to 68 percent (Dowdall 2011).

Even well utilized school buildings are not always in the best condition. In 2011, the average age of SDP school buildings was 63 years old, and at least half of its school buildings were built before World War II. More than half of SDP buildings received a rating of "poor" or "fair" on a Facility Condition Index analysis, which "measures the cost of renovation against the cost of replacement" (Dowdall 2011, 5). Interviews with teachers and school staff revealed that many schools did not have potable drinking water because of aging pipes.

The school district's governance structure closely ties city funding and decision-making to that of the school district. In the December 2001, after years of declining enrollment and fiscal challenges, the state legislature dissolved the Philadelphia School Board and replaced it with the

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[23] For example, in the 1960s, with an influx of primarily black families in North and West Philadelphia, the school district suddenly faced overcrowding in its school buildings, many of which were built in the late 19th century. The district launched a school building program to rehabilitate and build new school facilities, primarily in North and West Philadelphia. This boom of school enrollment was relatively short-lived. New and larger facilities accommodated the growing populations of the 1960s, but offered the opposite challenge when enrollment began to decline and the state provided less funding to the local school district, necessitating a wave of closures in the 1970s and 1980s.

School Reform Commission (SRC). While Philadelphia never had a full elected school board,[24] what local control they had was severely curtailed with the state takeover and formation of the SRC.

The School District of Philadelphia cannot levy taxes or sell its own bonds, so remains dependent on City Council, the state, and the federal government. Over 42 percent of the district's annual budget comes from local revenue sources, all of which must be approved by City Council (Griffith and Millard 2015). In 2012, the City and the School District had over $290 million of outstanding delinquent taxes on 102,789 properties (nearly 18 percent of the City's taxable real estate); this figure is over $500 million when interest and penalties are included. (Ginsberg 2013) Coupled with declining state expenditures, the district has struggled to meet the needs of its very high-needs, high poverty, largely minority student population for decades.[25]

Given these declining enrollments, building conditions, ongoing budget issues, and poor academic performance, the school district considered school closures as one of many strategies to improved fiscal health and academic achievement. In 2012, SDP staff proposed closing 37 of its traditional public schools. After an emotional public process, 24 school buildings were shuttered, displacing nearly 9,000 predominantly low-income students of color.[26] Since 2013, the district has approved the sale of 15 of these buildings, at least half to developers for non-educational purposes.

The closures were not evenly distributed across the city, and were more likely in high poverty and African American neighborhoods (Good Forthcoming), creating education deserts in places persistently neglected by public investment. While many defended their decisions against claims of racism, the spatial evidence clearly illustrates the racialized impact – if not intent – of closure policies (see Figures 7 and 8).

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[24] Mayor Richardson Dilworth spearheaded a referendum that passed in 1965 that made the elected school board smaller and more accountable to the mayor. The City Charter Article XII: Public Education 92 (amended in 1999 through Philadelphia City Council Resolution 990066, approved June 28, 1999) stipulates that the Mayor appoints the nine Board of Education members (*Philadelphia Home Rule Charter* 1965). Authority can only revert back to local control if the SRC members vote to abolish the commission or the state legislature amends the SRC's enabling legislation.

[25] Superintendent David Hornbeck, who oversaw the district from 1994-2000, struggled with deficits of $200 million. He went so far as to file law suits against the state, claiming that the underfunding of education for African American students violated their Civil Rights.

[26] The 24 shuttered buildings join at least 15 surplus school properties that had been closed over the past decade.

Figure 7. Poverty Rates by Census Tract and Public School Buildings Closed 2013 (Source: U.S. Census, School District of Philadelphia)

Poverty Rates and Public School Buildings Closed 2013

Sources: U. S. Census; School District of Philadelphia

★ Closed School
Poverty Rate 2010
☐ 0 to 4%
☐ 4 to 11%
☐ 11 to 22%
☐ 22 to 100%
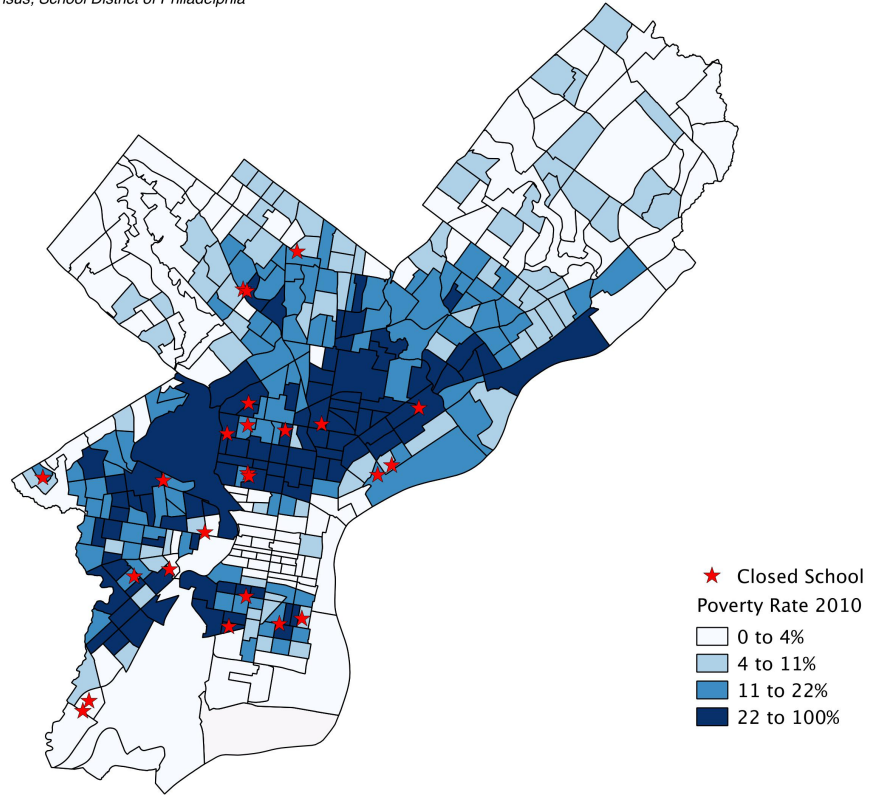
Figure 8. Percent African American/Black by Census Tract and School Buildings Closed 2013 (Source: U.S. Census, School District of Philadelphia)

Percent African American/Black and Public School Buildings Closed 2013

Sources: U. S. Census; School District of Philadelphia

★ Closed School
Percent African–American/Black 2010
☐ 0 to 8%
☐ 8 to 31%
☐ 31–84%
☐ 85–100%
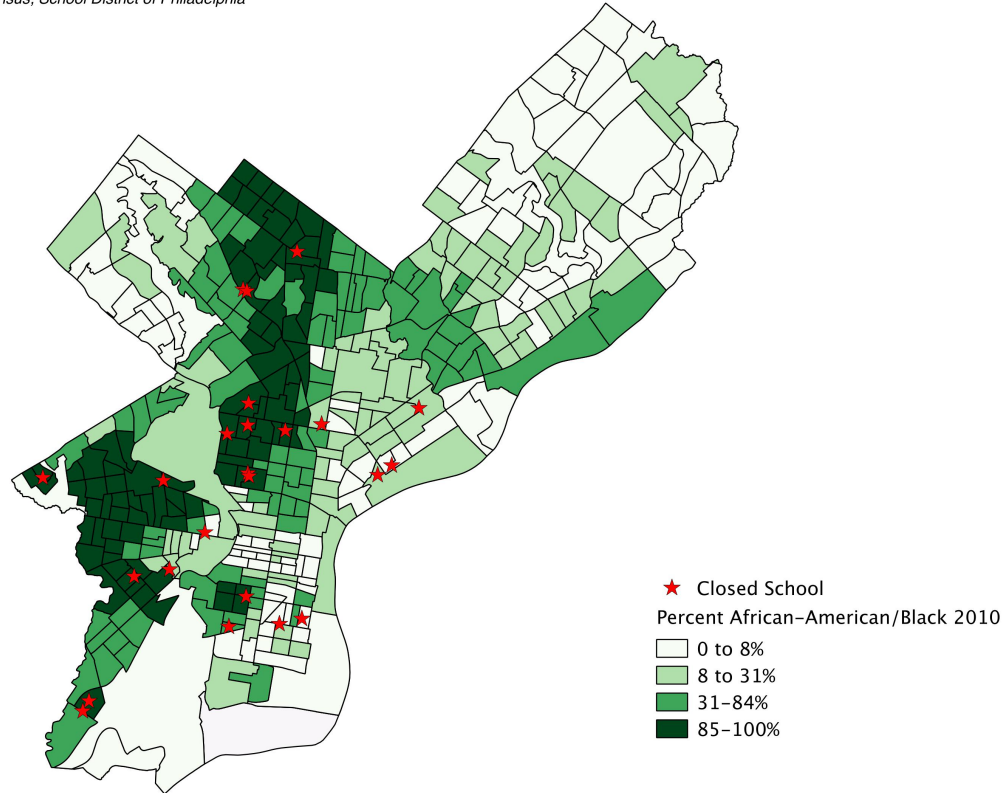
2.2.2 Philadelphia's School Closure, Sales, and Reuse Process

Like districts across the country, Philadelphia's facilities management has always been dynamic. As alluded to above, shifts in population over time have meant the expansion and contraction of school facilities since the turn of the 20th century. In this section, I provide a broad overview of the closure decision-making and sales process for the 2013 tranche of 24 closed schools. This history is not meant to be an exhaustive, but rather provides additional background and a sketch of the approach of the district and the city in general around closures, sales, and reuse. This information contextualizes the reactions and experiences of closures and sales detailed in subsequent chapters.

Since 2010, the district expressed a theory of change that puts facilities management and master planning at the center of creating high-quality and equitable schools (School District of Philadelphia 2010, 9). Early drafts of the facilities master plan from 2010 and 2011 set up a facilities-related imperative to "right-size" the district through closures: "By closely matching the number of available seats to current and projected enrollment, we can achieve operational efficiencies and redirect resources into the classroom" (School District of Philadelphia 2010, 7).

Based on analysis of school district and city data, and a series of community meetings, in December 2012, the school district proposed shuttering 37 public school buildings.[27] This number was down from the 50 buildings that had been mentioned in the prior three years of the district's facilities master plan process that had been initiated in 2009. The 2011 "rightsizing" policy adopted by the School Reform Commission identifies 13 criteria for determining closures and consolidations: educational adequacy, academic performance, enrollment/population decline, percentage of students outside boundary, academic program alignment/equity, neighborhood/community impact, sharing staff/resources, building condition, utilization, neighboring schools, excess reduction, feeder pattern alignment, and reuse (School District of Philadelphia 2011c). However, in presentations to the public, the district privileged utilization and facility condition, academic performance, and educational issues that would come up in reassignment such as accessibility to special programs and transportation.

The district allowed three months for public comment on the proposal with March 2013 as an expected date for the School Reform Commission to vote on the final closure list. Despite this short timeframe, the District made some of their process available to the public. They made their data presentations publicly available and invited the public to make alternative proposals for schools on the closure list. The District created a web presence that catalogued meeting agendas, minutes, presentations, public comments and responses from staff, and proposals; and televised and archived video of all public hearings and community meetings.

The public engaged in the media, at School Reform Commission public hearings, and at District-facilitated community meetings. Overall, more than 5,000 students, parents, and community members participated in this official process, and 43 community proposals were submitted.[28] Participation brought heavy criticism, anger, and tension to the district's highly technical and data-driven process (for more on this tension see Chapter 5). Issues of racism and disproportionate impact on low-income students of color were a central concern.[29]

Partly due to community feedback, in March 2013, the School Reform Commission ultimately decided to close 24 buildings (School District of Philadelphia 2013a; School District of Philadelphia 2013b).[30] As mentioned above, these schools were more likely to be located in predominantly low-income and African American neighborhoods (Good Forthcoming). These closed school buildings joined 15 other closed District properties, most of which were schools that had been shuttered in previous years.

As part of its ongoing facilities master plan process, District staff had proposed revised policies for the disposition of surplus properties. Its original Adaptive Sale and Reuse policy from 2011 created three tiers of potential users: educational, community/non-profit, and private/commercial development. The hope was that the District could prioritize sales and

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[27] The district identified not only school district data on school utilization, enrollment, and facility condition, but also City Planning Commission data on housing and neighborhood development as core to their planning and decision-making process (School District of Philadelphia 2011a, 23–24). The district also relied on the City Planning Commission's 18 planning districts to structure its community outreach strategy, by collapsing these 18 into 6 larger areas for study and engagement. The December 2013 proposal also included a number of grade reconfigurations and school consolidations.

[28] See: http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/f/facilities-master-plan/community-forums for community proposals.

[29] Philadelphia joined other cities in filing a Civil Rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education regarding the disproportionate impact closures have on African American students (Hing 2014; Herold 2012).

[30] The decision also included a number of grade reconfigurations and consolidations.

calibrate pricing based on the potential user. The policy also outlined a process for a committee to review all request for proposal (RFP) submissions for a given property (School District of Philadelphia 2011b). This committee would include District staff, community members, and representatives from City Council and the City Planning Commission, and they would evaluate properties and proposals based on a District-developed rubric including things like property condition, existing neighborhood plans, historic significance, neighborhood characteristics, experience of applicant, community support, funding, and purchase price.

From early on in the facilities master planning process started in 2009, the District recognized its strengths and weaknesses in the area of property disposition. For example, a 2011 draft plan states explicitly, "The District is not in the business of real-estate and/or property development" and goes on to suggest to that the School Reform Commission give staff leeway to hire outside firms to dispose of properties (School District of Philadelphia 2011d, 43). In 2012, the District did just that, releasing an RFP and hiring a number of real estate brokers to manage the marketing and sales of closed buildings (Venti 2012).

The process of using brokers and a committee to vet proposals proved to be too time-consuming and arduous for the District to manage. Staff reported in interviews with me that the training requirements were overwhelming staff time and the confidentiality requirements stressed the boundaries of community members' capacity. The District only had limited success with sales through the brokers, as well. Looking for a new path to expedited disposition, in August 2013, the School Reform Commission adopted a revised Adaptive Sale and Reuse policy (School District of Philadelphia 2013c). This revision came as part of a new strategy of collaboration with the Mayor's Office and City Council; ultimately the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) handled the marketing and sales process (City of Philadelphia 2014).[31]

The revised policy eliminated the committee evaluation that included community and City staff input. It also expedited the sales of buildings considered to be "High-Level Marketability – properties located in favorable markets that are likely to sell" (School District of Philadelphia 2013c, 2). While the policy claims that proposals will be evaluated based on eight criteria, including impact on surrounding neighborhood and community support, the actual rubric used included only four criteria: proposed use, financial capacity to complete purchase, purchase price/timing to close on purchase, and experience purchasing/developing real estate (Burns and Hite 2014). The public input on sales was limited to six District-facilitated community meetings, email comments, and public comment at School Reform Commission meetings. Subsequent community input on specific designs and reuses once the buildings had been sold were directed to the Philadelphia Zoning Law and processes established for new development by the City Planning Commission.

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[31] PIDC is a quasi-public agency that historically has supported the attraction, retention, and disposition of industrial properties throughout the City. The Mayor's Office and the District developed a collaborative initiative – the Philadelphia Schools Repurposing Initiative in August 2013 (School District of Philadelphia 2013d; Brey 2013a). A few weeks later, City Council released its own plan that included the transfer of $50 million to the School District in advance of the sales, a much needed cash infusion for the deficit-strapped District (Brey 2013b). The final arrangement is a hybrid of the two plans. In Phase One, the District hired PIDC and Binswanger Company to administer the sales process for an initial 12 properties, seven of which sold. PIDC managed Phase Two of sales completely, handling all marketing, setting up a website (http://phlschoolsales.com/), leading open house tours of properties, and vetting initial proposals. PIDC staff then made recommendations to District staff on specific buyers for school sites an assisted through the final decision-making and closing.

As detailed above, the process to close and dispose of school buildings proved complicated, and required the involvement of not only District staff and School Reform Commission members, but also City staff from a number of departments, City Council, quasi-public agencies, and private sector companies. The disposition of closed school buildings evolved over a five-year period. It required multiple policy changes from the School Reform Commission and changing processes by District staff. The final process of closure and disposition incorporated multiple sectors of government and a diverse set of public, quasi-public, and private agencies. At each moment of policy or process revision, what got lost were elements that took more time or resources, most notably intense community input in the sales and reuse of closed school buildings. I elaborate on the ways that tensions surfaced during the closure, sales, and reuse processes in subsequent chapters.

2.2.3   Philadelphia's Planning Context[32]

Other city efforts focus on the disparities across neighborhoods. In June 2011, the City Planning Commission adopted its Citywide Vision of its comprehensive plan, *Philadelphia 2035* ("Philadelphia2035 | Citywide Vision" 2016). In August 2012, Philadelphia updated its zoning code for the first time since 1962 ("City of Philadelphia: Zoning" 2016). *Philadelphia 2035* identifies 18 planning districts across the city, and initiated planning processes in each district. These plans seek to set the framework to leverage local, state, and federal investments to improve neighborhood conditions, the built environment, and access to opportunity for residents. As of writing in August 2016, 12 district plans have been adopted, three are underway, and three are scheduled for completion in 2017.

I focused my research in the Lower North and South planning districts, which have the highest density of closed schools (see Figure 9). This study is not a comparative study between the two areas, however. These two planning districts have sufficient variation in poverty, income, racial/ethnic make-up, and development activity that allows me to surface the complexity and tensions in school closures, sales, and reuse under different conditions.

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[32] Background information on the Lower North and South Planning Districts comes from the City Planning Commission *Philadelphia 2035: Lower North District Plan* (City of Philadelphia City Planning Commission 2014) adopted on May 20, 2014 and *Philadelphia 2035: South Philadelphia District Plan* (City of Philadelphia City Planning Commission 2015) adopted June 9, 2015.

Figure 9. Philadelphia City Planning Commission Planning Districts and Public Schools Closed 2013
(Sources: Philadelphia City Planning Commission and School District of Philadelphia)

Philadelphia City Planning Commission Planning Districts and Public School Buildings Closed 2013

Sources: Philadelphia City Planning Commission; School District of Philadelphia
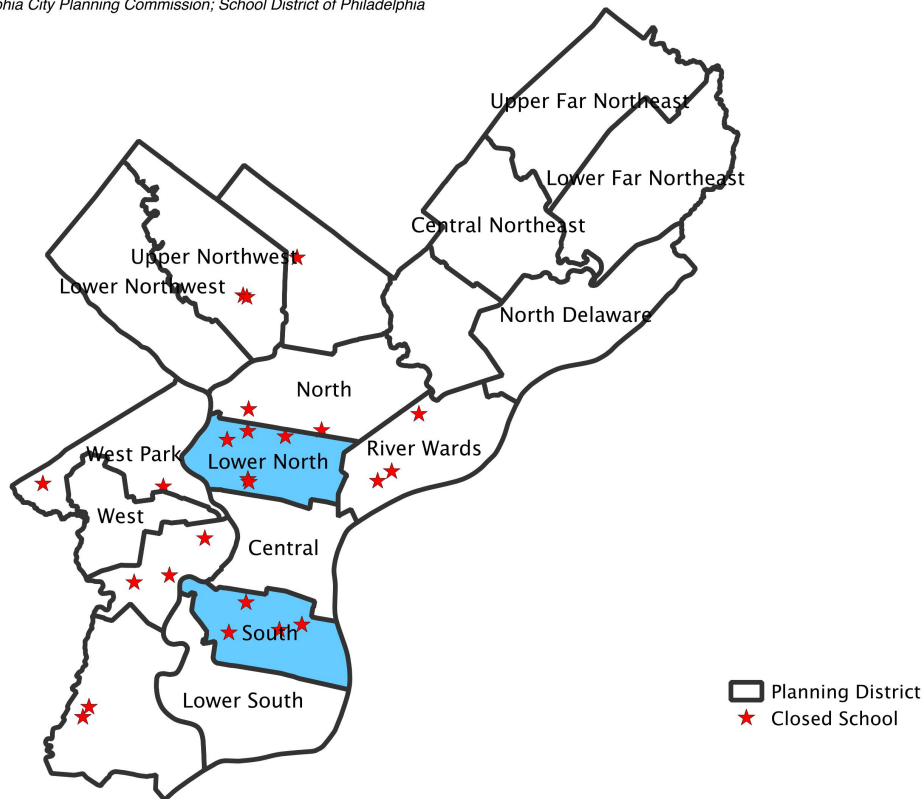
The Lower North District is 5.9 square miles and sits just north of downtown, and includes all or parts of 16 distinct neighborhoods. This part of the city is defined by population decline for the past 50 years. It is also an area where the City has used powers of eminent domain for Urban Renewal and other redevelopment efforts since the 1940s. This land clearance provided opportunities for Temple University expansion, as well as new school and recreation center construction. In the 1960s, the Housing Authority and other entities constructed "superblocks" with high-rise public housing, much of which was redeveloped with federal assistance under HOPE VI in the 1990s and 2000s or will be redeveloped now under Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

Today the area still has large swaths of vacant land, housing, and industrial properties. Sixty-six percent of blocks have some vacancy, limiting tax revenue for the city, depressing property values for homeowners, and fostering unsafe spaces for residents.

Much of the district is residential and is home to large parts of the city's largest municipal park adding to its percentage of open space (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Lower North Planning District Land Uses (Sources: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia 2035: Lower North District Plan (2014))
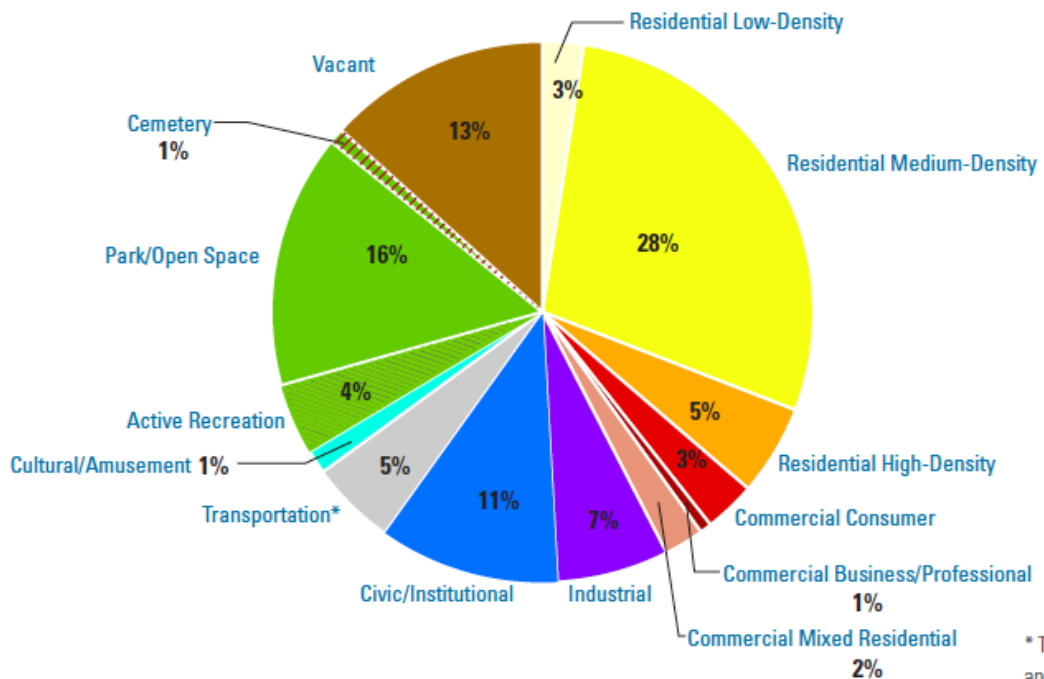
Home to just over 95,000 people, 69 percent of the people living in the Lower North district are African American and almost half of the population is living in poverty. This swath of the city is historically African American and home to many neighborhoods that were centers of Civil Rights and Black Power movement activities (Countryman 2006). Median income in 2010 was $16,459, less than half of the City's median income. Lower North struggles with persistent poverty, low levels of educational attainment, and high crime.

In 2013, five schools closed[33] in the Lower North planning district, adding to the vacancy in the neighborhood and disproportionately affecting the low-income students and families of color sending their children to public schools in those neighborhoods. The Lower North District Plan identifies two closed schools in their land use assessment, but does not specifically address issues of education or school building sales and reuse in its proposals.

The South planning district spans 3.98 square miles and seven neighborhoods, and sits just south of downtown. The district is densely developed, with few vacant land and properties. The district is primarily residential and lacks open space (see Figure 11).

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[33] An additional three schools closed in the adjacent planning area, close to the boundaries, which meant that many more residents in Lower North may have been affected because school catchment areas do not map to planning district boundaries. Families living in parts of the Lower North planning area may have sent their children to the nearest school, which may fall just north of the Lower North boundary into the North Planning district boundary.

Figure 11. South Planning District Land Uses (Sources: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia 2035: South District Plan (2015))
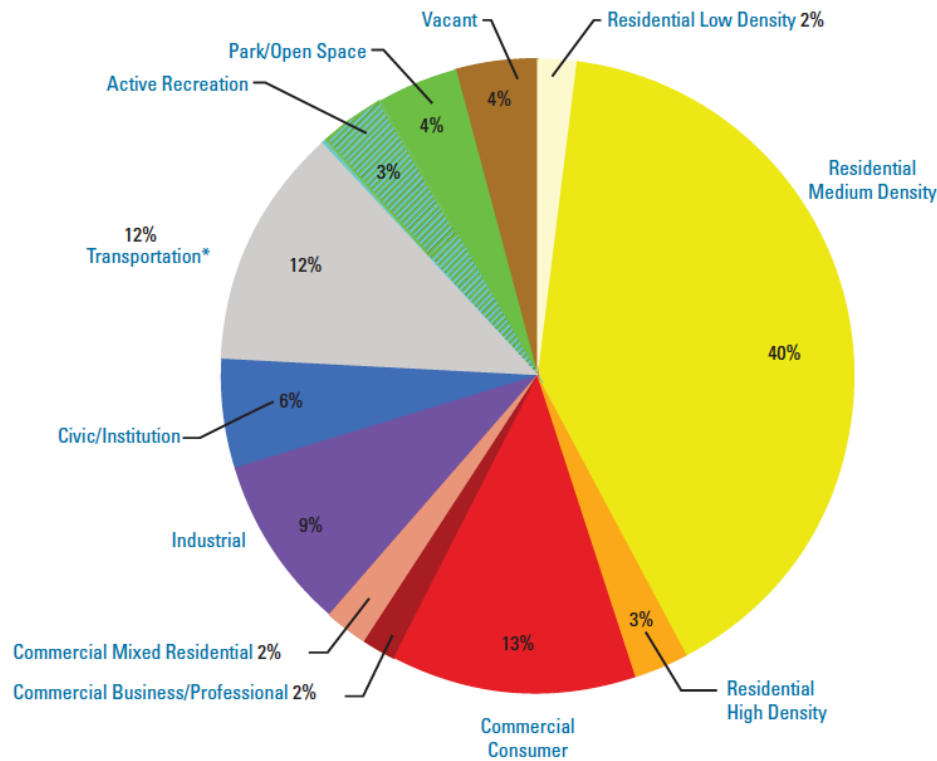
Most of South district is stable, with a high homeownership rate (59 percent). The housing market is robust with many parts of the area seeing rising housing values and new higher-income residents with higher levels of educational attainment. New retail has also emerged on a number of commercial corridors.

The South planning district has a total population of 133,000 residents. The area has historically been home to working class immigrant populations, particularly Irish, Italian, and Jewish. Today, 15.5 percent of residents are foreign-born, coming from China, Hong Kong/Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Mexico, and Italy. Like the City as a whole, the area has seen a decline in population, although new immigrants have contributed to an uptick since 2000 (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. South Planning District Population Trends 1980-2010 (Sources: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Philadelphia 2035: South District Plan (2015))
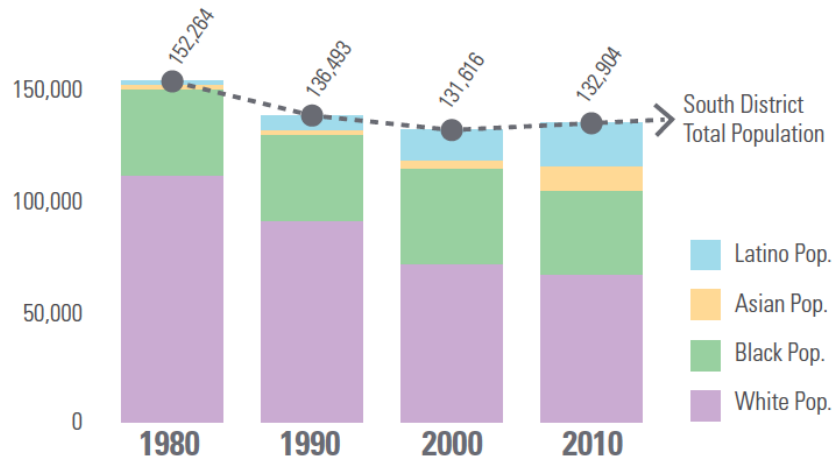
The poverty rate in the South planning district is 24 percent, compared with the citywide 26 percent rate. The South district is home to five closed school buildings, all of which have been sold to private developers for adaptive reuse as condominiums or mixed use. The South district plan identifies schools as historic buildings and opportunity sites for redevelopment to "preserve community landmarks and promote investment in neighborhoods" (City of Philadelphia City Planning Commission 2015, 80).

Chapter 3. News Media's Democratic Functions in Public Education: An Analysis of Newspaper Framings of Public School Closures

3.1 Introduction

Over the past ten years, large urban school districts have closed public schools – often en masse – to manage declining enrollments and underutilized buildings, rising costs and decreased funding, and poor academic performance. Closures are one of many market-based educational strategies used by school districts. These strategies assume that market-based interventions can improve the provision of public services and result in better and more equitable educational outcomes for students. Market-based reforms include increasing school choice, fostering competition among schools, and using quantitative performance metrics to measure academic outcomes and success.

Not all school stakeholders agree that these strategies benefit students, however; teachers, parents, and other community representatives have voiced serious opposition to market-based reforms and school closures, arguing that closures damage social ties, disrupt and limit access to quality education, and compromise student safety. Further, empirical research has shown that school closures in large urban districts have disproportionately affected low-income students, students of color, and neighborhoods that are predominantly African-American (Good 2016; Kirshner, Gaertner, and Pozzoboni 2010; Research for Action 2013; Sunderman and Payne 2009; Valencia 1984).

Public debate about the benefits and costs of school closures has not been limited to the halls of school buildings or agendas of school board meetings. The controversial nature of closures has inspired extensive coverage in local and national news media. Examining this media coverage can reveal the multiple and sometimes competing discourses of education reform that circulate the public realm. This discourse affects public perceptions and policy-making, influencing how the public and policy makers define problems, identify causes, pass judgments, and propose solutions for public policy issues (Entman 1993; Jacobs 2006; Schon and Rein 1995; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Vliegenthart 2012; Watts, Frick, and Maddison 2012; Wettstein 2014). Additionally, analysis of media coverage can reveal how political battles play out as well as the power dynamics underlying controversial policies (Castells 2009).

Media framing has had particular salience in the education policy arena. Studies have examined the ways in which the media has portrayed teachers, unions, and education reform policies nationally and in select cities (R. A. Goldstein and Chesky 2011; R. A. Goldstein 2011; Tamir and Davidson 2011). For the most part, this research has presented critiques of the media's role in promoting market-based education reform policies, yet without empirically documenting the impact of this coverage on democratic processes and/or on the material consequences on policy or on the ground (Opfer 2007). Further, none of these studies have looked at media framing of school closures across multiple cities or over time.

This chapter seeks to fill these gaps by asking: How do newspaper media frame public school closures? In addition, I extend the question by examining the extent to which news coverage of public school closures fulfill the democratic functions as a civic forum, a mobilizing agent, and/or a watchdog (Norris 2000; Opfer 2007)? To answer this question, I examine

national and local newspaper coverage of public school closures in thirteen cities between 2005 and 2013. I chose to examine newspaper coverage because it is easily accessible, and studies show that traditional media still drive most other media content (Mejia, Cheyne, and Dorfman 2012).

My analysis reveals that the contentious closure process is the entry point for news media. Coverage then focuses on pre-closure catalysts, the closure decision-making process, and the anticipated impacts of closure. I find that news media coverage fosters a conflictual and dichotomous framing of closures, reducing complicated and plural meanings of schools to two competing and singular arguments: Proponents deploy rationality, data, and technical expertise to mange an inevitable and dire crisis. Opponents express their concerns through emotionally laden messaging. Coverage is after-the-fact reporting of meetings and decision-making, and does not necessarily provide critique of the closure plans or criteria used to decide on which schools are closed. Through their depth of coverage and attention to decision-making processes, media are predominantly sympathetic to the problem definition and causal interpretations of school closure proponents. This analysis reveals how newspaper media do not maximize their role as a democratic institution, and affirms the findings of previous studies on media coverage of educational reform policy issues, especially the general tone of inevitability of closures and neglect of issues surrounding the disproportionate and racialized impact of closures.

The chapter proceeds as follows: First, I present the literature on media analysis and its relationship to educational policy-making. Second, I describe my methods and data. Third, I present my findings, organized by each phase: pre-closure catalysts, closure decision-making process, and post-closure impacts. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this analysis for future research and policy-making.

3.2 Analyzing the Role of Media in Education Policy-Making

Media, while often thought of as external to the policy process, are actually vital to understanding policies and their impacts on communities. As a gatekeeper of information, news media serve as a shaper or mirror of public opinion (Entman 2004; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Takahashi 2011; Wettstein 2014). News media can decide what information to reveal or obscure in ways that can privilege elite political and economic actors over others (Tamir and Davidson 2011). News media simplify complex ideas for easy consumption. Choices about simplification can "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1993, 52). This selective information may mirror or shape public opinion, and can reveal of axes power and conflict over contentious policy issues (Castells 2009).

News media have had a long-standing place urban politics and policy, serving as an urban booster and a part of the "growth machine" (Logan and Molotch 1987; Scobey 2002), contributing to a city or neighborhood's image, and fostering the legitimacy of particular urban actors (Brown-Saracino and Rumpf 2011; Lees 1996; Vale and Warner 2001). News media have also played a role in a specific dimension of urban life: education. Research on media and education policy making has largely argued that the media have negatively influenced public support for public education (Opfer 2007). Scholars attribute this to a few factors. Some suggest that the privatization and economic imperatives of the news industry have decreased the public or democratic purposes of journalism (Killeen 2007). Others argue that news media increasingly take a conflictual approach to covering policy issues, focusing on crisis, polarized positions, and

dichotomous heroes and villains (Allweiss, Grant, and Manning 2014; Anderson 2007). Further, scholars critique the media for taking sides, privileging certain actors and interests (e.g., decision makers relying on market-based reforms) over others (e.g., community members and parents opposing these kinds of interventions) (Allweiss, Grant, and Manning 2014; Anderson 2007; R. A. Goldstein 2011; R. A. Goldstein and Chesky 2011; R. Goldstein, Macrine, and Chesky 2011).

These critiques suggest that the media's focus on the economic dimensions of public education and market-based interventions undermines public education's broader democratic principles. This relationship between media coverage, public perception, and democratic public institutions may not be that simple, however. News media may not actually be democratic institutions, nor do they necessarily serve some set of democratic principles (see e.g., earlier work on the ways the news industry serves as part of the "urban growth machine" (Logan and Molotch 1987)). Further, public engagement and support for public education may not be directly influenced by news media coverage. Finally, the larger forces that influence shifts in education policy-making may also influence news media and reporting.

The relationship between media, public perception or action, and policy making is complex and not well-understood by media scholars (Takahashi 2011). Opfer argues that lack of understanding is in part because there is not clarity on what and how scholars are investigating the media. Citing Norris (2000), Opfer (2007) presents a procedural framework to assess the ways media cover education policy-making. Under this framework, media can serve three democratic purposes: "[as] a civic forum for pluralistic debate, a watchdog for civil and political liberties, and a mobilizing agent for public participation" (2007, 172). These proposed roles focus on what media do, rather than how the public or policy makers respond. Opfer suggests that each democratic function yields a particular set of research questions that would facilitate more rigorous analysis of news media coverage of education policy making. For example, considering media's function as a civic forum raises the question, "Does the coverage of education reflect the political and cultural diversity within a society?" (Opfer 2007, 173). Understanding media's function as a mobilizing agent points to questions like "Do the media provide coverage of opportunities for public engagement with educational processes?" (Opfer 2007, 173). Finally, media's function as a watchdog suggests scholars examine things like "Does the media coverage attempt to hold school officials accountable for their actions?" ?" (Opfer 2007, 173). These questions crystalize the potential and power of media, and capture the multifold roles media play as gatekeepers, shapers, and mirrors of public opinion and policy making.

3.3 Methods and Data

Although public school closures[34] have been adopted in cities across the country, in this study, I initially limited my analysis to twelve cities that were highlighted in a 2013 report by The Pew Charitable Trusts as places with a significant proportion of closed schools: Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, MO, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C. Collectively, between 2005 and 2013, these cities have closed over 560 schools (Dowdall 2013). Through my queries and analysis, I also found extensive coverage of New York City school closures and added this as a thirteenth city to my analysis.

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[34] This research focuses on the closure of traditional public schools, rather than all schools (traditional public, charter public, private, and parochial). Semantically, I use the terms *school*, *public school*, *traditional public school*, and *district-run school* interchangeably. This analysis does not include coverage of charter, private, or parochial school closures.

These districts have faced declining enrollments in their public schools. These declines are in part due to losses in citywide total and school-aged population (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Percent Change Total Population and School District Enrollment in 13 Cities 2000-2010[35] (Source: U.S. Census, National Center for Education Statistics)
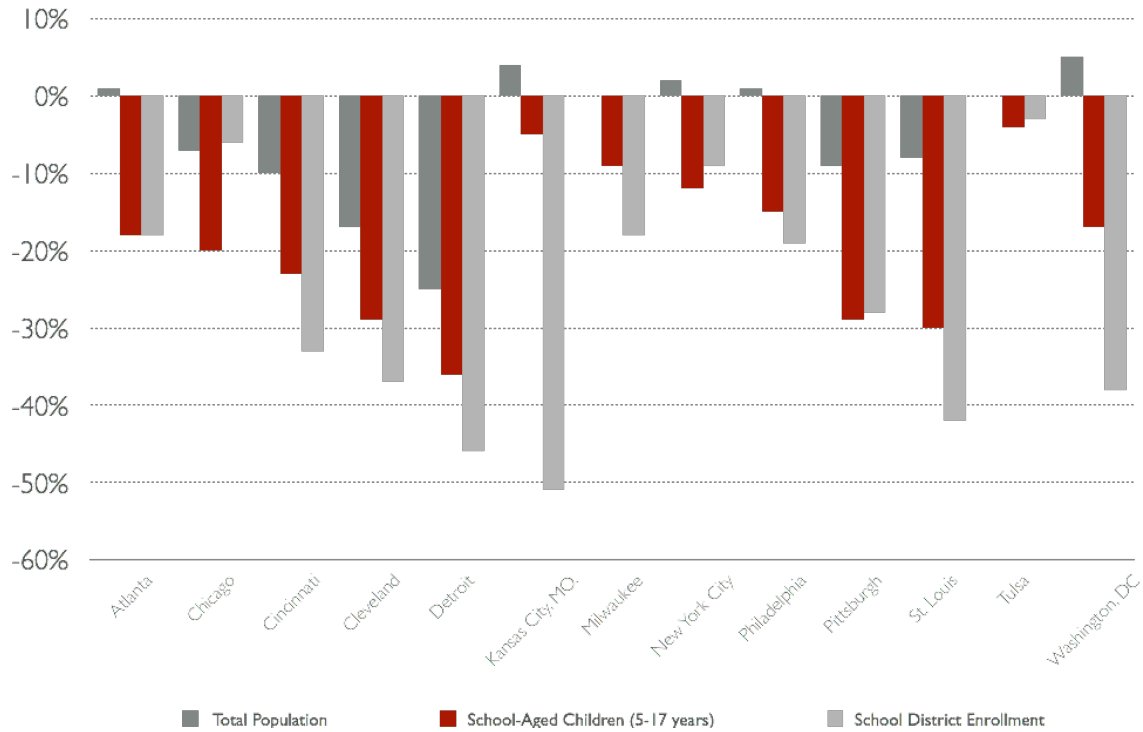
Declining enrollments in public schools is also a function of school districts' increased reliance on market logics – particularly school choice policies and the opening of charter schools. All 13 school districts in this study have opened charter schools in the past decade (Figure 14).

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[35] 2000 population and school-aged children data from Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer. 2010 population and school-aged children data from Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, Census Bureau; Social Explorer. 2000 and 2010 enrollment data from National Center for Educational Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/ed/index.asp). The Census School District Tabulation (STP2) is a special tabulation prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division and sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 14. Percent Change Charter School Enrollment in 13 Cities 2005 to 2012 (Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools)
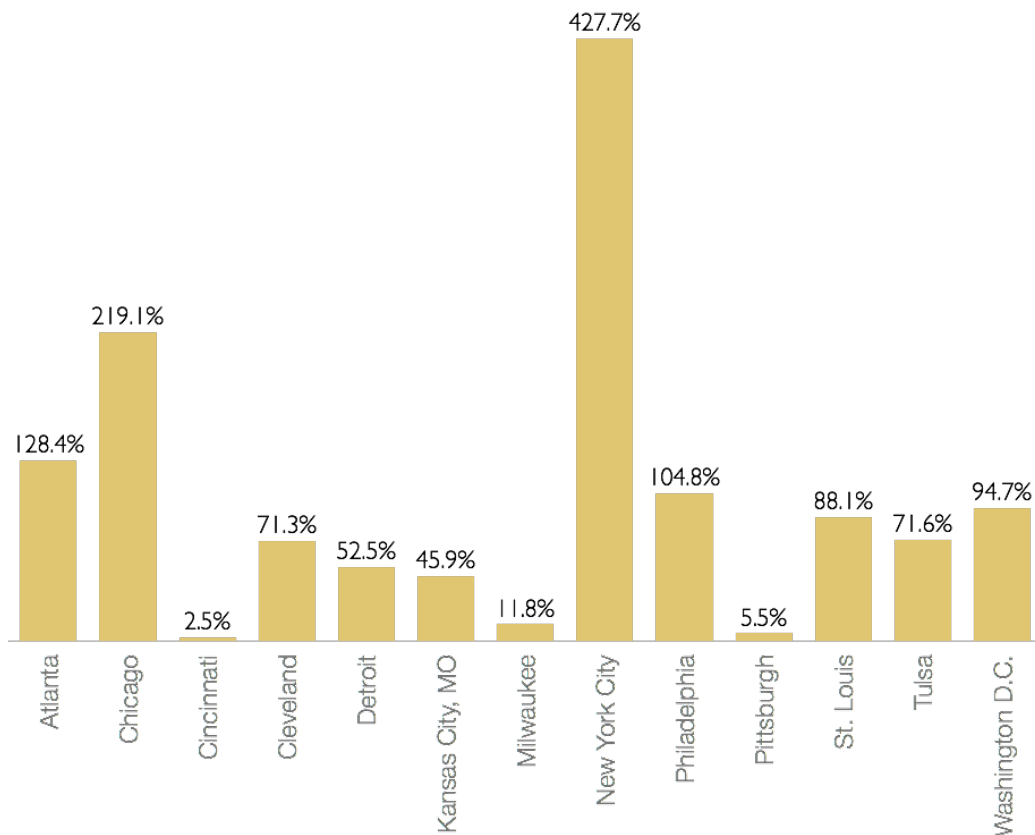
These charter schools have drawn many students out of traditional district-run public schools, exacerbating enrollment declines due to population loss.

These declining enrollments, coupled with decreases in federal and state funding, have led to underutilized buildings that are often in poor condition. Without adequate funds to renovate the school buildings, or students to put in classrooms, school districts have argued the best use of limited public resources is to close schools and dispose of the buildings through sales or lease. In addition to funding, enrollment, and building conditions, some districts also have used poor academic performance as criteria in school closing decisions.

Working with a research assistant, I used four newspaper databases (LexisNexis, Access World News, Proquest, and Proquest Newstand) to search 29 newspapers from the initial 12 cities and three national publications from January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2013 (see Appendix A). With the inclusion of *The New York Times* as a national publication, I also found extensive coverage of New York City school closures, leading me to add it as a thirteenth city in my analysis. My analysis also includes coverage of school closures in nearby non-urban districts in the metropolitan areas of each of the 13 major cities.

My search criteria included 72 keyword variations on "school" and "close," excluding articles on terrorist concerns.[36][37] Like other studies of newspaper coverage, I have focused on reporting articles with bylines. This search yielded 18,586 articles. Next, we manually filtered articles to eliminate those that referenced higher education; closure due to weather, illness, holidays, or other temporary factors; Catholic school closure; and international coverage. This left a universe of 7,749 articles. We cataloged and removed duplicates of these articles in a citation management system, yielding a universe of 7,316 articles from 2001 through 2013. For this specific project, I pared down this list to only include articles from 2005 through 2013 (following The Pew Charitable Trusts 2013 report), totaling 5,907 articles. We conducted one final manual filter on these articles, eliminating news digests or summaries, obituaries, and letters to the editor. This left a final universe of 5,452 news articles published between 2005 and 2013.

To draw a representative sample of these articles, I selected a chronological random sample called a "constructed week." Constructed week samples are more reliable than a simple random sample in analyzing newspaper coverage because they take into account variation of the news cycle from day to day and year to year, where there are slow and heavy news days (Mejia, Cheyne, and Dorfman 2012; Riffe, Aust, and Lacy 1993). For studies that look at issues with coverage every day, researchers use the calendar as the sampling frame and "first identify all 52 Mondays and randomly select one Monday. This Monday would be the first day of the week. The procedure is then repeated to select the remaining Tuesday, Wednesday and so on to 'construct' a week" (Song and Chang 2012). Then, all coverage from these sampled dates is analyzed. Researchers have found that two constructed weeks per year is enough to get representative samples (Lacy et al. 2001; Riffe, Aust, and Lacy 1993).

For this study, I constructed two sample weeks for each of the nine years of the study (2005-2013), for a total of 18 weeks or 126 days of news coverage. Because the coverage of school closures does not appear every day, I built a Python script that first created a list of dates that included only those with coverage from my 5,452 articles. The script then randomly selected Monday, Tuesday, etc. dates for each year. Through this process, I ended up with two constructed weeks for each year, a total of 352 individual articles. Once coding commenced, I deleted additional articles because they were irrelevant, editorials or opinion pieces, or

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[36] The full search term string was: ("school closing" OR "school closure" OR "school closings" OR "school closures" OR "school close" OR "schools close" OR "school will close" OR "schools will close" OR "school would close" OR "schools would close" OR "school to close" OR "schools to close" OR "school could close" OR "schools could close" OR "schools were to close" OR "school was to close" OR "school closes" OR "school is to close" OR "schools are to close" OR "schools that would close" OR "school that would close" OR "schools that will close" OR "school that will close" OR "school should close" OR "schools should close" OR "school should not close" OR "schools should not close" OR "school should be closed" OR "schools should be closed" OR "schools would be closed" OR "school would be closed" OR "schools could be closed" OR "school could be closed" OR "schools will be closed" OR "school will be closed" OR "schools closed" OR "school closed" OR "schools have to close" OR "school has to close" OR "schools had to close" OR "school had to close" OR "could close school" OR "could close schools" OR "would close schools" OR "would close school" OR "should close schools" OR "should close school" OR "will close schools" OR "will close school" OR "had closed schools" OR "had closed a school" OR "had closed that school" OR "had closed this school" OR "had closed school" OR "closing school" OR "closing schools" OR "close school" OR "close schools" OR "were to close schools" OR "were to close a school" OR "were to close that school" OR "were to close this school" OR "were to close school" OR "will close school" OR "will close schools" OR "closed school" OR "closed schools" OR "have to close schools" OR "have to close school" OR "have to close a school" OR "have to close that school" OR "have to close this school") AND NOT ("World Trade Center" OR SARS OR terror OR terrorism OR terrorist)

[37] Because my original search started in 2001, a significant number of articles came up related to September 11th and subsequent terror threats to schools. Thus, we added this exclusion in our search term.

duplicates, or focused on charter or parochial school closures.[38] The final sample for analysis presented in this paper is 240 articles spanning over nine years (2005-2013), drawn from 20 newspapers in 12 of the 13 cities (see Appendices B, C, D).

I pulled the full text of all articles published on these randomly selected dates and brought these files into MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software for analysis. I assigned each article a set of attributes that defined the scope of the article. For example, I coded each article as either Urban or Non-Urban, to describe the coverage of the major city/district versus that of an outlying suburban or rural school district. Some articles were not focused on a specific district, and I could assign an attribute Nationwide or Statewide, depending on the content (Table 2).

Table 2. Sample Articles by Geographic Attribute (n = 240)

Geography	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	166	69.2%
Non-Urban	51	21.2%
Statewide	16	6.7%
Nationwide	7	2.9%

I coded the articles at the paragraph level using a combination of deductive and inductive coding. Based on prior research on school closures and my simultaneous ethnographic study on school closures, sales, and reuse in Philadelphia (citation suppressed), I developed a set of deductive codes as "descriptive" or "provisional" coding (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014). These codes included high-level themes such as *governance*, *education*, and *facilities*. I iterated on these codes inductively based on the content of the articles. I ended up with 10 high level codes and 21 subcodes (see Appendix E).

3.4 Findings

I organize my findings along three categories of coverage: pre-closure catalysts, closure decision-making process, and post-closure impacts. These categories are not mutually exclusive, appear throughout single articles, and are sometimes discussed iteratively. However, they serve an important analytical purpose to disentangle the kinds of arguments presented and to highlight the curatorial functions of news media in covering school closures.

3.4.1   Pre-Closure Catalysts

In my sample, coverage focused extensively on the district rationales for closure. The emphasis in the articles was on enrollment declines in districts, due to a combination of demographic shifts and rise in charter school enrollment; funding constraints; and aging school buildings. Although academic performance appear to play some role in closure decisions, there seems to be variation by city into how strongly district rationale focused on this. For example, New York City stands out in its almost-unilateral focus on academic performance as the key metric for closure

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[38] At times, these deletions resulted in deleting all coverage for a randomly selected date and day of week for that particular year. To ensure coverage for that day of the week that year, I ran another Python script to create another randomly constructed two-week sample. I used one of two dates that was the same day of week as the deleted coverage, which resulted in the current sample of 240 articles.

decisions, while Philadelphia and Kansas City, MO are more preoccupied with enrollment declines, building utilization, and building condition.

The media coverage privileges school districts' rationalities focused on technocratic, data-driven logics, as opposed to more qualitative, experiential, or emotional frames.

> *District officials said the closings are needed because the district has lost an estimated 6,000 students in the five years since charter schools came to Kansas City. Taylor wants to cut about $20 million in operating costs from the district's $324 million budget; the school closings ultimately would save about $3.3 million a year…[the superintendent] said he realized the plan would prove unpopular but said the district must cut expenses…"We must look out for what is in the district's best interests as a whole."* (Smith 2005a)

> *Shaton Berry, PTA president of Western International High School, said news of the planned school closures was disturbing but inevitable. "While nobody wants schools closed, you also have to think of the fact that the district is a business. The problem is that it is not run like a business."* (News 2009)

> *But most of what happened was beyond her control. When a $100 million budget shortfall necessitated school closings and nearly 1,400 layoffs, student progress stalled.* (Larkin 2012)

Closures are framed as inevitable and necessary interventions in dire circumstances that serve a greater good. Funding constraints from a local, state, and federal sources drive this sense of exasperation and inevitability. This frame presents an idealized school district that mimics private-sector enterprises and "runs like a business," asserting that school closures could have been avoided if the district had more fully adopted market-based policies and practices.

In some places, closures are implicitly or explicitly tied to other budgetary discussions in school districts, including labor negotiations. At times this emphasis serves to assign blame, casting some forces or actors as at fault.

> *State funding cuts worsened the district's financial shortfall, and unless the nine-member board decides to raise taxes, it will have to seek concessions from the district's 3,665 employees and close more schools, administrators warned the board this week during discussions about the 2006 budget… The district has never sought wage concessions before…* (Roebuck 2005)

Other times, labor is positioned as a casualty of funding constraints, as much as buildings and students:

> *To wipe out a $24.5 million deficit, the Pontiac School District has proposed closing two schools, eliminating 66 jobs, cutting health care coverage and cutting its athletic budget by 20 percent…The proposed cuts would save the school district $26 million over three years, according to the district's estimate.* (Donnelly 2011)

> *A year after budget cuts shook the community with school closings and teacher layoffs, the Kansas City School District is cutting again. The district is working toward trimming $37 million after cutting more than $50 million a year ago.* (Kansas City Star, The (MO) 2011)

Coverage does not provide historical or other policy context for these budget cuts, offering no specific agents of upstream financial decisions. In contrast, superintendents, school board members, and other elected officials making closure decisions sometimes are presented as strong leaders making painful choices under difficult conditions.

The country's ongoing economic troubles and the corresponding decline in tax revenue are providing cover for hard financial decisions. That leaves leaders -- run out over such suggestions years before -- lauded for their strength today.

> *"The board should be commended for doing it now," Missouri's education commissioner, Chris Nicastro, said of Kansas City's decision.* (Hunn 2010)

The praise for leaders making hard decisions reinforces a frame of inevitability, focusing on conditions – particularly financial conditions – outside of the control of any individual actor. This approach echoes other research on discourses of crisis and the naturalization of austerity measures in public agencies within the milieu of neoliberal governance (Hinkley 2015).

By positioning decision makers as actors confronting a powerful and inevitable set of forces that catalyze closure, media coverage obscures historical policy and budgetary decisions that may have led to closures. Coverage presents the current funding conditions as a given; closures are presented seen as the outcome of the immediately pressing and implicitly unavoidable situation of the present moment. The coverage also sets up these decision makers as a "hero" in a story with a predetermined plotline trajectory – of inevitable disaster and crisis. This approach establishes decision makers as protagonists, with little attention to parents, community groups, or other stakeholders that may have reflections on other catalysts for closure decisions.

3.4.2 Closure Decision-Making Process

The process of closing schools motivated much of the news media coverage. The spectacle of public meetings and protest attracted news media. Coverage describes district presentations and plans as well as public opposition voiced at public meetings.

> *The Kansas City Board of Education will hold a special meeting Monday to discuss next year's budget. Superintendent Bernard Taylor says the district must cut up to $20 million from the budget. Taylor has proposed saving about $3.2 million annually by closing, relocating or consolidating a dozen schools, a plan that has sparked an outcry from some parents.* (Smith 2005b)

> *At hearings at Oakcrest and Glenarden Woods, dozens of parents and students critiqued the proposal as school officials took notes and gathered statements written on paper and index cards. Not a single person spoke in favor of the changes.* (Hernandez 2009)

The closure process coverage gives attention to the emotional dynamics of closure, describing meeting attendees' anger and frustration by both the closures and the decision-making process.

> *Hardly anyone wants to see their local school shuttered. The remaining hearings will be loud and angry, exactly the volatile scene that caused many of the nine previous superintendents to back away from closing schools.* (Fisher 2008)

Coverage across the sample uses words such as "fuming," "anger," "weeping," and "outrage" to describe meeting attendees. Interviews with opponents include descriptions of "choked back

tears," and quotes about "hoping and praying" that schools might be "spared." The focus is on the emotional reaction, rather than substantive claims or concerns of those in opposition to closures.

This coverage juxtaposes the technocratic and data-driven rationality of decision makers with more emotional and relationally-oriented rationality of closure opponents. This binary juxtaposition – of rationally argued evidence from district leaders versus emotional protests from parents in opposition – echoes prior research on school closure news coverage (Allweiss, Grant, and Manning 2014). These approaches are perhaps not surprising – either as represented neither in media coverage nor in practice. We expect public officials to make decisions using technical expertise and quantitative evidence. Likewise, we expect that parents supporting their children to be passionate in their advocacy. But the media coverage neglects the ways that these rationalities may work in concert, rather than as competing and mutually exclusive modes of operation. For example, a community schools model would address concerns about building utilization, bringing in other non-profit or social service providers to the school building, while still honoring the social and emotional connections that parents, students, and school site personnel have to the particular school site.

Other coverage focused on objections to the decision-making process.

> *Parents of students at Perrysville and Northway have protested the closing of those schools since a 70-member facilities action committee first recommended it in December 2003. Seville recently was added to the list of schools being closed. That drew complaints from parents that they were not given time to argue for keeping their school open. Six of the nine Ross commissioners addressed the school board Monday. They expressed worries about the impact of closing community schools and asked the school board to delay its decision.* (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review (PA)* 2006)

> *Parents complained that they were given just a few hours' notice about Wednesday's special school board meeting called to discuss the 2005-06 budget. Some expressed dismay and vowed to fight the closings. Others said they were shell-shocked and would have to confer with other parents.* (Smith 2005a)

Without detailing specifics, coverage alludes to the ways that districts do or do not ask parents and others to participate in public hearing or decision-making processes.

> *"We heard some very impassioned comments today," said School Board President Rufus Williams. "Change is hard. I understand that. . . . But we've got to get better and get better right now." CPS officials insisted they had fine-tuned some plans in response to public hearings and emerged with a better set of recommendations. But some parents walked away feeling they had been steamrolled. They accused CPS officials of using stilted statistics, of courting kids in "gentrified" areas and marginalizing poor ones, and of experimenting on children. CPS changes didn't go far enough, they said.* (Rossi 2008)

> *In an interview, Rhee said the revisions [to school closure decisions] were more the result of individual arguments she heard in private meetings with parents and others than large community gatherings and demonstrations. "None of the changes were driven by people coming out to big meetings," Rhee said. "The way that was more productive was when small groups came to me and said, Here are our concerns, here are our ideas."* (Labbé and Nakamura 2008)

In the second excerpt, the "success" of small group meetings raises questions about access to decision makers; in this case in DC, "small groups" who scheduled private meetings, but not those that attended public meetings, seemed to exert influence. Within this sample coverage, I did not find critique or raised questions on this kind of accountability structure for district leaders. The news media miss an opportunity to hold school districts accountable for a level of transparency of both decision-making criteria and processes. Coverage does not raise questions about the specific rubrics and criteria, or question the modes of engagement by district leaders.

News media points to other modes of accountability that the public exercises beyond participation in public hearings or smaller meetings with decision makers. For example, coverage included organized protests about closures and other education policy decisions:

A small group of D.C. parents, teachers and residents rallied outside the John A. Wilson Building yesterday to protest city education policies, saying Mayor Adrian M. Fenty and Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee are not seeking advice from the public in their plans to close schools and fire administrative employees. In the first demonstration since the mayor took over the schools June 12, about two dozen people waved placards with slogans such as "We shall not be moved!" The group included parents and teachers from Bunker Hill, John Burroughs and West elementary schools and from Cardozo High School. (Labbé 2007)

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) announced today that it is planning a massive rally around Board of Education (BOE) headquarters on Wednesday, in protest against what the BOE called the proposed closing of 61 elementary school facilities will be "removed from our footprint." The rally, which is expected to draw thousands of educators, union members and citizens, ratchets up the pressure. The CTU is accelerating the pressure on the BOE and Mayor Rahm Emanuel to stop the school closings with the rally and debunking the reasoning behind the school closings. (*Chicago Examiner (IL)* 2013)

Still others turned to litigation, both locally and at the state level:

The 2009 state law that renewed mayoral control of schools required that the city hold public hearings and provide information on the effect of the closings. The city's teachers' union and the New York chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. sued the city, claiming that it had not met those requirements. (Medina 2010)

The Chicago Teachers Union filed a lawsuit Wednesday that seeks to keep 10 schools from being shuttered, the third such action aimed at reversing the Board of Education's approval last week of closing 49 elementary schools and a high school program. Unlike two federal lawsuits filed by parents that, among other things, allege discrimination, the CTU's lawsuit argues that Chicago Public Schools did not follow proper procedure in the 10 closures. It contends that CPS ignored recommendations of independent hearing officers who opposed the closings on the grounds that the district did not follow state law or its own guidelines for shutting schools. (Ahmed-Ullah 2013)

This coverage often links these modes of opposition to broader education policy issues, and to both the trajectory of decision-making process and outcome. This coverage also spans levels of government, and demonstrates the interconnections between federal law (e.g., Civil Rights laws), state policy making and budgeting, and local level impact and decision-making.

3.4.3 Post-Closure Impacts

The analysis also revealed that media coverage predominantly focused not on actual but rather perceived or anticipated impacts of closures, as articulated in the closure process by both decision makers and opponents. For advocates of closure, pre-closure catalysts and anticipated post-closure impacts are closely tied. If funding constraints, underutilized buildings, and poor academic achievement necessitate closures, then closures will "right-size" districts, yielding costs savings, better use of school facilities, and improved academic outcomes.

> *The school board approved a plan on Feb. 28 to close 22 schools to save money and boost achievement…The so-called "right-sizing" plan is intended to eliminate underused buildings and improve poor-performing schools.* (Zlatos 2006)

> *Last week, Fenty and Rhee announced a list of 23 schools that could be closed to save money. Fenty and Rhee have said the closures could save $23.6 million for the 49,600-student school system, money that could go toward academic offerings such as new technology, magnet programs and early childhood centers.* (Labbé 2007)

The anticipated benefits of school closure for academics are implicitly and explicitly juxtaposed against an imagined future of further decline.

> *Detroit Public Schools can't survive unless it downsizes. The district has roughly 60,000 more spaces in classrooms than it needs. Even the most conservative estimates say the district needs to close at least 70 schools to right size the system and avoid destroying educational programs.* (Editor 2007)

Opposition to closures is also couched in terms of anticipated impacts. Protesters voice concerns about loss of community, increased travel burdens, compromised student safety, limited academic opportunities, and neighborhood deterioration as the result of closures.

> *That's how fourth-grade teacher Shirlee Opdahl, a 21-year Pleasant Hill veteran, also describes the school's environment. This year, she anticipates having 14 in her class. "So many think a small school is bad," she said. "But if you look at it the other way, it's great because you do get to know everybody. You know the kids, know all the teachers. The teachers know all the kids. The families form their own community."* (Hetzner 2007)

> *…several students at Cooley were confused why their historic school will close while other schools they feel have more troubles and violence will remain open and receive upgrades. They fear gang problems after transferring to another school and believe others will drop out. Traveling far away to another school means taking at least two city buses while it's dark outside, sparking fears of being raped or harmed waiting for the bus, several female students said. "A lot of people like this school. I don't see why they are closing it down," said Sherri Payne, a Cooley student along with her twin, Terri.* (Schultz 2010)

> *District officials have said they need to shutter the 33 schools because of declining enrollment and budget problems. Foes of the plan had claimed the move will deny students access to education, cause them to walk longer distances to school through dangerous neighborhoods, merge them into schools that are more dangerous than the ones from which they came, and deny students access to English as a Second Language education programs.* (Mrozowski 2007)

This dichotomy between the technocratic rationality of decision makers and emotional rationality of parents and teachers emerges again. What also emerges are competing claims about educational quality – with decision makers arguing that closures are necessary to improve academic outcomes and opponents arguing that closures will hurt academic success. In both cases, post-closure impacts are speculative and future looking, and coverage does little to present context or additional evidence that may confirm the veracity of these claims.

Opponents articulated post-closure impacts not only through this future-looking orientation, but also through an historical lens. The social and symbolic value of schools came to the fore, as one of the greatest impacts was one of loss, to families, students, and neighborhoods:

> *Park View is an anchor of the neighborhood, he said, and Garnet-Patterson was the first African American junior high school in the city.* (Labbé and Nakamura 2008)

> *Board member Marilyn Simmons…said it would leave too many vacant buildings in the inner city, which she said would foster crime. "All I see is devastation," she said. "Why does the African--American community have to continue taking hits for this school district?"* (Smith 2005a)

Social and symbolic – emphasize the role that schools play not only as spaces of learning, but also as sites of community-building, meaning-making, and intergenerational connecting. These values ultimately proved secondary to the economic values that news coverage emphasized in their more detailed articulations of district rationales that focused on numerical references and financial considerations.

This focus on immediate issues echoes my findings in my in-depth research of the Philadelphia school closures. I have found that individuals articulate the catalysts, process, and impacts of closures differently in large part based on differential temporal frames. Those that focus on the present and future emphasize the current crisis of district finances and building utilization. Those that focus more on the past and present connect closures with long-standing social networks, past policy interventions, intergenerational connections, and longer standing structural injustices.

News media are generally focused on the present, looking for stories of "crisis" moments. Thus, news coverage will make choices of framing and simplification that may "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman 1993, 52) that is more in line with stakeholders who articulate the issues with a similar present-focused temporal frame. These choices will result in coverage of closure that privileges the logics and approaches of decision-makers and those that also emphasize the current crisis, rather than those who see school closures as linked to past systematic injustice or future longer-term impacts.

One more arena of post-closure impacts is political. In some communities, school closures become central features of elections.

> *Leading the pack among the GOP hopefuls were Mr. Meyer, Mr. Nudi, Mr. Wielgus, Mr. Barto and Mrs. Bender. One issue that has divided the candidates is a plan to close three elementary schools and to renovate or expand three others. The buildings slated for closing are Northway, Perrysville and Seville. Although the school board voted in November to approve the consolidation plan, some residents have urged reconsideration, and several hopefuls said they would review the issue. Mr. Wielgus and Mrs. Bender both*

voted for the consolidation plan while Mr. Meyer opposed it. (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (PA)* 2007)

Unless they lose in the general election to a third-party nominee or write-in candidate, the primary victors will join Dan Domalik, Joe Finucan, Dave Hommrich and Raeann Lindsey on the board as representatives of the "SOS Coalition," formed about two years ago in response to the board's intent to close schools in Castle Shannon and Green Tree, consolidating students at the elementary school and middle school in Dormont. (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review (PA)* 2013)

Decisions about previous closures may mar or bolster current campaigns for local school board, city council, and/or mayoral races, raising the personal stakes for decision makers.

3.5 Discussion

What does this mean for the democratic purposes of news media? Recall Opfer's three roles for news media as a democratic institution: civic forum, mobilizing agent, and watchdog (see Table 1) (2007, 173). In each of these arenas, sample coverage of school closures falls short of the ideals presented in Opfer's proposed research questions.

As a Civic Forum, news media is arguably "widely and easily available." My sample includes local papers of record – both liberal- and conservative-leaning. However, the coverage does not necessarily "reflect the political and cultural diversity within a society." The lack of coverage on racial disparities, and coverage that was predominantly centered on the closure process, limited exposure to opinions and ideas outside of those directly involved with public meetings and/or protests. My findings suggest that the depth of coverage strongly favored technocratic rationalities of decision makers, with more detail on these arguments. This led to a preponderance of coverage that emphasized the inevitability and dire circumstances of districts in this acute moment of crisis, rather than longer-term considerations or circumstances of students and teachers in closed schools. This masks the pluralistic nature of schools and school districts, in which diverse stakeholders articulate multiple values and sources of legitimacy (Deeds and Pattillo 2014). Media have reduced these plural meanings to two competing and singular motives; at best this was in the interest of simplification, at worst an effort to obscure and persuade. Regardless, in this way, media have done a disservice to creating space for dialogue and highlighting the ways in which closures and policy making are highly contested, plural, and interpretative processes.

Further, little news coverage addressed the actual impacts of closure. The attention to closure process and the anticipated impacts took precedent over post-closure coverage of building reuse, actual academic outcomes, and other impacts of closing schools. News media's preoccupation with conflict and crisis and limited resources for long-form journalism perhaps led to this focus. Without time and space to contextualize and historicize the present issue, media is left to report moments – in this case, moments of protest or closure. This convergence of policy issues and journalistic approach is unfortunate, however, given that arguments both for and against closures are about short, medium-, and long-term impacts. Sample news coverage fails to test the veracity of claims made during the closure process.

As a Mobilizing Agent, media coverage of school closures arguably falls short. The coverage reiterates the arguments of closure proponents, providing little context about broader education issues or the historical context that led to closures. As previously discussed, the

coverage of anticipated closure impacts provides information about speculative consequences, but does not "provide practical knowledge about the probable consequences." Over time, news coverage does not revisit or report back on these consequences either. Some of the coverage provides information about the closure process, and presents information about where and when the public can engage in the decision making process. However, most of the coverage is after-the-fact reporting of meetings and decision-making.

Sample coverage demonstrates the limited role of news media as a Watchdog. Coverage does not necessarily provide critical coverage or analysis of the closure plans or meetings. Without coverage of the longer-term impacts of closures, news media limits its role in holding officials accountable. Finally, sample coverage does represent two sides of the closure issues – those in favor and those against. However, depth of coverage privileges decision-makers, their crisis-orientation, and their use of technical data over more historically grounded and emotionally laden arguments of opponents. Further, there may be other positions or interests that are not represented at all, including those that offer alternatives to closure policies.

Despite research that has shown that closures have disproportionately negative impact on African American and Latino students (Good 2016; Kirshner, Gaertner, and Pozzoboni 2010; Research for Action 2013; Sunderman and Payne 2009; de la Torre and Gwynne 2009; Valencia 1984), very little coverage is devoted to issues of inequality and opportunity. This limits the news media's attention to diverse voices, leaving out questions of race and ethnicity. In the context of a highly racialized policy-making arena, and the persistent racial inequalities of public education funding and outcomes, this absence limits news media's ability to foster an inclusive civic forum and to serve as an effective watchdog addressing some of the most stark inequalities in public education.

3.6 Conclusion

My analysis documents the ways that news media coverage fosters a conflictual and dichotomous framing of closures. Media play an important role in defining problems, interpreting causes, and suggesting interventions. Using Opfer's framework of media as civic forum, mobilizing agent, and watchdog, this analysis reveals how newspaper media do not maximize their role as a democratic institution. Rather than capturing the complexity and multitude of perspectives on closures, they present one narrative of decision makers grounded in technical data juxtaposed with one counter-narrative of opponents grounded in emotional expression.

Proponents deploy rationality, data, and technical expertise to manage an inevitable and dire crisis. Opponents express their concerns through emotionally laden messaging. Both rely on speculative future impacts to make their case. Through their depth of coverage and attention to decision-making processes, media are predominantly sympathetic to the problem definition and causal interpretation of proponents. Thus, this analysis affirms the findings of previous studies on media coverage of educational reform policy issues, especially the general tone of inevitability of closures. Overall, the media coverage emphasizes institutional rationales and dynamics while de-prioritizing issues of inequality, segregation, and symbolic values of schools during closure processes.

Notably, this analysis focuses on newspaper media coverage, and not on the reception of or actions out of this coverage. There are no easy ways to impute from this analysis the impact of

the coverage on the public or on policy-makers in the cities studied or elsewhere. As Opfer states, "how the public experiences media coverage of education and the subsequent actions that result need to be studied" as well (Opfer 2007, 176). More extensive research in specific localities can shed light on the impact of these media framings on political action and lived experience of closures for students, parents, teachers, and neighborhood residents. Such research may examine the extent to which the media framings of school closures been adopted, redeployed, and/or challenged by policy makers, educators, and the general public.

Chapter 4. The Nexus of City Planning and Public Schools

4.1 Introduction

The role of schools in America's cities and neighborhoods is the subject of volumes of empirical inquiry, core to policy-making, and fodder for extensive political debate. Schools are key institutional actors in neighborhood change, urban housing markets, economic development, urban politics, and transportation planning. Schools serve as more than just spaces of learning; they are also social, political, and physical infrastructure in cities. Do school closures disrupt these roles and relationships? Does the sudden absence of this institution change its perceived or actual value? This chapter grapples with these questions by digging into the Philadelphia case of school closures, sales, and reuse.

This chapter proceeds as follows: First, I describe the multi-disciplinary literature on the nexus between schools and cities. Based on this literature, I develop a conceptual framework with three categories that clarify schools' values to cities: economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic. By making implicit values explicit, this conceptual framework can help bridge between empirical and theoretical projects and the world of lived experience. I use this conceptual framework to present my findings, and use my findings to test the limits of these values. I conclude with a discussion of and implications for future research and practice at the intersection of planning and public education, and preview the topics of Chapter 5 on frames of closures, sales, and reuse deployed in Philadelphia.

4.2 Established Relationships between Schools, Neighborhoods, and Cities

In an oft-cited parable, six blind men try agree on an elephant's characteristics. Each feels a different part, and is sure that they have the answer: the one at the leg says the elephant is like a pillar, the one at the tail says it is like rope, and so on. A wise man passes by, seeing the elephant and blind men arguing. He assures them that they are each correct; the elephant is the sum of all these individual features.

The city-school nexus is a proverbial elephant in the room, and across a wide set of disciplines, scholars have tried to parse the ways that schools affect individuals, communities, and city life – and vice versa. Each makes an important contribution, but disciplinary silos inherently paint a fragmented picture, creating challenges to the translation of research into practice. The following literature review juxtaposes this body of diverse scholarship, in all of its complexity and contradiction, to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the trans-disciplinary and multi-scalar realities on the ground.

4.2.1 Human Capital, Geographies of Opportunity, and Housing Markets

Schools serve as the primary institution for building human capital by imparting new skills and knowledge to individuals (G. S. Becker 1962). Increasing one's human capital is the mechanism for individual social mobility through increased earnings. These individual outcomes then contribute to city and regional workforce and economic development.[39]

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[39] Others suggest that rather than investments in individuals or families, schools serve as spaces of social reproduction in an inherently unequal capitalistic society. Through "hidden curriculum," schools transmit particular consciousness and behavior modifications necessary for perpetuating the current relationships and hierarchies within society. Schools are instruments of a larger system reproducing the "social relationships of economic life" and

Unfortunately, inadequate and inequitable resources that align to race and class segregation across metropolitan areas compromise the efficacy of schools to support this kind of human capital investment. The mutually reinforcing conditions of neighborhoods and schools create "uneven geographies of opportunity," or spatial patterns of resources and risks, that contribute to disparities between African American and Latino people and their White and Asian counterparts in the short and long-term (Da Silva et al. 2007; G. C. Galster and Killen 1995).

Neighborhoods in the United States are highly segregated by race and class (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). Where families live is closely tied to where their children attend school, but families have not always had full agency in making housing choices. Persistently segregated neighborhoods are the result of decades of intentional public and private interventions, including zoning policies; federal housing and transportation policies that enabled and inspired "white flight" from central cities to outer lying suburbs; and private sector and individual discriminatory practices (Benjamin 2012; Jackson 1987; Silver 1997; Sugrue 2005). These policies and individual actions have facilitated a cycle of segregation and inequality across metropolitan areas with concentrations of wealth in some areas and poverty in others (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). Because schools are more often funded by property taxes, the isolation of lower income people in the city means lower tax base to fund basic city services and schools as compared with the wealthier suburbs.

Living in segregated neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and with housing instability has long-lasting effects on residents' educational attainment, employment, and mental and physical health (Sampson 2011; Crane 1991; G. C. Galster 2010; Ellen and Turner 1997; Jencks et al. 1990; W. J. Wilson 1987; Ludwig et al. 2001; Mueller and Tighe 2007; Vliet 1986). Neighborhood segregation is coupled with metropolitan fragmentation into separate school districts, leading to deeply entrenched patterns of race and class school segregation (Ayscue and Orfield 2016; Rothstein 2014). Racially segregated, high-poverty schools are generally under-resourced, have higher suspension rates, employ less experienced teachers, and have higher teacher turnover (Carter, Welner, and Ladson-Billings 2013; Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley 2012; Grubb 2009). Students attending these schools are more likely to drop out and have lower academic performance (Goldsmith 2009; Logan, Minca, and Adar 2012; Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley 2012; Owens 2010). In other words, the spaces that set the "conditions for learning" (neighborhoods and cities) and places of learning (schools) are intricately connected and mutually reinforcing.

This relationship between school quality and residential neighborhood is central to people's housing location choices, and is intricately tied to housing markets. The extent to which schools and school quality are capitalized in housing values has been the subject of significant volumes of research by educational economists.[40] This scholarship faces a number of data and methodological challenges. Much of the scholarship has been focused on trying new methods to

economic inequality (Bowles and Gintis 1976, 11). In this perspective, the isolation of high poverty schools in segregated neighborhoods is fulfilling the role of schools in social reproduction in teaching young people and their families where they sit in the social and capitalist hierarchy, and that they should expect to be recipients of social welfare. This analysis reflects an understanding of class systems as a relational rather than a gradational system, defined by more than just occupational status. This relational understanding implies that one has some consciousness of where she sits relative to others in the class system, defined by differential levels of authority and autonomy (Wright et al. 1982).

[40] For reviews of the literature prior to 1999 see Ross and Yinger (1999). For reviews on the literature since then see Black and Machin (2011) and Nguyen-Hoang and Yinger (2011).

overcome data limitations and confirm robust findings. For example, the interrelated nature of school, housing, and neighborhood quality raise questions of endogeneity, making it difficult for researchers to isolate the effects of schools. Likewise, Bayer, et al. find that "conditional on neighborhood income, households prefer to self-segregate on the basis of both race and education" (2007, 4) further confirming the links between race and class segregation in neighborhoods and schools.

Despite these challenges and the diversity of methods and study sites, "almost all of this work shows a significant statistical association between housing valuations and school quality" and that parents "are prepared to pay sizable sums of money for access to better performing schools" (Black and Machin 2011, 515). Different studies find different increases in housing prices for different levels of increases in school quality (measured by school test scores). Black and Machin estimate that "the magnitude of the average causal impact is that a one standard deviation increase in test scores raises house prices by around 3 percent" (2011, 515). Nguyen-Hoang and Yinger similarly find that across a number of studies "house values rise by 1–4% for a one-standard-deviation increase in student test scores" (2011, 46). Furthermore, once living in a neighborhood, individual homeowners near a higher-quality school may invest more in upkeep (Horn 2015).

Schools are also tied to transportation infrastructure; the proximity of housing to a child's school affects mode choice (Banerjee, Uhm, and Bahl 2014; McDonald 2008). As education policy increasingly promotes school choice, a student's home neighborhood is disaggregated from her school neighborhood. This can affect mode choice and travel time for students and families (Makarewicz 2013; E. J. Wilson et al. 2010).

4.2.2   Schools as Tools for Neighborhood Revitalization

The capitalization into housing (and by extension neighborhood) values offers an opportunity for economic development and neighborhood revitalization through school improvement. Patterns of segregation, neighborhood effects, and capitalization have led some scholars to interrogate the possibility of school improvement as a strategy for economic development and/or revitalization at the neighborhood level, as a way to mitigate growing inequality across cities.[41] The "direction" of the relationship is not well understood; in other words, are school improvements instruments of neighborhood revitalization, or does neighborhood revitalization support or catalyze school improvement?

Some have argued that schools serve as anchor institutions in neighborhoods, and thus school improvements will strengthen the quality and role of that anchor in revitalization (Khadduri et al. 2003; Patterson and Silverman 2013; Patterson and Silverman 2014; Varady and Raffel 1995; Weiss 2004). This role occurs in two ways: by supporting new, higher-income residents and improving outcomes for incumbent, lower-income residents. First, schools are part of the "bundle of goods" that make neighborhoods attractive to those that have choices about where they live (Tiebout 1956). A high-quality school is a prerequisite to attract households of choice – middle and upper income households – to struggling neighborhoods. The assumption is

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[41] This inequality stems from the fact that school funding is largely determined by local property tax dollars. Thus, communities that experience premiums on their housing because of their high quality schools then benefit from a higher tax base to reinvest in their already-high quality schools. And vice versa for higher-poverty areas with lower-quality schools and smaller tax base.

that these higher income households will catalyze and/or foster neighborhood revitalization.[42] Second, some suggest that improving the educational opportunities of incumbent residents will also foster neighborhood revitalization (although the mechanisms of this are not clear) (Khadduri et al. 2003).

This research has relied primarily on qualitative case study methods, and often was driven by large-scale neighborhood investments through federal programs like HOPE VI. They also center on improvements to elementary schools, which are generally considered to be more "neighborhood-based" and important in housing choice. Finally, they often analyze the cross-sector collaboration and coordination across multiple agencies (e.g., housing authorities, city governments, non-profit organizations, school districts, etc.), rather than focusing on specific outcomes of students, schools, households, or neighborhoods.

Critics of these kinds of large-scale housing and education reform interventions also conceptualize schools as catalysts of revitalization, but at the expense of incumbent residents. They argue that the push for mixed income housing and school improvements (through charter schools or other education reform strategies) advocated by federal programs like HOPE VI and similar local-level initiatives like Chicago's Renaissance 2010 or mass school closures in places like Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Detroit are strategies to displace low-income residents and communities of color. These critiques suggest that improving schools is one tool in a larger policy toolbox aimed at restructuring urban space through the attraction of higher-income white households at the expense of low-income households of color (Lipman 2008; Lipman 2009).[43]

Other recent research examines the opening of charter schools and their relationship to neighborhood revitalization, and has turned to quantitative methods to tackle questions of directionality/causality between school and neighborhood improvement.[44] Burdick-Will, et al. found that in Chicago "new schools are opened in neighborhoods that are increasingly socio-economically advantaged, but also more heavily minority" (2013, 18). This study used a number

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[42] This assumption is central to the policy and scholarly advocacy for mixed income housing and neighborhoods. This advocacy is grounded in four theoretical propositions about the benefits of mixed income housing and neighborhoods (G. Galster 2007; M. L. Joseph, Chaskin, and Webber 2007; M. L. Joseph 2006). First, scholars suggest that residents living in poverty benefit from increased social networks with new residents of different income levels, which enhance social capital and potentially opens up new avenues to jobs. Second, scholars argue that higher income residents bring more social control to neighborhoods by instituting rules and norms in the neighborhood that mitigate social disorganization, resulting in more safe neighborhoods. Third, scholars purport that higher income residents serve as role models in ways that modify the behavior of lower income residents by encouraging behaviors like daily work habits, and home ownership. Finally, through a theory of "political economy of place," scholars argue that higher income residents with more political clout and knowledge to navigate government, can better advocate for and bring in additional public and private resources for neighborhood services, amenities, and maintenance. To date the empirical research is limited as to how these four theoretical propositions play out in reality.

[43] However, others argue that because charter school providers are mission-driven and aim to serve the most disadvantaged students, new charter schools open in challenged neighborhoods, not facing revitalization prospects. (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley,&Wand 2011; Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2002; Miron & Nelson, 2002; RPP International, 2000; Yancey, 2002).

[44] There are many limitations to each of the individual studies that take on these questions. One major limitation is the underlying assumption that charter schools deliver a higher quality education, which empirical research has shown to not be true ("Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States" 2009; "Urban Charter School Study Report on 41 Regions" 2015). Perhaps because of significant data limitations, few studies look at other school improvement strategies and interventions in traditional district-run neighborhood schools.

of neighborhood metrics to measure "revitalization" including increases in education, income, and home ownership rates. For some charter school providers opening up new schools, it appears that the current conditions of the neighborhood (as revitalizing or not) are important location decisions; the impact of the new school on catalyzing new or sustaining this existing revitalization is unclear: "It remains to be seen whether these schools will become anchors of sustained neighborhood improvement and will help keep these middle-income families in the city and in the public school system over the long term (Burdick-Will, Keels, and Schuble 2013, 20). Davis and Oakley (2013) look at the extent to which charter school emergence is tied to gentrification. Their findings suggest "that charter school emergence is a tool of urban revitalization efforts and school reform [and that] although school improvement and urban revitalization efforts may have a symbiotic relationship, the emergence of charters is not always related to gentrification—even if they are opening at the same time as revitalization efforts" (2013, 19).

Some scholars have moved away from looking at large-scale federal intervention. For example, Steif (2015) argues that scholars and practitioners of urban economic development neglect K-12 education and therefore put at risk "both human capital potential of individuals and the economic potential of entire neighborhoods…the likely fate of these places is either continued stagnation and decline or increased economic inequality" (2015, 5). Using the case of a university-assisted school in West Philadelphia, Steif measures the impact on housing values and extends this value to overall tax base to advocate for a "School Improvement District." The SID repurposes "the Business Improvement District framework to fund local schools, but instead of bounding the District to include a homogenous area (like a downtown, for instance), this intervention suggests the demarcation of a mixed-income neighborhood," and suggests that the schools within a SID "can foster both equitable neighborhood economic development and increased human capital development" (Steif 2015, 9).

Horn (2015) takes a different approach to understand the role that school quality may play in improving the physical housing stock in New York City. She uses "detailed building level investment data in New York City as well as measures of school performance" and finds a statistically "significant relationship between performance in math and English Language Arts and property owner capital investment behavior." She estimates that "a one standard deviation improvement in test scores is associated with a 2.5 percent increase in dollars invested in a building" (2015).

4.2.3   Physical Centrality for Social- and Political-Capital Building

Normative urban design ideas have placed schools as central features in the physical landscape of cities (Lawhon 2009; Mumford 1938; Vitiello 2006). Mumford (1938) commented that "the spotting and inter-relationship of *schools*, libraries, theaters, community centers, is the first task in defining the urban neighborhood and laying down the outlines of an integrated city" (emphasis added). He echoes Clarence Perry's 1929 neighborhood design, which carefully placed a school building "so that a child's walk to school was only about one-quarter of a mile and no more than one-half mile and could be achieved without crossing a major arterial street" (Lawhon 2009, 4).

With a strong and idealized notion of physical determinism, neighborhoods were designed such that the indoor and outdoor school facilities "could further opportunities for social interaction, social activism, and serve as a source of community identification" (Lawhon 2009, 9). These ideas persist today and are echoed in today's urban design conventions, advocacy for

community use of school spaces, and transportation planning ("National Trust for Historic Preservation: Protecting Older and Historic Schools," n.d.; Filardo et al. 2010; Vincent 2006; McDonald 2008; "Coalition for Community Schools" 2016).

Schools thus function as physical landmarks in the landscape; they are unique, memorable, and easily identifiable with a prominent location in the neighborhood (Lynch 1960, 78–79). These elements of their physical form are key elements in the construction of individuals' cognitive map of their cities and neighborhoods, the cultivation of place attachment, and the "power of place" (Hayden 1997). Individual and collective histories are embodied in the physical components of the urban landscape – like schools – which therefore become "storehouses for these social memories" (Hayden 1997).[45]

This physical centrality implies a social centrality. In the physical deterministic frame of planning and urban design, schools as physical centers of neighborhoods presumed they would also serve as centers of social community. The policies of school districts meant that this was generally true – attendance boundaries were geographically determined so that where a family lived, their child also attended school.

Schools may also be part of a larger welfare state apparatus aimed at redistribution and facilitated through spatial units – like neighborhoods. Katz (2012) defines the welfare state by examining "the mechanisms through which legislators, service providers, and employers, whether public, private, or a mix of the two, try to prevent or respond to poverty, illness, dependency, economic security, and old age" (Katz 2012). Public schools have acted as sites of social service delivery (through direct program provision) and economic redistribution (through equity-based federal, state, and local school financing). This is reflected in more recent efforts of the community schools movement, for example.[46]

The physical location of schools facilitates routines, interactions, and ultimately increased social capital. Historically, schools were used as instruments of constructing exclusionary physical and social spaces, and the vehicles for perpetuating segregation in the North and South (Highsmith and Erickson 2015; Erickson 2012; Lassiter 2012). Perry's ideas about neighborhood schools were deeply segregationist, with a strong belief that community building required racial homogeneity (Highsmith and Erickson 2015). More recently, researchers and practitioners suggest that schools serve as "amenities, local resources, and forums for interaction and collective action" in neighborhoods (M. Joseph and Feldman 2009, 232). Schools "link individuals together in unintended ways that enhance collective oriented tasks" (Sampson 2011, 233), and may promote "child-related social capital" (Nast and Blokland 2013).

As implied by the normative planning design, empirical research has shown that in fact the physical location of schools does create particular "spatial organization of routine activities and everyday behavior settings [that permit] a variety of social interactions" (Sampson 2011, 234)(Bowles and Gintis 1976)(Bowles and Gintis 1976). These interactions help build trust among school community members, and foster a safe, pro-social environment, a sense of belonging, and a communal identity (Kirshner, Gaertner, and Pozzoboni 2010; Witten, McCreanor, and Kearns 2007). Further, schools may be important spaces for social mixing in

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[45] School buildings embody "power of place" because of the dialectical relationship of their physicality and social community (Lefebvre 1991).
[46] See e.g., The Coalition for Community Schools: http://www.communityschools.org/

newly revitalized mixed-income, multiracial housing developments (M. Joseph and Feldman 2009).

Schools are also spaces for collective action. In the early 1900s, urban schools were sites of political engagement around issues of neighborhood resources and immigrant assimilation. At this time, as industrial development catalyzed urban development, people moved to urban areas and ethnic, racial, and class groups became organized (in part voluntarily and in part coercively) in particular neighborhoods. These working classes also organized around issues, including education, in the communities in which they lived. Thus, "schools became important locations in the shaping of American political culture" (Katznelson and Weir 1985, 11), and schools emerge as sites of ethnic and territorial contestation. Educational politics for an American working class "had less to do with social class and the state than with questions of neighborhood, ethnic diversity, and cultural assimilation" (Katznelson and Weir 1985, 30)(Katznelson and Weir 1985).

In the 1960s and 70s, many White parents pushed a segregationist agenda, while many disenfranchised groups of people – including the poor, Black and working class people, and immigrants – mobilized and advocated for desegregation or local community control of schools (J. Scott 2011; Stulberg 2016a). More recently, communities have organized at the neighborhood level for school improvements and developed citywide coalitions for education policy changes (Shirley 1997; Stone 2001; Warren 2011).

4.3 Multidimensional Values of Schools

Unpacking the nexus between cities and schools is much like learning about the proverbial elephant; scholars blindly follow their own disciplinary path (i.e., economists asking questions about human capital or housing markets, sociologists those of social capital, political scientists those of organizing, etc.). But the lived experience of a school in a city is more complex and simultaneously multi-scalar than any one of these approaches in isolation can capture. Understanding the convergences and tensions across these disciplinary constructs, and the ways that they manifest in neighborhoods and cities is less well documented.

Following, I present a conceptual framework to juxtapose these multi-disciplinary approaches side by side, and parse how schools matter to neighborhoods (see Figure 15). This framework provides a set of categories – to transcend disciplinary divisions and capture the multi-dimensional ways that schools matter to neighborhoods and cities – economically, socio-spatially, and symbolically. My framework surfaces what I see as three implicit ways that schools are *valued* in neighborhoods. Each of these values – economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic – has shaped empirical questions and approaches across disciplines.

Figure 15. Conceptual Framework: Schools' Value in Cities as Found in Scholarship
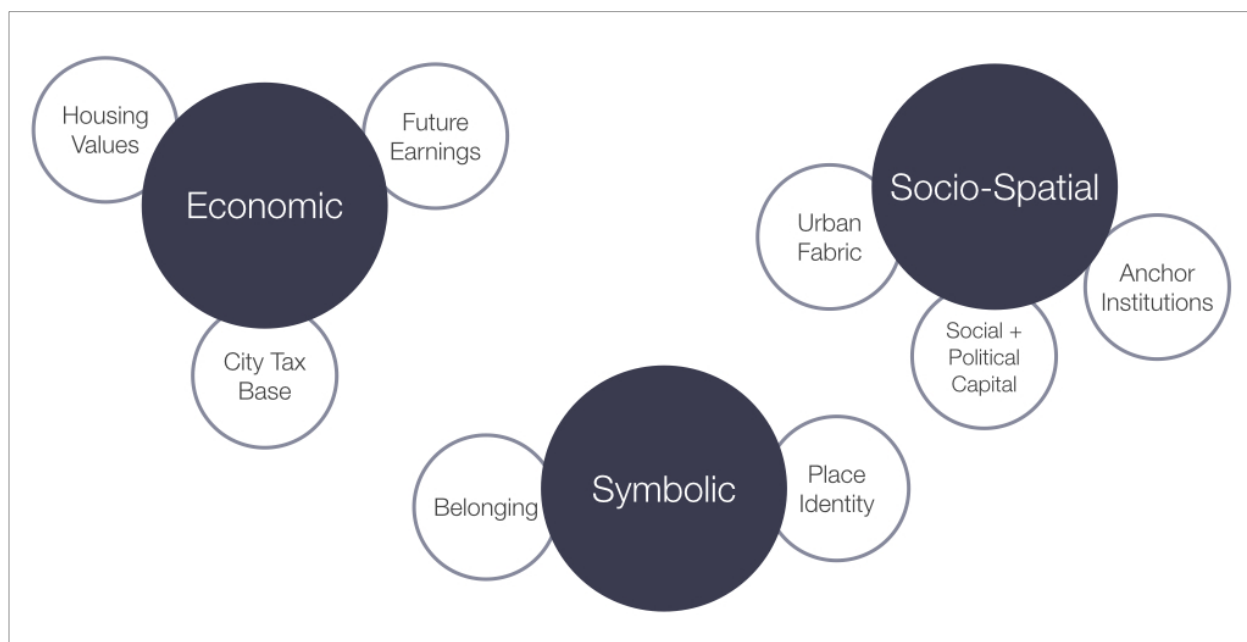
First, schools' value is economic. Schools improve individual earnings and social mobility through human capital investments. They support neighborhood, city, and regional economic growth through workforce development and as a tool of firm attraction and retention. They also contribute to housing market dynamics; good schools raise property values and serve as markers of wealth and value. School quality is tied to a city's tax base, and can play a role in neighborhood economic development as well.

Second, schools' serve important socio-spatial purposes to neighborhoods and cities. As large pieces of physical infrastructure in neighborhoods, schools punctuate the urban fabric. They offer spaces for social interaction, community building, and political mobilization, and are a hub for social service delivery.

Finally, schools' hold symbolic value, fostering collective identity and a sense of belonging. Scholarship on both open and closed schools emphasizes the ways that schools signal belonging among people who identify with the school community (e.g., students, parents, staff, faculty, and alumni) and as the embodiment of collective histories and memories.

In reality, schools may do the "work" of all of these domains; they are simultaneously spaces of learning and skills building, landmark buildings and hubs of activity, and spaces of meaning-making. I have developed this framework from the existing literature described above, which assumes an open and operational school. [47] But what happens when a school closes? Does the sudden absence of this institution change its perceived or actual value? How can the extreme case of school closures affirm, advance, or critique these values? What might these differences

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[47] To some extent, they also assume a high quality school as well, although where there are not high quality schools the value is implicitly negative (e.g., industry attraction is benefited by high quality schools and hurt by low-quality schools).

tell us about experiences of neighborhood life and urban change more broadly? I now turn to my empirical case of school closures in Philadelphia to answer these questions.

4.4 Extending Schools' Values

Using the conceptual framework above, my research answers two specific questions: Do school closures disrupt the roles and relationships between schools and their neighborhoods? To what extent does the sudden absence of this institution change its perceived or actual value – economically, socio-spatially, or symbolically? By situating school closures in larger issues of neighborhood change and planning processes, and considering schools as redevelopment sites, the findings presented here extend (rather than merely affirm) the values found in prior scholarship (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Conceptual Framework: Schools' Value in Cities as Found in Scholarship and Philadelphia
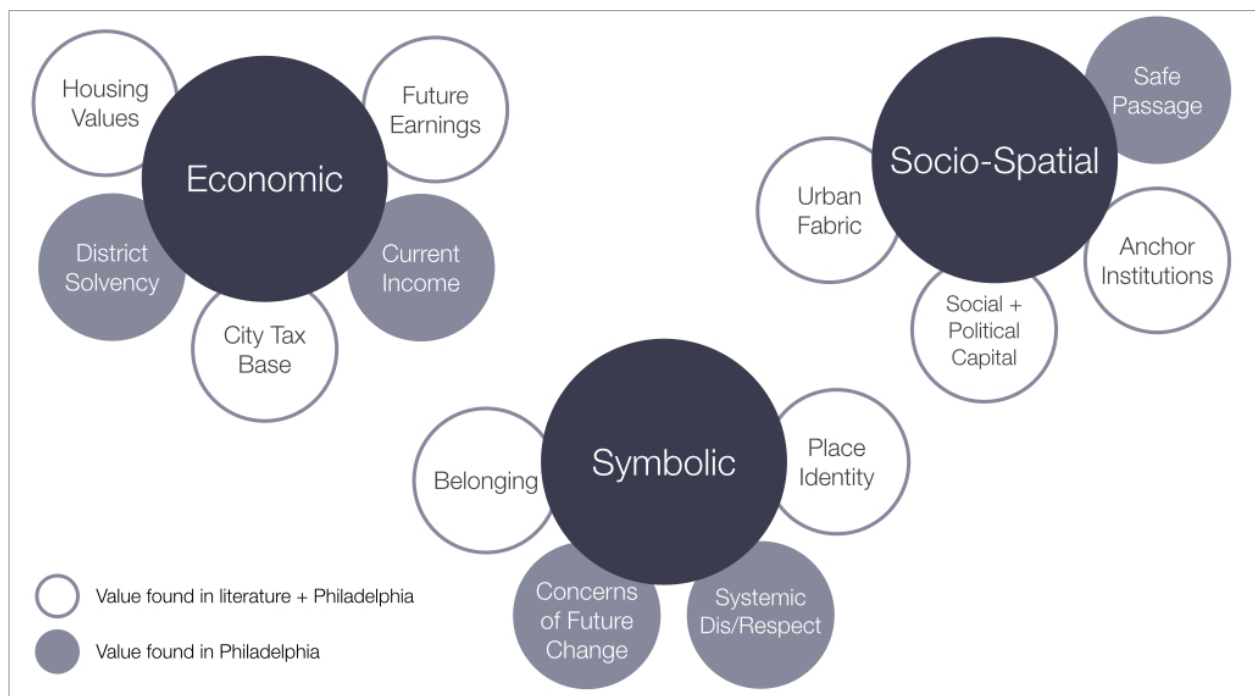
The Philadelphia case affirms the economic value of schools in terms of individual earnings and city economic development. It extends the economic value, as well, and illustrates how schools are a current job creator and deeply bound up with district fiscal solvency, neighborhood real estate markets, and private profit making.

This case also affirms the socio-spatial values found in the literature. It also clarifies the socio-spatial value of schools by delineating sharper distinctions among stakeholders' neighborhood mental maps. School closures also highlight the ways that school buildings can have a negative socio-spatial value.

Finally, school closures in Philadelphia illustrate the ways that schools have symbolic value as spaces of belonging and are important to place identity. They also reveal two additional dimensions of the symbolic values of schools. First, closures stand in for larger processes of neighborhood change and what is to come in neighborhoods, triggering or exacerbating fears about gentrification or continued disinvestment. Second, decisions about schools represent a

larger and historically racialized relationship between particular communities and the public sector, one that is defined by systemic respect or disrespect.

4.4.1 Economic Values

In the literature, schools have economic value along a number of dimensions. First, schools are an instrument to improve individual earnings and social mobility through human capital investments. Second, they contribute to housing market dynamics, in which school quality drives housing location choices and high quality schools are capitalized into housing prices. Third, schools support neighborhood, city, and regional economic growth through workforce development and as a tool of firm attraction and retention. Three additional dimensions of economic value of schools emerged through my interviews in Philadelphia. First, schools are an employment center, often for neighborhood residents. Second, schools are assets or liabilities that contribute to school district fiscal solvency. Third, schools are redevelopment sites, linked to neighborhood real estate markets and vehicles for private profit making.

An open school contributes to human capital-building, and serves as a site of employment, supporting the city's tax base. Open, but under-utilized school in disrepair or recently closed schools are liabilities on the school district's ledger. However, the potential sale represents potential revenue for the district and profit for a developer. In the context of closure, a schools' value is reduced to a dollar amount. Open schools and vacant closed schools are positioned as financial liabilities to the school district, and barriers to the district achieving fiscal solvency. The high costs of keeping schools open in the context of decreasing state support and growing budget deficits justified closures. In the short term, selling closed school buildings would generate revenue for the district. In the long term, closing schools would save the district money in ongoing maintenance and operations. Once buildings are sold, their reuse may bring profit to developers and depending on their reuse, enhancing the city's tax base.

These economic values of schools were a prominent theme throughout my interviews. Some respondents focused on the individual economic value of schools, as suggested in the literature on human capital. A police officer talked about the lack of structure in many children's home life and the role of the school in filling that gap:

> *[W]e have one objective and that's to make sure that we do the best we can raising this child, so they can have a good start in life. Education - I'll tell you, education is key. And more in the high school years. Just put these children in a position to go to college.*

He went on to talk about the human capital building role of the school district, and the ways that schools fell down on this job:

> *[A] large number of young men – the school system hasn't done the job that it needed to do. So now you have people, who want to work but can't find work because they don't have the skill set. And then they turn to things to survive…How do you get people to get the jobs that are out there if they don't have the skill sets to get there?*

Another respondent, based at an organization that is focused on economic development and industry/firm attraction and retention, expressed the importance of high quality education for these ends:

> *So the [school] district itself is important to the city's overall economic vitality in a real sense because – people don't like to hear it this way – but the school district has a product. Every year it graduates more people that need to get hired and if the district is*

stable and it generates a good product, that students that are prepared for post-secondary education or work then that's healthy for the city. And like many urban districts that are having a hard time doing that, employers will say it's tough to find young people that are sort of up to snuff with really math skills and those sorts of skills. So it feeds into it. A lot of higher end employers will look to the city and one of the reasons they're attracted to it is the institutions – so the universities represent a talent pool and they say well that's a great help, that's why I want to be here. I don't like your tax structure, I don't like your expensive real estate, I don't like this, but I do like that the people I need to take my business to the next level are here. We find more of that on the professional services and the research and sciences side. The college or graduate educated young people live in town, and they don't want to commute to the suburbs... So there's an interplay between workforce and location decisions by a certain cut of the economy. There would be as well with a stronger, solid school district as well. If a high school diploma gave the employer confidence that the person was solid all around, then that would be good.

The speaker talks about the links between overall city economic vitality and the efficacy of the school district. The efficacy is defined along human capital lines where students are identified as "products," in which the district invests in skills building that ultimately get capitalized into firm attraction.

Staff in the Mayor's office also tied the vitality of the school district to city health and wellbeing:

This Mayor came in, and education was a big part of what he wanted to do. He basically didn't care that he didn't run the schools. He felt that the schools were – you know, having a strong public education system was very important to the economic health of the city, to the public safety – to, I mean, pretty much anything you want to look at.

Early in his tenure, the Mayor put out goals "of doubling the college graduation rate and the high school graduation rate." His office helps coordinate social service supports to at-risk youth, seeking multifold investments in individuals. In this way, schools are seen as part of a larger rubric for poverty alleviation and social mobility, which was echoed by others in the city.

The economic value of schools for human capital was put into stark relief by school closures. One city council staff member, talked about the impacts of school closure on local communities: "The first and prime most thing that people can't forget is that this community has lost an educational resource in this community. And education is seen as a necessary tool to move out of poverty." These economic values were also palpable for neighborhood residents. In a group interview, residents living near the Edward W. Bok Technical High School in South Philadelphia talked about the value of vocational education:

Respondent A: *It's a loss for the city - it's a loss for the people looking for good jobs, even the auto mechanics.*

Respondent B: *You're always going to need an auto mechanic - everyone in this country either owns a car or rents a car. Or culinary arts – there are so many restaurants in this city! You need plumbers. Maybe we don't have manufacturing jobs but you're always going to need skilled electricians and plumbers and mechanics and construction workers.*

And I like to know that the guy messing around with my electricity knows something about it.

Respondent A: *That's not a loss [only] for the neighborhood, that's a loss for this entire region. I don't know how we bring it back because now the building is not going to be there and accessible for all of that stuff. But I think there - it drives me nuts when I hear our president say "and every kid should have a college education." I do not believe that because I think you set people up to fail when you say that. But they have an aptitude for something. So let's play to their skills.*

Here, local residents recognize the value of technical education not only to individuals for income and social mobility, but also for the economic vitality of the city and the region. They spoke of the relationship between the loss of manufacturing in Philadelphia since the 1970s, and the unavailability of a skilled workforce.

In addition to training the workforce, schools also employed a workforce – teachers, staff, janitors, cafeteria workers, crossing guards, and others. Some neighborhood schools drew employees from the immediate neighborhood. Many neighborhood residents shared that they or family members worked in neighborhood schools as aides, janitors, and other core staff. In one conversation at a local art event, a former teacher talked about the disruption closures created for her; she was reassigned to a school outside of her home neighborhood and thus had a much longer commute across town.

This teacher's experience speaks to the concerns about the personnel impacts of closures. Research on the fiscal impacts of closures suggests that closures do not necessarily result in mass lay-offs (Dowdall 2011). However, what this analysis has not done is link personnel impacts spatially to the surrounding neighborhood. Thus, while in the aggregate, staff may not get laid off, and rather moved around a district, the impacts in the immediate neighborhood and on travel for residents who formerly worked within walking distance of their homes is not discussed.

My findings also revealed another dimension of a schools' economic value. In Philadelphia, schools were understood as capital assets or liabilities for the school district, and situated within broader local real estate development markets. The district's dire financial situation because of cuts to state and local funding and the pressures that charter schools place on district-run school budgets were a critical motivation for the decision to close schools. As one district staff member explained:

We did a really good job on the narrative of we're in serious financial distress [and as] one of the means to achieve savings, we were going to implement a large amount of school closures.

Tight finances put local governments and school districts into a scarcity mentality that presents further cuts and "austerity measures" as inevitable (Hinkley 2015). In the case of closures, retrenchment in funding coupled with declining enrollment also led to fewer dollars for building maintenance and rehabilitation. With buildings underutilized and in poor (often dangerous) condition, district decision makers argued that closures are the obvious and inevitable intervention. Fiscal dynamics of public education are thus seen as a zero sum game, with schools as commodities and a finite set of resources to manage them. This perspective views closures not as discriminatory or damaging to students and communities, but rather as "right-sizing," and a strategy that ultimately fosters equity by redistributing limited resources.

Understanding schools as a source of financial liability or potential cost-savings relies on a quantification of the schools' value in dollars as well as along other metrics. In policy documents, public meetings, and interviews, district and city staff and residents talked about building utilization rates, facilities condition indices, academic performance scores, and numbers of "high quality seats," and ongoing operations and maintenance costs. Quantification in decision-making is arguably a political act, transforming "the thing being measured…into its statistical indicator and displac[ing] political disputes into technical disputes about methods" (Rose 1999, 205). This moves also divorces schools from any social, cultural, or spatial context; if the value of the school is not quantifiable, it literally and figuratively does not count (Caven 2015).

These numbers provided justification for and yielded a sense of inevitability around closure decisions not only for decision makers but also for residents and non-profit leaders (respectively):

> *You have these hulking enormous buildings that cost a gazillion dollars to heat and maintain. People don't want to say it, and I'll say it and people would probably hate me for it, but you can't keep them open…You can't have a school building for 1,000 kids with 300 kids in it.*

> *It's probably something that had to be done. You've got this big old albatross of a building, right? And you hardly got any students in it.*

Even those that did not necessarily agree with closures expressed the ways that the school district structured its process around this narrative of finances and the economic value of schools. One resident said:

> *I don't know if [the community] would have been successful [keeping the school open] because the school system is about the bottom line, and they had low attendance. It wasn't cost effective.*

This attention to cost effectiveness and efficiency was also reflected in the articulation of a larger set of trade-offs between expenditures on closed school buildings and open educational programs. As one staff of a quasi-public agency said:

> *I think what the important thing is, from a resource allocation point of view, is to get them out of the school district's – off their cost ledger. Because those costs they're at a point, maybe it will improve, but they're at a point where if you take a dollar to take an old school from becoming a nightmare, then that's a dollar that's not going into an academic program. You're robbing from Peter to pay Paul…I don't think there's a vast cushion where they have some extra cash. No nurse, no counselor – it's like that and so in that stark contrast and choice environment, you have to make hard decisions…if you have someone [a buyer] who can execute, and you have confidence in them – that was in my perspective was more valuable than the offer…Because otherwise you're going to stay in the closed school business. And every day you stay in the closed school business, you're not in the open school business. Take the Band-Aid off all at once – just get it – it's like a convulsion – it's a terrible situation for the district, but let's try to get it behind them so they can focus on the future and I don't think that those buildings, as long as they continue to languish and be on their books – I think that's a distraction. It's a psychological distraction, it's a resource distraction, it's a personnel distraction, it's not*

a good thing. It would be great if there were more resources and they weren't in that position, but they are.

Other respondents also recognized the financial trade-offs of managing closed buildings. A police officer in South Philadelphia spoke about the maintenance of vacant school buildings in his police district:

Now you've got weeds growing up out of the concrete and it's like, well, who takes care of it? You know? And the answer frankly is nobody. The School District of Philadelphia's standpoint is, well, we're not going to leave any standing force behind because then that's a waste of our personnel, you know, money, tax dollars, it's somebody's salary.

Fiscal dynamics of public education are thus seen as a zero sum game between open and closed schools. The trade-offs presented as rationales for closure represent a process of commensuration, wherein a common quantitative metric is developed to measure things that are qualitatively different. Through commensuration, value "is derived from the trade-offs made among the different aspects of a choice" (Espeland and Stevens 1998, 317).

Finally, closures, sales, and reuse in Philadelphia position schools as redevelopment sites, with value in local real estate markets and vehicles for private profit making. Closing and selling schools were seen as a source of revenue, as described by a staff member involved in the sales process:

The whole purpose was to do two things. To sell properties to generate revenue and I think what got, or what doesn't get a ton of attention – is selling the properties also frees up the district from the operating liability of those properties.

The valuation of schools as commodities required an appropriate way to monetize schools. Many numbers had been cited to express the monetary value of schools, none of which came from a simple calculation (Fiedler 2013). These market-driven assessments were not necessarily well-aligned with either the appraised values or asking prices (Brey 2014). Debates and questions had been raised about the numbers from the Office of Property Assessment assessed value, the district's asking price, and the final sales price. Some have argued that they are not even well-aligned with the actual value of the land (Geeting 2014; Geeting 2013).[48]

For the most part, decision-makers relied on "the market" to both determine its sales price and consider final offers. School district employees and those from the quasi-public agency involved in the sales process talked about the market as having significant agency in setting sales price and pointing towards reuse:

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[48] These questions become even clearer when looking at the assessment and sales price data from even just a year after the closures and initial sales (available: https://alpha.phila.gov/property/). The schools were put up for sale with an asking price based on their assessed value in 2013. However, that assessment was conducted just before the City implemented its Actual Value Initiative (AVI) to overhaul the property tax system in Philadelphia. As part of that process every piece of property in the city was reassessed and its certified market value changed. (In addition, AVI also included changes to "the way individual assessments are used to calculate tax bills, and how property owners deal with any big tax increases that might result from the new system" (Dowdall and Warner 2012).) The assessed value of the school buildings, on which the sales prices were based, sometimes as much as tripled later that same year once AVI went into effect. Even in the space of the market, city and school district collaboration matters; these city processes were going on simultaneous to the closures/sales process and no one at SDP realized that if they could sit and wait for another 6 months, then their short-term revenue from the sales could have been significantly more money and perhaps still been more even with the financial liabilities sitting on their books for an extra six months.

District staff A: *We had all the properties appraised so we knew where we thought we should be given our appraisal, which according to PIDC, the market really – the appraisal kind of informs you, but the market really tells you.*

District staff B: *We went with the highest bid for each property…our highest bidders all had the same proposed use. Which again I think shows that this is what the market is saying – what the use of these buildings could be from either a profit or a non-profit viewpoint…This is what the market is saying can be in this building. And it's saying it strongly because look – out of the five bidders, the top four are all saying the same use….So if this is what the market's bearing, and you don't want the vacant school, then it's an opportunity.*

Quasi-public agency staff: *By and large, the uses for the properties that were proposed when there were multiple offers, kind of tended to be the same. The overwhelming bulk of the offers for the properties is some type of residential redevelopment. And that sort of makes sense given the scale of the school. None of them are in places where there is an office market, so you wouldn't necessarily convert these into an office [and] they're not really in retail corridors.*

Staff clearly articulated the spatial and physical nature of real estate markets, and the ways that sales prices reflect the bundle of value provided by the surrounding neighborhood and the potential of the building.

Quasi-public agency staff: *[Y]ou're buying a place, you're not just buying a building. You're buying a neighborhood – good or bad – but you have to understand that context.*

School Reform Commissioner: *People look at the school building and make something of it - they see it as an empty building and project onto it. But in fact it is a vacant building in a micro market. You're not likely to get far from what the market wants to do with it….To project the empty school building or any empty building a purpose beyond which the whole environment and context has some energy or whatever is in most cases a mistake…It's interesting to focus on the schools but the real thing is that they are a mirror of the market and the political volition to have something happen.*

This link between school building and neighborhood market values helps explain uneven sales of school buildings across the city. A staff member at the quasi-public agency described how the district may need a different strategy with properties in neighborhoods with weaker real estate markets:

[In neighborhoods with weaker markets] maybe they have to get sold at a low basis for that to be able to be attractive. To reflect the market. Some of the buildings may not really be candidates for reuse – I can't really say which ones because I'm not familiar enough with their physical assets but my instinct tells me that some probably need to come down.

He goes on to suggest that sales prices may need to be lower than expected or desired:

I think if you can get it priced right, which might be almost a fire sale, then that gives enough breathing room for an owner to figure out the market and make some improvements. Maybe it's senior housing, maybe it's a mix of somewhat offices for community purposes, so maybe the purchaser is a non-profit like a CDC.

An elected school official agrees, identifying that a challenge in weaker real estate markets is the need for increased public subsidy to get development and reuse off the ground:

The more the building is in a place that has no momentum and energy, the more public resources have to go in to make something. And then the more you have the question of sustainability.

When the district approved the sale of 11 of the closed school buildings in September 2014, it appeared that this was the strategy they employed. News reports cited that the district sold buildings for an average of $11 per square foot, netting just $14 million, more than $64 million less than their assessed value (Brey 2014), reflecting how real estate "has the unique (dis)advantage of having its value held hostage by the vagaries of proximity and its relationship to other properties" (Weber 2002, 521).

Schools are also potential opportunity sites not only for private profit making, but also for community-serving reuses. The same elected school official who elevated the role of the "market" in determining sales price commented that "[t]here are exceptions that where a building can become an organizing principle for a neighborhood or city to do something." A city council staff person echoed this strategy in her reflections on her hopes for reuse of the closed school buildings for her constituents:

[W]e know that these schools could lend themselves to be ideal housing for seniors. Ideal housing for some sort of development that includes those that are at or below the area median income, and working families in addition to those that are in poverty. [W]e know that the schools are a very important cog in that wheel because of their location in these communities. Again they were community gathering places and they were strategically located based on transportation, based on community population and so many of these schools are in a great location for bus transportation for seniors, because there were buses going there to drop kids off and things like that. So if it's not a school, then how can we best fit it into those housing needs for the community?

She frames the school building as an opportunity for fostering the city's goals of affordability and neighborhood stabilization. This approach to community-centered reuses begins to bridge the economic value of school buildings as real estate assets to the socio-spatial value of schools in neighborhoods, described in the next section.

4.4.2   Socio-Spatial Values

In Philadelphia, schools function as both social and physical centers in neighborhoods. The rhythm of daily life as shaped by the specific morphology of Philadelphia's neighborhoods shifts when schools close. Additionally, closures reveal how school buildings also have potentially negative socio-spatial value, as attractive nuisances in the absence of stewardship. Schools are key physical landmarks in the urban fabric of neighborhoods and the city. They are nodes on pathways throughout the neighborhood, shaped by individual perceptions of safety and community. The routes to and from and access through school sites are core pieces of individuals' mental maps of neighborhoods.

Echoing prior research, respondents described Philadelphia's schools as spaces for more than just educating children, but also as places for social interaction and community building among students, parents, teachers, and the broader community. Respondents, such as this City Council staff member, naturalized the role of schools in community-building

[N]ow the thing that brings people together outside of their houses - where you congregate, where you meet your neighbors is gone. You meet your neighbors at the corner store or where you drop off your dry cleaning, or you meet your friends when you're at the basketball court, or you meet other parents when you're swinging your child on a swing or you go to the library to go pick up a book. When you lose that and then you lose another major community space where people see each other - it unravels those community ties. There are less opportunities for people to meet and to congregate. When you drop off your child at school, that's when you get to see someone else, or you might meet a neighbor down the street. Now you don't have those opportunities to just do that and be neighborly. And those natural outlets don't exist anymore when you take that [the school] away.

In other neighborhoods, closures have not impeded the social function of schools. According to a resident and former school staff member, in one neighborhood in North Philadelphia, a closed school still serves as this kind of community space:

Right now, if you go to that school – you know most of the parents are in the back playing dominoes, planning parties, selling stuff. Every summer, they're doing events out there.

In many neighborhoods, however, closures meant fewer community resources and amenities. One planning staff member reflected on how their planning processes would have to pick up the slack left by school closures:

I think that [closed schools] will be reused, but I think that the really big issue, and I think that it's something we will definitely talk about in the planning process – with these schools going away – what services do they provide to the community that they're missing? Because they didn't really close schoolyards down. You know? Like people still used the playground and the open spaces and even meeting spaces at the school and now that they're closed you can't – they can't use them. Or say it's being redeveloped as something else – that it's apartments now or something – condos. You know? What is the community missing from that closure?

Overall, previously taken for granted, these school spaces served core community development functions. Their closures present new challenges and sometimes-unexpected burdens to neighborhood planning efforts.

Vacant buildings also fostered negative socio-spatial conditions for near neighbors and the neighborhood. As one respondent commented, "[a vacant school] sits there and it looks like an impossible hiccup in the middle of an urban environment." The respondent continued to raise questions about the "broken windows" (Kelling and Wilson 1982) effect of empty school buildings:

[Y]ou've got this now once vibrant, active building. It's going to be sitting there in the middle of the neighborhood. What's going to come to be that once – because – I think they had a sense that the School District of Philadelphia is not going to leave a standing army behind to guard an empty building, so is that what it's going to be? Is this going to turn into a kid take a rock and throws it and breaks a window and next week now we have two windows broken, you know, so on and so forth, you know, before everything windows broken and the place is graffiti-ed up, you know, we've got abandoned cars in the lot, flipped out and caught on fire.

City Council staff and residents agreed:

> City Council staff: *Because the longer [the closed school building] remains vacant, the more detriment it is to that community. And then there's when you have a large structure like that – vacancy – it allows for – it provides for an atmosphere for crime because there's hidden corners now, there's no natural eyes watching because no one's dropping off their kids to see if someone's hanging out on the corner or to see if someone is putting up graffiti, and it starts off with small things like graffiti and stuff like that but no one is paying attention because no one's there it can lead to even more vandalism and even more problems occurring in the vicinity of that building.*

> Resident A: *We were alarmed. I was alarmed because I thought a couple of things could happen. I thought it could sit like this forever. Become a fire and a trash heap.*

> Resident B: *We worried about vandalism too. If this building is going to be empty for so long, it's going to be vandalized and graffiti-ed, and whatever.*

A police officer shared that he was concerned about the closed school building in his police district: "Now you've got weeds growing up out of the concrete and it's like well who takes care of it? And the answer frankly is nobody." The absence of a dedicated school community and resources from the school district creates a hole in stewardship.

This is not to say that open schools did not also pose challenges for the neighborhood. In a South Philadelphia neighborhood, I conducted a group interview of four long-time female residents, who live near the now-closed Edward W. Bok Technical High School.

> Respondent B: *Can I tell you when Bok was open, we as neighbors dealt with an incredible amount of crap. In my lifetime, they started busing kids in so there were busses and traffic. They came from all over. And we were never a neighborhood of school buses because we all lived close enough to walk [to our Catholic schools]. School buses were different for us. And then a lot of the kids on the west side would take the Morris Street bus and there would literally be hoards of kids walking down the streets.*

> Respondent A: *The litter was worse.*

> Respondent B: *The litter was horrible. This little store on the corner gives them little black plastic bags. And I would come home from work and they would be blowing in the wind.*

> Respondent A: *Or there would be the plate with the pizza that they would just throw their plates. So litter was much worse.*

> Respondent B: *And parking during the day was also much worse because I didn't realize it but a lot of the high school kids drove.*

> Respondent C: *Not only that but the teachers used to park too.*

Despite these challenges, the school was still an important piece of the neighborhood, as expressed by Respondent B in this group interview, who herself had attended Bok as a teenager.[49]

> Respondent A: *To me it was part of the community because it was there and it was the people and the litter, that's just what the part of the community was. My mother sent me there in the summer to learn dressmaking. And I made a dress and in my whole life I've only made one dress!*

As much as these comments reflect the interrelationship between the physical and social dimensions of schools, planning staff still shy away from thinking about closed schools as physical infrastructure in their planning processes:

> *[U]nfortunately I don't think that we can really address like school closures that much. I think our plans focus – I mean we do focus on infrastructure and physical elements, but I think to me the main focus is to get zoning [and] remapping recommendations as well as other recommendations for things that we can implement with the help of other city agencies.*

Activating or redeveloping closed school spaces is not something that planning staff see as within their purview or capabilities. They acknowledge that closures take away spaces of activity and open up another area of concern for planning. However, they have not integrated school reuse into their thinking about future land use, community amenities, or community development.

The physical centrality of schools facilitates their social centrality. Philadelphia has a fairly uniform urban fabric of predominantly row houses interspersed with large buildings – schools, churches, and factories – that become markers of differentiation. These buildings also serve as social and functional punctuations. One respondent commented that factories and school buildings act as "touchstones and place-makers in their community. So if you were to take them down you would sort of fray the fabric of that community." This reflects the connections between schools' physical and social centrality articulated in prior research.

Access to, from, and through schools emerged as an important theme in interviews. One respondent living across the street from a closed school and its parking lot described the ways that their paths through the neighborhood changed with closures: "Whereas before our street, we had access to the parking lot on the side [of the school and] were able to cut through to go to church. But the gate is now shut down." Residents had created informal pathways through the school site and important routes in the neighborhood that were eliminated with closures.

Physical access to, from, and through schools is related to the mental maps of the city and neighborhoods. However, maps differed across respondents and institutions. For example, school district staff articulated concerns about the spatial distribution of schools. One staff member closely involved in the closure decisions commented:

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[49] Bok's closure and potential reuse presents challenges to the neighborhood. It is an eight-story, 338,000-square foot building in a neighborhood of two-story row houses. A vacancy (or reuse) that large would surely affect the neighborhood significantly.

> *[Y]ou can't [close schools] and not look at a map. You can't finalize a list of schools and not go to the schools. It's just – you just can't do it! It's kind of an important thing. Like just start by looking at a map.*

She reported that the district wanted to ensure that if a school was closed, a receiving school was within one-half mile or five city blocks. For this staff person, the mental map of schools was district-wide in scale, and defined by a measure of walking distance. A straight calculation of distance did not necessarily match the mental maps of residents and parents, however. In some parts of Philadelphia, neighborhood boundaries are very small – smaller than five blocks – and closures yielded great concerns about safe travel to school. One respondent commented:

> *[T]hat your child could walk into another neighborhood, that's scary for the child and family. In North Philadelphia it's a very big issue – block to block, even across the street is a whole different world.*

The mismatch between district decision-makers' spatial scale and that of residents became a source of tension during the closure and school reassignment processes. Furthermore, city staff suggested additional divergences between school district, resident, and planning staff perceptions of scale and space:

> *[T]he school district just wasn't thinking about those wider neighborhood implications. [At a recent planning area meeting] I was at a table with another facilitator and there were three people that we were working with on identifying strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and they said, "You know what's funny? Within the boundaries you have drawn, we don't have any open public schools."*

The ways in which the planning staff drew neighborhood boundaries and asked residents to discuss assets and opportunities as part of a neighborhood planning process was divorced from the actual and metaphorical maps of both school district decision-making and resident experience.

While planning staff-drawn boundaries may not include schools, parents' lived experience does, which is important during a planning process aimed at neighborhood improvements. Distance and neighborhood environments are key elements in the safe passage of students to school. The planning staff member continued:

> *[T]he school district has just gotten hammered because it doesn't seem as though they considered fully the amount of distance students would have to walk to these new schools. You know the catchment areas that they redrew, and that's something we could have helped them with.*

This staff member identifies the process of creating new attendance zones and maps as a "missed opportunity" for school district and planning staff collaboration. This staff member implies that coordinated discussions could have helped mitigate the divides between school district, resident, and planning staff's mental and actual maps of Philadelphia's neighborhoods. Interestingly, this planner does not consider that his boundaries need to be changed. Rather, the school district and residents are asked to align their maps to planning staff.

In the absence of coordination, divergent mental maps created challenges in both the closure and neighborhood planning processes. These challenges are in part because mental maps not only help people physically navigate their neighborhoods, but because they also represent the building blocks of how people make meaning of their spaces and the symbolic value they hold

for their neighborhood schools, which I describe in the next section on the symbolic values of schools.

4.4.3   Symbolic Values

In the scholarship, schools also have a symbolic value, primarily as spaces of belonging among people who identify with the school community (e.g., students, parents, staff, faculty, and alumni). The physical school building represents "the power of place" (Hayden 1997), embodying a collective memory of the school community and linking socio-spatial values with the symbolic.

In the Philadelphia case, I have found four dimensions of symbolic values, which are specific to open or closed schools:

(1) Open schools cultivate a sense of belonging among members of a school community.
(2) Open schools are central to defining a neighborhood's identity.
(3) School closures stand in for larger processes of neighborhood change and the future of neighborhoods. They trigger or exacerbate fears about gentrification or continued disinvestment.
(4) Decisions about opening or closing schools represent a larger and historically-grounded and racialized relationship between particular communities and the public sector. This relationship is defined by respect through continued public investment on the one hand, and disrespect and disinvestment on the other.

The first two affirm that found in the literature. The latter two extend and complicate prior scholarship, and provide insight available because of this extreme moment of closure. Following, I detail the evidence for each of these dimensions of symbolic value.

4.4.3.1 Belonging

The scholarship emphasizes the way that a school site embodies a sense of belonging for school stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, and alumni. Certainly the personal history and multigenerational connections at the school site fostered a sense of community and belonging in Philadelphia. One non-profit leader, whose high school closed, commented:

> *It's really sad because like for alumni we lost a home. How do we do our reunion? Where do we go to get back to where we came from? It's almost like erasing your history.*

This sense of belonging also came from those who worked in the building. For example, one developer spoke about the interactions s/he had with former building maintenance staff:

> *Even this morning when I was there with the current operations guy he kept saying, he kept referring to the building as her "I'm just so glad that she'll be taken care of" or "I've been in her for so long working." It's just very like – people really have invested – like I said, years in that building.*

For staff, faculty, students, and alumni the buildings were symbols of connectedness and stability. For some, this kind of connectedness was also a multi-generational experience, and one that was tied to other needs within marginalized communities. A resident in North Philadelphia shared her reflections on the closure of a local elementary school:

What I heard, particularly about Reynolds, was the history that was there. How many grandparents and great-grandparents attended there. How significant it was there. How there were years ago, African American teachers and role models for our children.

This comment points to the role that public education has played in the racial politics of the United States and Philadelphia.

In some neighborhoods, even newer residents sensed the intergenerational connections of neighborhood schools. Through her reflections on her elementary school-aged son's experience attending a charter school outside of their home neighborhood, a newer resident and parent in South Philadelphia expressed the ways neighborhood schools foster belonging and multigenerational connections:

I also think that for kids - I see what happens. My son's friends are from all over. He doesn't have a community of buddies from the school and neighborhood like the way I grew up anyway - where you all go to the same school, you all live in the same neighborhood - and those are your people...It's fractured. I feel like my son doesn't feel like he has a cohort. That's readily identifiable for him…I think that's why when the schools closed they closed – a lot of schools closed in neighborhoods where that was the thing – where they really were neighborhood schools. Where kids knew each other, kids played together, families knew each other, second generations of families – and they closed the heart of the thing.

Here she clearly talks about the role of the school in fostering something cohesive and identifiable. Her comments reveal the way that schools serve as "the heart" of a set of multi- and inter-generational relationships and the neighborhood.

4.4.3.2 Neighborhood Identity

As signaled in the previous comments, a sense of belonging moves beyond an immediate school community and takes on a spatial dimension to the surrounding geographic area. Leaders in the community, including police officers and City Council staff expressed the ways that schools shaped neighborhood identity:

Police office: *[T]here's a certain sadness to it. People do lose their sense of belonging. You know, look at the school just around the corner from here. If you go out, well the front or back of our [police] district, it doesn't matter. If you went down to the very first street down from here, it would be Wharton and you made a left, you go over one block to 19th – there's a five to six story school that's just sitting abandoned. It's sad. It is. It's sad to see. You know, you got a concrete lot that children used to once play in – recess, lunch, before and after school. Yadda, yadda. And of course on weekends because you have basketball courts and everything else like that in there…that's why I think there's a sort of sadness in the neighborhood when a school closes because you do lose a bit of your identity.*

City Council staff: *[W]hen you look at what makes a community a community – you can't just put some houses down and say "oh, we have a community." A community has houses, has some place of worship, whether its a synagogue or a temple or a church or somewhere that people go to practice their religious belief – that's part of a community. It's the corner store, it's a dry-cleaners, it's a basketball court or some recreational facility, and it's a school… And so [school closure] spiritually breaks down the context of*

what a community is because natural community spaces, natural gathering spaces have been removed from the community, have been shut down.

In these comments, the definition and identity of a neighborhood and a place-based community is intricately tied to the kinds of institutions in that neighborhood, including a school. Thus, school closures disrupt school-community identity as well as a broader neighborhood identity, cohesion, and spiritual connectedness.

The story is complicated, however. Another non-profit leader talked about his preferences for neighborhood schools:

I would love to send my kid to a neighborhood school for all the reasons that – it's obvious. I'd love to walk. I'd love to not have to drive; I'd love to walk. I'd love to have a community where all the neighbors are my kids' friends.

Currently childless, the respondent, who is White and works on education reform and supports the expansion of charter schools, imagines a community of belonging cultivated through a neighborhood school. However, he then goes on to critique those who express a feeling of belonging that stemmed from personal experiences in neighborhood schools:

[A] lot of what folks want out of neighborhood schools is nostalgia for a system that didn't ever – that doesn't exist. Which is this belief that before [the governor] or before charter schools, that black families in North Philly had this golden era where they sent their kids to – they walked their kids to school, and the crossing guard knew their name, and things were great. It's like, no. These schools have been failing for decades, multiple generations. And families still feel a romantic attachment to them, because it's their school, but it's important to recognize that those schools hadn't produced results for a long time.

This is a complex critique and argument. He seems to mix priorities and metrics of success. On the one hand, schools are valued for the kind of community they may build or may have built in the past in the neighborhood in which they are situated. On the other hand, schools should be valued only for their success in educating students, along certain kinds of "results."

This juxtaposition is an important positioning of these kinds of symbolic values of belonging against the economic values of human capital building. It also reveals the tensions across experiences in neighborhoods and of schools: recall the description above about African American mentorship. Further, others see the schools as key places that help young people navigate their neighborhood. A resident of North Philadelphia, who is both works for the City and is a mother of two elementary school aged children, articulated a different experience and hope:

Philly is a city of neighborhoods, right and schools are a very, very important part of that neighborhood concept for young children - that security of knowing what is your neighborhood, who are the people in your neighborhood, who is the bus drive. [My son] takes the same bus on SEPTA at the same time with his gram-mom and I hear – people say, "Oh I see your mom and the kids, and she's always on the bus and she takes the 3:30 bus." They know what bus she's' on; the bus driver knows her so if she forgets a token or whatever, it's all a part of that "this is home beyond your house" feeling. This is my block. Not just this is your block but this is your neighborhood, and these are the things I can identify in my neighborhood. I can identify the grocery store, I can identify the

school, I can identify the barber shop and the doctor's office. And we try as best as we can to find when we can find those avenues in our community.

This conceptualization of schools reaches far beyond the "results-orientation" expressed in the non-profit leader's prior comment focused on policy change. Rather, it elaborates on his more personal aspirations, that he has yet to realize because he does not have a child. She explicitly signaled to me in the interview that this comment (and others as noted) came from her personal experiences as a parent of elementary-aged children, not official positions of the Councilperson's office. For her, as a parent, schools serve an important symbolic role in neighborhoods, helping young people "be known" and cultivating a neighborhood-based identity.

4.4.3.3 Fears or Hopes of the Future

Investments in education are linked to broader investments in neighborhoods. These kinds of investments can signal positive change. As one non-profit staff member described, school construction or rehabilitation is often the only new investment many of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods see:

I've driven through neighborhoods looking at industrial sites and the only new construction is charter schools. It's an attempt at the physical level to even the playing field. It's a signal to the neighborhood that someone cares that there's progress. The investment may have spin off or at least psychological impact that it's a fresh start – like when you get new fresh school supplies.

Just as new school construction may trigger hope, school closures, sales, and reuse can have the opposite effect. Closed schools are potential development sites in neighborhoods, the presence of which can trigger or exacerbate anxieties about neighborhood change. A City Council staff member described her conversations with residents immediately following school closures:

Depending on the locations of these schools that also shapes the vision of what reuse can be, but it also shapes the community concerns. So when you have a school…close to Temple's campus and close to student housing, when the closures were proposed, some of the immediate responses were from community – whether it's fear or true concern is that these buildings would be converted into some sort of student housing use or some other market rate purpose that will gentrify a community, that will accelerate other development efforts that may not include the existing community.

In many neighborhoods, these concerns are long-standing, and the potential development of closed schools led some residents to take stock of past and current dynamics in their neighborhood. A group of long-time African American neighbors near a closed school, expressed anxiety about the future of the closed school building and skepticism of the ways in which they have been engaged with other neighborhood changes.

Respondent A: *If only we knew what was going to happen with the building, so as I said it's a long process and we just gotta go to the meetings and voice our opinions.*

Respondent B: *No, you ain't going to know until they go do the deal. Then they're going to come and tell us. And that's not right. We should know what's going on in our community.*

They went on to speak about the impacts of increased development, the changing nature of the neighborhood, and feelings of disrespect they felt as a result of these changes.

Respondent A: *The more people who move around here, it's just so many people soon there'll be arguments about parking. And a lot of people who are moving in now are not friendly. They're kind of to themselves. Whereas this block knew each other or if you didn't know each other you kind of like talked and do things. But everybody now is just into their own selves.*

Respondent B: *These guys just do what they want to do – they don't respect the community. They never came and asked us anything, they just came in and do. They do without asking…Recognize the neighbors first…If they change from a school then we have some say.*

In another interview, I asked about school closures and the ways that the neighborhood has changed. The respondent, a long time, African American female resident echoed the ways that schools serve as landmarks in the neighborhood fabric, as much as other buildings like churches.

Respondent: *I grew up in this community and I drive by churches that were there for decades and now it's a high-rise building.*

Interviewer: *How does it make you feel?*

Respondent: *Awful. There's a church at 19th and Fitzwater that my grandparents belonged to and I was on the bus and it's a high-rise building. They tore it down and built condos. It makes me sad but this is the way the area has changed so much. There's no sacred anything. But again we as the people have to come together to try to defend establishments like that. If they let big business come in and tear down old buildings and establishment then shame on us.*

School closures and the potential redevelopment of school sites trigger fears of physical and/or cultural displacement, lack of affordability, and stress on already strained resources.

4.4.3.4 Systemic Dis/Respect

These fears about future development or persistent disinvestment are tied to past experiences of development in neighborhoods both in terms of engagement in the process and impacts in daily life in the neighborhood.

Decisions about opening or closing schools thus represent a larger and historically racialized relationship between communities – particularly the African American community – and public officials. Many situated school closures, sales, and reuse as emblematic of Philadelphia's racialized politics of place and development. For example, schools have resonance as symbols of past struggles in education and city politics:

So that educational complex is symbolic to the community in that it was built 30 or 40 years ago as the Dr. Ruth Wright Hare Educational Complex. Dr. Ruth Wright Hare is the first African American woman to be a principal in the City of Philadelphia and she may have been on the school board and had a lot of leadership for the education of African American children in particular, and children in North Philly and children from lower income communities. She was a champion, and here this educational complex [was] going to be closed. And it would have just really impacted that community in more ways than one…[I]t's a building that during its construction was a site for protest

because minorities weren't involved in the construction. So Cecil B. Moore[50] had led some protest there and it actually was a really huge protest in that the federal government got involved and they had to manage the protest...that's how meaningful it was for them.

The inequitable distribution of political power that inspired protests in the 1960s and 70s are no less palpable today. In an interview, a long-time African American resident in South Philadelphia reflected on how her neighborhood school with predominantly lower-income African American children was closed, but one in an adjacent neighborhood with a growing higher-income and White student population and a very active parent group was saved. She commented, "It does make a difference if the community is majority people of color, you don't get things as quickly as if the community is predominantly White or another ethnic group. It makes a big difference and that's reality."

The closure, sales, and reuse processes served to erode trust among the district and city and local residents. In a conversation with a long-term African American resident, she shared her anger at City Council members and their involvement in the sales of certain school buildings:

I'm supposed to trust you when you make those kinds of deals [for school sales]? Hell no – I'm not trusting you – no, no. You haven't done anything to fix up our neighborhood at all. You have contempt for our neighborhood – the very neighborhood that put you in.

She makes a leap from the school sales to other neighborhood revitalization efforts in her neighborhood, linking the actions of the district with those of the city.

Others also suggested that closed school buildings are situated in broader patterns of neighborhood investment or decline:

For many of these neighborhoods where they've already seen disinvestment in other ways – their rec centers or their public libraries or their local corner stores have moved out or have been closed for some reason – this is just another dagger to that community.

When asked what closure meant to the neighborhood, one resident put it simply: "It means divestment." To this resident, closure and school building disposition signals dispossession. While open schools represent a public commitment to a civic institution; closed schools symbolize disinvestment, disrespect, and dispossession not only in education but also in the public realm that many neighborhoods have experienced for generations. A more recent in-mover in a South Philadelphia neighborhood reflected on the interconnectedness of public disinvestment across sectors in the African American community:

They close our schools and then they tell kids, "Why don't you just get a better job?"...And then like kids are all on the street selling drugs because they need to make money and that's bad for your community, it's bad for your neighborhood...So when they close schools in predominantly Black neighborhoods like that to me is an attack on the Black working class people.

Beyond closures, reuse also held symbolic value. The turnover of closed public schools to private developers for redevelopment into non-school uses served as an affront – a symbol of divestment of the public sector in civic, public-serving institutions. In a number of interviews, I

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[50] Cecil B. Moore was a prominent defense attorney and a leader in the Philadelphia Civil Rights movement. He served as president of the Philadelphia NAACP from X to X ??? [add more from Up South ??]

heard an interest in reusing schools as senior centers, community centers, or charter schools.[51] For others, the specific reuse was less of an issue than the larger landscape of closure and disposition, and trust between the community and government decision makers:

> *It's so much larger than the reuse of buildings. There are wonderful examples of the reuse of buildings – like the one at 17th and Master, like the one at 17th and Parrish. There's a lot of good examples of reuse of buildings as apartments and things of that sort. But what's happening now – those are like cases here or there. But what's happening now is it's like you're not being told what the real plan is in terms of land reuse. It's so vast – the disposition of these properties. And there's so many properties and it's so vast and not being told the big picture is problematic.*

School closures, sales, and reuses thus symbolize a broader relationship with the public sector. While open schools represent a public commitment to a civic or communal institution; closed schools symbolize disinvestment, disrespect, and dispossession not only in education but also in the public realm that many neighborhoods have experienced for generations.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the cross-disciplinary scholarship that documents the nexus among schools and individuals, neighborhoods, and cities. I then presented a conceptual framework to clarify three categories of schools' values: economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic. Empirically, I have shown how the extreme case of school closures in Philadelphia puts the value of schools in sharp relief, and both affirms and complicates how scholars and practitioners have thought about the importance and role of schools in communities.

Economically, schools – open and closed – are understood as financial liabilities or assets to the school district and potential buyers. Closures, sales, and reuse of school buildings to non-educational purposes are articulated as the inevitable result of dramatic demographic changes, district "right-sizing" in the face of dire fiscal conditions, and an agentic "market." This market-oriented perspective renders schools in an a-spatial and a-historical way, and sits in tension with other socio-spatial and symbolic values, which are prominent for many and motivate much of the opposition to closures. Articulating the economic values of schools requires relies on the quantification of education through data such as budget numbers, building utilization rates, enrollment numbers, standardized test scores, and real estate market values (Mehta 2013). Quantification in decision-making transforms "the thing being measured…into its statistical indicator and displace[s] political disputes into technical disputes about methods" (Rose 1999, 205). Further, quantification yields an erasure of context (Caven 2015), and commensuration "changes the terms of what can be talked about, how we value, and how we treat what we value" (Espeland and Stevens 1998, 315).

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[51] The suggestion that closed schools should be any kind of school again – including charter schools – suggests a naiveté about education funding and policy making in Pennsylvania and Philadelphia. Because of state funding and charter authorization regulations, when the School District of Philadelphia approves a charter school, the district is left with "stranded costs," which means the same amount of costs but with fewer resources because the charter school students take per student dollar amount with them. In other words, the opening of charter schools creates both population shifts in traditional public schools and resource constraints to manage the facilities and programs within these schools, which have led to many school closures. Without a full understanding of this complicated and multi-level policy framework, some residents may just see a school as a school in terms of the rhythm and landscape of their neighborhood.

This kind of quantification sits in contrast with the socio-spatial and symbolic values of schools. Socio-spatially, schools are centers of community and serve diverse functions in neighborhoods. Closures mean the loss of a key gathering space and a disruption to collective mental maps of neighborhoods. In addition, vacant school buildings may also become attractive nuisances, further transforming the daily rhythms of neighborhood life.

Symbolically, school closures, sales, and reuse processes are situated in a broader historical context of racialized policy decisions that have repeatedly disadvantaged low-income communities of color for generations – from slavery to the Jim Crow south and the redlined north to Urban Renewal[52] to the foreclosure crisis and on and on. School closures are another manifestation of systemic oppression; school building disposition is experienced as dispossession.

Certainly, these three values – economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic – are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually constitutive. They converge in ways that result in specific implications for closures in the Philadelphia context. As we will see in the next chapter, these different values – their divergences and convergences – matter because they situate schools and school closures in different spatial and temporal contexts. Values undergird frames (Schon and Rein 1995), and these values and the spatial and temporal references combine in diverse ways that yield three distinct – and often competing – frames or perspectives of school closure. These frames make different claims about what closures mean, what their impacts will be, and what the appropriate policy interventions should be.

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[52] Perhaps a historical irony, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, which SDP contracted to manage the sales of school buildings, was originally created in 1958 to manage the marketing and sales of "blighted" industrial properties. Some of their work included land assembly and investments under the auspices of the federal Urban Renewal program. (see: http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/philadelphia-industrial-development-corporation-pidc/)

Chapter 5. The Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of School Closures, Sales, and Reuse

"A city is more than a place in space, it is a drama in time." (Geddes 1905, 6)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the previous analysis of values presented in Chapter 4 to uncover the specific frames of school closures *in Philadelphia. Specifically, it addresses the question: To what extent do residents and decision-makers in Philadelphia understand and experience school closure in relationship to broader urban shifts such as disinvestment and gentrification?*

I find three frames, or "stories," of school closures: *closure as crisis management*, *closure as loss,* and *closure as oppression*. Each one places schools in a different spatial context– from a-spatial (*crisis management*) to the school site and/or neighborhood scale (*loss*) to broader citywide patterns of re/development (*oppression*). This variation is tied to different notions of time, which foreground the past, present, and future in divergent ways. Respondents articulated a braided nature between these temporalities and the spatiality with which they situated school closures. I argue that these divergent spatial and temporal perspectives contribute to tensions in the school closure decision-making, sales, and reuse processes, and offer a potential point of intervention for planners who seek to bridge the work of community development citywide planning with public education policy.

In this chapter, I present evidence that of these frames from my interviews. To make sense of these findings, I draw on an interdisciplinary set of scholarship and theoretical lenses theories of time, place, and social suffering

5.2 Space and Time in Planning and Education

The entanglement of space and time is a puzzle that scholars have long grappled to understand. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan asks "Space exists in the present; how does it acquire a temporal dimension?" In planning, Kevin Lynch poses the provocative question "What time is this place?" (1972). Both of these scholars begin to articulate the temporal dimensions of space (and the spatial dimensions of time).

Tuan offers three ways to understand time and place: "time as motion or flow and place as a pause in the temporal current; attachment to place as a function of time…and place as a time made visible, or place as memorial of times past" (1977, 179). In the first, the movement along a temporal trajectory is always tied to movement in space; goals for the future have a locational specificity. Second, Tuan argues that length of time in a place affects one's place attachment. Finally, place – particularly the built environment – becomes a memorial, with particular buildings or monuments constructed, preserved, or otherwise marked in ways that signal historical moments and memories. As Tuan says, "Objects anchor time" (1977, 187) in this case our objects are the built environment.

Tuan draws a distinction between time and space, but Lynch approaches the time-space relationship from a slightly different perspective, where individual perception has a more pronounced mediating role. He argues that "the quality of the personal image of time is crucial for individual well-being and also for our success in managing environmental change, and the external physical environment plays a role in building and supporting that image of time" (Lynch 1972, 1). In Lynch's conceptualization, the temporal current has a multidirectional flow, where past, present, and future are "created together and influence one another…The perception of the

present is strongly affected by both past and future and in turn influences what is remembered or foreseen" (Lynch 1972, 124). Thus, places are not distinct or causally linked to a uni-directional arrow of time, (as Tuan suggests), but are also "emblems of past, present, and future time" (Lynch 1972, 1).

In her comprehensive literature review focused on place, history, and health disparities research, Susan P. Kemp suggests that attention to temporality is especially important given a "relational view of place," which offers a corollary of sorts to Tuan's "temporal current." Place as relational is a "process rather than entity – a fluid, dynamic field of constantly interacting elements, within and beyond itself" (Kemp 2011, 3). Time and place are mutually constitutive, with people as the mediating agent through their individual and collective memories. Like Lynch, she presents time as non-linear and multidirectional: "while the past influences the present, the present also reaches out to and engages with the past" (Kemp 2011, 6). This articulation of time also echoes Pickering and Keightley's reconceptualization of nostalgia as "an action rather than an attitude" in which the past becomes "a set for resources for the future" (2006, 937). These "forward looking uses of the past" (Pickering and Keightley 2006, 937) are salient in planning and development, and concur with Lynch's attention to the way that particular interpretations of history result in different demands and visions for future designs of places.

Time and place are in relationship not only through intimate and personal place memories, histories, and lived experience, but also through the larger historical trajectories of "sociospatial processes such as racial segregation, suburbanization, urban disinvestment, and gentrification" (Kemp 2011, 3), which result in uneven geographies of opportunity (Briggs 2005; G. C. Galster and Killen 1995; Squires and Kubrin 2005). Situating places in a temporal context – of either personal memory and socio-political history – thus becomes a focus of much scholarship on time and place (see e.g., (Adams and Larkham 2015; Bell 1997; Crang and Travlou 2001; Hayden 1997; Massey 1995; Pred 1984; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2008). Because "memories, expectations, and present consciousness" are socially constructed and reproduced (Lynch 1972, 125), different cultures or groups within one culture may maintain different images of time: "Variations occur in basic orientation (the emphasis on past, present, or future), as well as in the extension and coherence of these images" (Lynch 1972, 131). National or ethnic identity, racial identity, and experiences with oppression all shape experiences and perceptions of place, and the ways that these experiences travel across generations (Schein 2006; Finney 2014; hooks 1990; Lipsitz 2011; McKittrick and Woods 2007; Tuan 1977).

Links between place, identity, genealogy, and time vary across communities. The experience of disruptions to or displacements from place – what Lynch refers to as "environmental changes" – will vary. In the United States, the salience of these displacements may be more profound for communities of color, particularly black communities, given the history slavery, subjugation, and oppression.

The above conceptualizations of time and space strongly connect present places to their pasts. However, this scholarship attends less to the influence of or on the future. There are some exceptions. For example, Massey presents examples of conflicting interpretations of particular places which are based on "conflicting interpretations of the past, serving to legitimate a particular understanding of the present [which] are put to use in a battle over what is to come. What are at issue are competing histories of the present, wielded as arguments over what should be the future" (1995, 185). She argues for using these reflections to "reinvigorate the way in

which we conceptualize geographical places" and to "think of them as temporal and not just spatial: as set in time as well as space" (1995, 186).

Lynch's project is also concerned with the future, but rather than challenging only conceptualizations, his aim is more instrumental, focusing on relationship between time, space, and planning practice. Specifically, he aims to "discuss how the form of the external environment can encourage a present-enlarging and flexible image of time, how this knowledge may be used to improve the management of environmental change, and whether the sense of environmental time may have any bearing on social or psychological change" (Lynch 1972, 134). He is explicitly interested in the relationship of past, present, and future and how individual perceptions of time mediate these three temporalities. The field of planning is inherently future-oriented, and as a planning scholar, Lynch aims to situate these abstract understandings of time and space in the context of practice and at the intersection of technocratic decision-making and lived experienced – now and for the future.

To do this, he shares a series of investigations in cities across the world. Through his research in Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela, Lynch uncovers distinct "group time" across two stakeholder groups: planners (what Lynch calls "initiators and regulators of change") and residents. Planners struggle to "comprehend and control" transformation, while residents are left to "endure [environmental transformations]" and "make sense out of a rapid transition" (1972, 3). These stakeholders focus attention on different things in the present, which affects their views of the future. They rely on different artifacts to construct their image of time. Planners ground their views in the "symbolic world of maps" and project out a longer timeframe for urban development. In contrast, residents base their vision on their daily activities yielding a shorter timeframe of the "concrete and particular" (1972, 19). (See Table 4)

Table 3. Summary of Lynch's Time-Space Framework (1972)

Actor	Temporality	Evidence
Planners	Present conditions	Maps
("Initiators and regulators")	Long-term future	Plans
Residents	Present experience	Memories
("Those who must endure")	Short-term future	Daily experience

Political or financial interest also influences the time horizon of urban change. Not only planners, but also developers and other private sector markets maintain an extreme future orientation. Capital or material assets (e.g., buildings) have a life cycle that is defined by their spatial context. The devaluation and revalorization of these material assets require specific temporalities: "long-turnover" or "short-turnover," depending on the market conditions on the ground (Weber 2002, 523). These divergent articulations of time have material consequences; preferences for demolition, revitalization, and preservation are guided by people's memories, daily realities, and hopes for the future (Lynch 1972, 28, 49). He finds that "conflicts between the times of diverse groups" as a source of tension in the planning of cities (Lynch 1972, 128).

Lynch's attention to the fluid and multidirectional flow of past, present, and future, articulates a similar concept of "pastpresentfuture," which challenges the linearity and

teleological nature of time (Imarisha et al. 2015). Linear time implies that the past as gone and that people have no control over the unknowable future. Given these limitations, this view of time suggests that individuals should focus only the present and making it as comfortable as possible. For those that reject this linearity this focus on the present is at the expense of a more radically imagined future.

This kind of link across time and space is not an unfamiliar idea in community development scholarship; Mindy Fullilove (1996; 2001; 2005) presents the "serial displacement" that many communities of color have faced through generations of U.S. public housing policies, gentrification, highway construction, and foreclosure. She calls the impact of this displacement "root shock," defined as the "traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" (2005, 11). Her qualitative research grounded in psychiatry documents the ways that these displacements have persistent, cumulative, and intergenerational impacts on people's psychological and physical well-being.

The displacement that occurred because of Urban Renewal set the stage for more recent displacements. Freeman argues that "the history of 'Negro Removal' under the Urban Renewal program…invoked images of gentrification being the postmodern version of urban renewal" (2006, 51). Placing present-day gentrification in its historical context highlights the cumulative and negative impacts of urban policy making on communities of color; Urban Renewal of the 1950s and 60s and gentrification in the 1980s through today represent the "old one-two knock-out" of low-income communities of color (powell and Spencer 2002). Serial displacements since Urban Renewal through gentrification contribute to racialized dynamics of trust and mistrust, with perceptions that public policy and private investments have consistently and systematically privileged White people over and at the expense of communities of color (Freeman 2006, 121–122).

Education scholar Michael Dumas explicitly links this nonlinear experience of time to a framework of "social suffering" for African American communities and public schools. He argues that "black suffering is a kind of constant travelling between historical memory and current predicament, that there is a psychic link between the tragedy of antebellum African bondage and post-civil rights (indeed, 'post-racial') black suffering in schools" (Dumas 2014, 3). Dumas argues that "policy is lived, and too often suffered, by those who have little hand in policy formation or implementation" (Dumas 2014, 2). Drawing on Bourdieu's idea of *la petite misère* (1999), Dumas argues that public schools are sites of everyday suffering for African American children and families. Rather than delivering on the promise of social mobility and equality, schools are spaces of suffering and reproduction of racial inequality. This suffering leaves a "deep impression…on flesh, bone and soul" and requires "interdisciplinary body of inquiry [that] aims to capture how suffering is felt in the flesh, how groups who have endured such pain make sense of their suffering as a shared phenomenon" (Dumas 2014, 2). Importantly, this suffering is experienced through a lens of nonlinear time, linking other forms of suffering and injustice from slavery and Urban Renewal to desegregation and police brutality.

These concepts of social suffering, corporeal impacts of place and displacement, and both linear and nonlinear perceptions of time inform my analysis. I use Lynch's framework as a starting point for understanding how people frame school closure and reuse as an instance of significant environmental change in neighborhoods in Philadelphia. His focus on planning practice and decision-making has particular resonance with my research and moves beyond mere observation and understanding of places and into an analysis of the actions and instrumental

decisions that shape those places. Concepts of linear or nonlinear time and the time traveling nature of "social suffering" have helped me understand and analyze what I have heard from my interviews.

5.3 Frames of School Closures

My data extend prior scholarship in two ways. First, Lynch's empirical work leads to distinct temporalities by actor, creating the planner-resident dichotomy. While I do find different "images of time," they do not fall along a simple binary. By identifying frames, rather than foregrounding specific categories of actors, my analysis complicates Lynch's dichotomous framework. Second, by using school closure as an object of study, my work broadens the scope of understanding both urban change and education policy. Studies of Urban Renewal, gentrification, and displacement have not included schools in their analysis. Studies of educational inequity and suffering focus on open schools, but have not considered the individual and collective displacements wrought by closures (at the school site and neighborhood scales).

In what follows, I describe the three frames of school closure I found in Philadelphia: *closure as crisis management*, *closure as oppression*, and *closure as loss.* Frames are implicit stories that convey a particular view of reality, knitting together lived experience, pointing to selective facts, and setting direction for action. Frames define problems and by extension establish the universe of potential solutions and actions (Goffman 1974; Schon and Rein 1995; Yanow 2000; Rein and Schon 1993; Ladson-Billings 2009). Tacit beliefs and values undergird frames, and it is through these values that we argue to particular policy positions (Schon and Rein 1995). Values and their frames are the vehicle that allow people to "make the 'normative leap' from data to recommendations, from fact to values, from 'is' to 'ought'" in a way that seems "graceful, compelling, even obvious" (Schon and Rein 1995, 26).

As described in Chapter 4, respondents articulated different values of schools and school closures – economic, socio-spatial, and symbolic. Each frame deployed different spatial references, from the a-spatial market (*crisis management*) to the school site and/or neighborhood scale (*loss*) to broader citywide patterns of re/development (*oppression*). Further, respondents framed schools and school closures with different temporal references, or "images of time," foregrounding the past and present in different ways (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Values, Spatial and Temporal References of Philadelphia School Closures and Reuse Frames
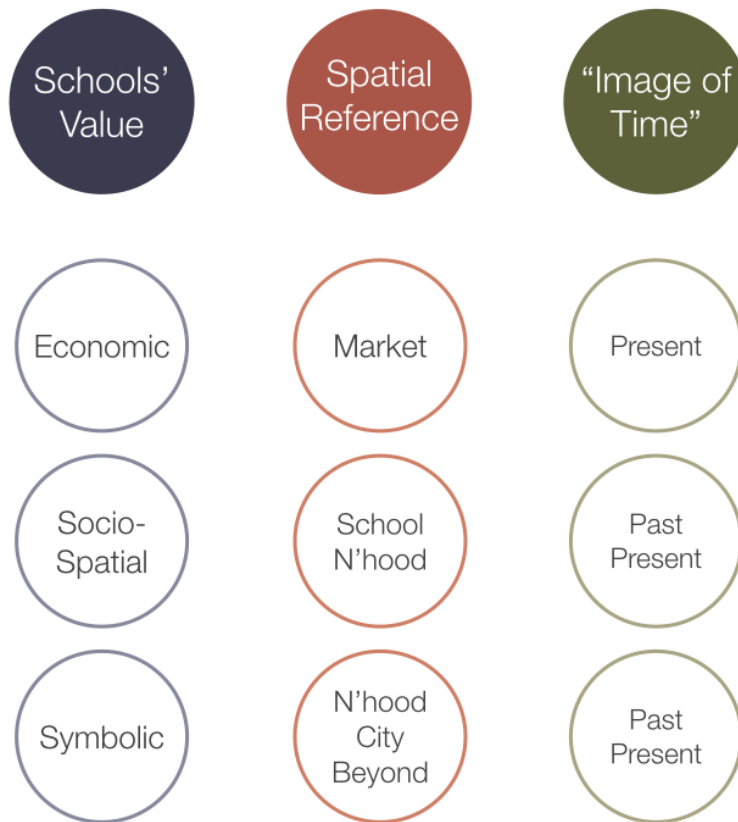
Each frame emerges with a different combination of values, spatial reference, and "image of time." Following, I describe each frame in detail, providing illustrative examples from my interview data. Because of the interrelationship between values and frames, I revisit some of the same evidence presented in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I emphasize the spatial and temporal references of these quotes, rather than the implicit or explicit values imbued in the comments.

5.3.1 Closure as Crisis Management

In the first frame, *closure as crisis management*, respondents frame school closures as a (and sometimes the only) response to a "crisis" and/or an "urgent" challenge to avert disastrous consequences. The frame *closure as crisis management* is most focused on the immediate present, with little historical context and a very limited vision of the future (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Closure as Crisis Management
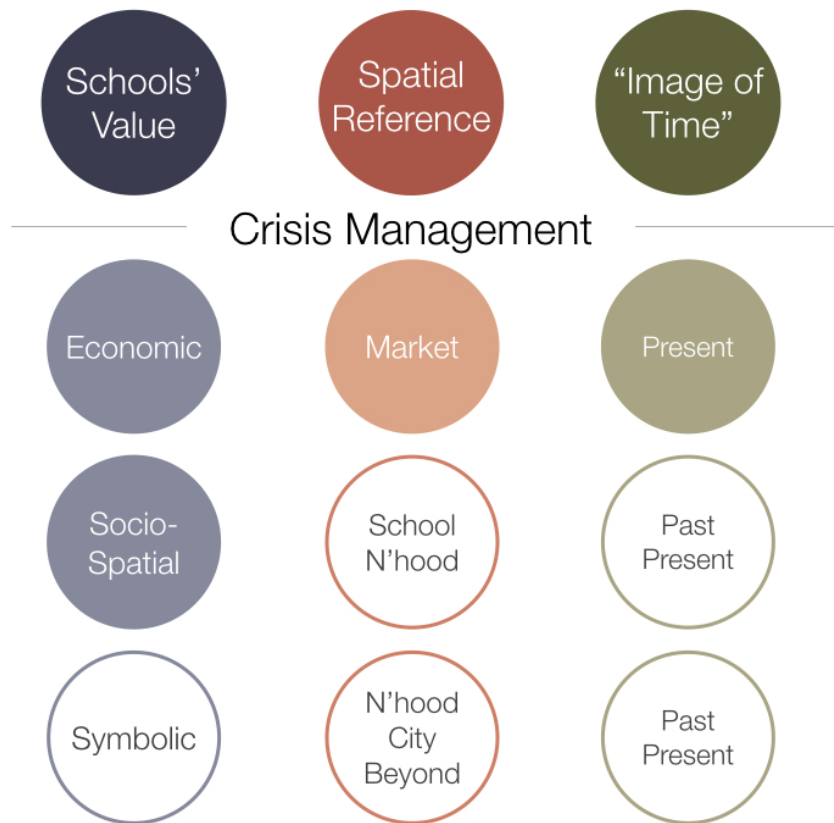
This frame relies heavily on data such as budget numbers, building utilization rates, enrollment, standardized test scores, and real estate market values to convey the urgency of the present moment and to justify closures as the tool to enable a better future. The reliance on quantifiable data is important to this frame, given that "the production and communication of numbers" brings both "clarity and parsimony" (Espeland and Stevens 2008, 402, 423) to complex phenomena and allows "more mechanized decision-making" (Espeland and Stevens 1998, 316). This approach – quantification – yields an erasure of context (Caven 2015) and by extension history, resulting in a frame that neglects space and that implies a present-focused temporality.

Key to this frame is a narrative of immediate financial distress and crisis. Recall the comments from both school district staff and residents:

School District staff: *We did a really good job on the narrative of we're financially – we're in serious financial distress which is why we had to bring a recovery officer in and a consultant and everything else [and] as one of the mechanisms or one of the means to achieve savings, we were going to implement a large amount of school closures.*

Resident: *The schools are hemorrhaging money is the chief concern. Ok, we close these schools…it's like putting your finger in a leak in the dam…No one seems to be able to think about a long-term fix…I think like a lot of terrible moments in history it might be a*

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wakeup call to all parties involved to say, "Ok. This is beyond unacceptable. We have to fix this now."

For decision makers, this fiscal distress not only highlights the economic value of schools (as described in Chapter 4), but also requires a preoccupation with timing, focused on constraints of the fiscal year budget calendar, the academic school year, and legally mandated periods of due diligence. School District staff in particular presented timing and calendar requirements in their discussion of closures:

The conversation became the rate of closure – do you try to spread it out over several years, do you try to do phase-outs, do you want to do a couple every year? [And] there are critical timeframes just in our budget planning that influence when decisions around school closure need to be made.

Issues of timing and progress are also core to the sales and reuse of school buildings. One developer commented:

You can either move forward and subsidize a use now that will make the community happy, or wait 10 years for the market to change. But you can't have it both ways.

His comment echoes the tension between the long time horizon of real estate developers and the more short-term needs of local community.

The preoccupation with timing found in this frame also reflects the quantification of time. Lynch, quoting Mumford, explains how the advent of the clock "dissociated time from human events, and helped create the belief in an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences" (Lynch 1972, 127). Time becomes understood as a commodity that "can be added, subtracted, divided, saved, lost, filled, killed, or stolen" (Lynch 1972, 128).

This fiscal distress and other quantifiable benchmarks yield a sense of inevitability about school closures, sales and reuse. This inevitability suggests a linear, teleological path of "progress," naturalizing market processes, demographic changes, and poor academic performance that again came from both residents and staff.

Resident: *You have these hulking enormous buildings that cost a gazillion dollars to heat and maintain. People don't want to say it, and I'll say it and people would probably hate me for it, but you can't keep them open just because people in neighborhoods are attached to them. It's sad, but you can't…intuitively it makes sense to me. You can't have a school building for 1,000 kids with 300 kids in it.*

School District staff: *…this is what the market is saying can be in this building. And it's saying it strongly because look – out of the five bidders, the top four are all saying the same use...which again I think shows that this is what the market is saying – what the use of these buildings could be from either a profit or a non-profit viewpoint.*

Naturalizing the market obscures the racialized dynamics of neighborhood real estate markets, the result of generations of discriminatory private and public housing policies and practices, and serves to "normalize events or actions that could otherwise be interpreted as racially motivated" (Bonilla-Silva 2014, 85).

Despite this inevitable march forward, a detailed vision or plan for the future is elusive. Respondents articulate an abstract notion of a better future, which is hindered by current crisis issues.

Resident: *Whereas the reality is the school district sold these buildings - or put them up for sale because it was in distress. There are no funds for a developer to cut a deal with you, with him, with her. It's not like that…I think that people have gotten it into their mindset that with these buildings, these developers are all super rich coming in and they're supposed to spread their wealth around. And I think that's going to hold up progress.*

Quasi-public agency staff: *Every day you stay in the closed school business, you're not in the open school business…it's a terrible situation for the district, but let's try to get it behind them so they can focus on the future…as long as [closed school buildings] continue to languish and be on their books, I think that's a distraction. It's a psychological distraction, it's a resource distraction, it's a personnel distraction.*

These findings challenge Lynch's framework in two key ways. First, my analysis reveals that the logics of crisis management include planners and decision makers, but unlike Lynch's suggestion, also include residents and other thought leaders. As illustrated above, residents name issues of financial distress and enrollment declines.[53] Second, the *closure as crisis management* frame is not as focused on the future as Lynch's planners are. Rather than looking forward to some far-off imagined future on paper, the focus of this frame is very much on the immediate present and the challenging issues of funding and academic performance that SDP faces in the short term.

5.3.2   Closure as Loss

The second frame, *closure as loss*, is revealed through data that focuses on the pain of closures for many communities today and in the short-term future. This frame highlights the ways that schools foster a sense of belonging and are central to a neighborhood's identity. (see Figure 19).

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[53] In addition to my interviews, casual conversation and reading media during my fieldwork made it clear that there is a general consensus that SDP is operating without adequate funds and that schools are at breaking point. Much of this has to do with state policy and Pennsylvania's school funding formula.

Figure 19. Closure as Loss

Schools' Value	Spatial Reference	"Image of Time"
Loss		
Economic	Market	Present
Socio-Spatial	School N'hood	Past Present
Symbolic	N'hood City Beyond	Past Present

The *loss* is centered on the individual school site and its impact on the immediate neighborhood, which in Philadelphia is often as small as a three to five block area.

> Non-profit leader and resident: *Where I live now is less than a mile away from where I went to middle school – Vaux Middle School, which is now closed. Actually two of my schools that I went to are now two of the schools that closed – Vaux and University City High School. It's really sad. Because like for alumni we lost a home. How do we do our reunion? Where do we go to get back to where we came from? It's almost like erasing your history. Well that's the way it feels to me.*

> Police officer: *There's a certain sadness to it. People do lose their sense of belonging. You know, look at the school just around the corner from here…It's sad. It is. It's sad to see. You know, you got a concrete lot that children used to once play in, recess, lunch, before and after school...I think there's a sort of sadness in the neighborhood when a school closes because you do lose a bit of your identity.*

The loss experienced reflects the braided relationship between a school's social community and the physicality of the school building. One city council staff member naturalized this connection:

> *[N]ow the thing that brings people together outside of their houses - where you congregate, where you meet your neighbors is gone…When you lose that…it unravels those community ties. There are less opportunities for people to meet and to congregate.*

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When you drop off your child at school, that's when you get to see someone else, or you might meet a neighbor down the street…[T]hose natural outlets don't exist anymore when you take that [school] away.

Some city planning staff also recognized the loss to the neighborhood:

[T]he really big issue, and I think that it's something we will definitely talk about in the planning process – with these schools going away – what services do they provide to the community that they're missing? Like people still used the playground and the open spaces and even meeting spaces at the school and now that they're closed they can't use them.

This staff member acknowledged that the planning department were left to figure out how to fill gaps in the social fabric of neighborhoods through their physical planning processes focused on land use and infrastructure improvements.

The *inevitability* of closures appears in this frame as well, although it is couched in what I call a *mournful resignation*. Residents felt the profound loss of a school, but also expressed a resignation to the inevitability of closures given district fiscal and academic situation:

But the reality around everything is that schools had to close. Because kids weren't in them. Kids weren't in them. That's the tough part. Schools had to close.

Grieving the loss of a school is situated in the context of continued forward movement along a teleological path of time. School District decision-makers recognize the loss that comes with closure as well:

From my perspective, the shorter time the better, but when you're dealing with a community that could potentially be inheriting sort of a sort of a forever loss – there's time that they just need to be able to try to change your mind or if it looks like that's not going to happen be able to internalize it, be able to be in a position to talk about transition with you.

School District leaders also juxtapose this loss with the decision-making criteria of the school district, which sets up the *crisis management* and *loss* frames in opposition.

It's tragic – horrible [and] the effect on the neighborhood is something that people talk about – they worry about it, but it's never going to be the determining factor because our mission is education. (School Reform Commission member)

The attention to belonging and loss also articulates a particular temporality that engages the past, present, and future in a linear progression. The loss references a particular set of experiences at a particular moment in the past – a connection to a class or colleagues, a community center, etc. The loss and attendant grief is felt acutely now in the present, and is something that will be managed and worked through to get to some point in the future.

5.3.3   Closure as Oppression

The third frame, *closure as oppression,* respondents position closures as an inequity in education, but also more broadly as part of a trajectory of policy decisions in neighborhoods that date from slavery. Like the frame of *loss*, this last frame, *closure as oppression*, also engages with past, present, and future, albeit in a different way. Instead of a linear, teleological path of time, this frame invokes past, present, and future in more simultaneous and fluid ways. Respondents

articulating *closure as oppression* move back and forth between historical precedents, personal and collective memories, present conditions, and an imagined future. Just as they held an expansive view of time, they also expanded the spatiality of their experience, moving beyond the school site and immediate neighborhood. (see Figure 20)

Figure 20. Closure as Oppression
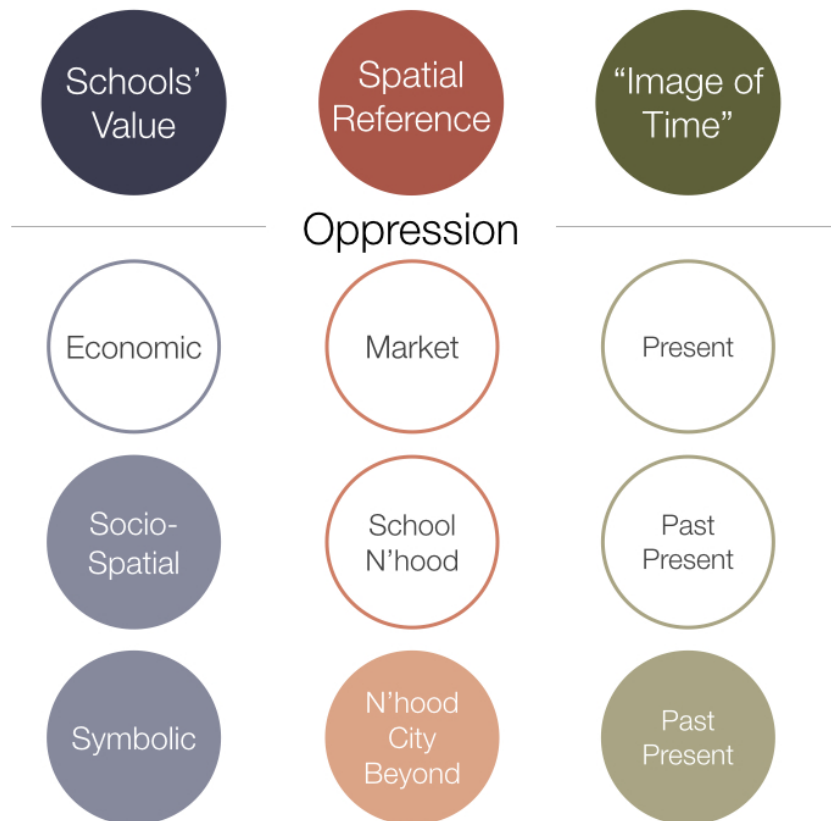
In interviews, questions about school closures were answered with issues of neighborhood change and citywide re/development, and vice versa. One White resident argued:

> *I mean all of these struggles are connected, right? So like they close our schools and then they tell kids, "Why don't you just get a better job?" And then like kids are all on the street selling drugs because they need to make money and that's bad for your community, it's bad for your neighborhood, so it's like – obviously all these things are related. So like trying to compartmentalize them to me doesn't make sense. So when they close schools in predominantly Black neighborhoods like that to me is an attack on the Black working class people. Meanwhile, in that same neighborhood, they're like selling half a million dollar houses. And they're going to turn like these empty schools into f***ing like condos?*

Respondents linked public school closures, sales, and reuse plans to decisions that date from slavery, Urban Renewal, and deindustrialization. The fluid temporality and interconnected nature of these experiences reflect what Dumas (2014) identifies as "social suffering" and recall

Imarisha, et al.'s (2015) assertions that the horrors of American racism is not experienced as linear. More so than the other two frames, *closure as oppression* emerged from residents, often – though not exclusively – residents of color.

The richness of this frame really lies in the looping and fluid descriptions respondents provided. Thus, longer passages from interviews best reveal this frame. In the following excerpt, the speaker moves across space (home, neighborhood, city, country) and time – from today's school closures and redevelopment plans back to the 1950s, to city initiatives in the 1990s and 2000s, to the birthplace of America, and back to today.

> *People do not have our interests in mind. And if you look at the development that has occurred in North Philadelphia, in the 5th councilmanic district in particular…it's back to my father's discussion back in the 50s in hearing Franklintown – they used to hear rumors in the 60s about Franklintown – to pull up Center City and push down Germantown, get rid of us in the middle all together. Well, we're seeing from a community planning standpoint – we're really seeing it happening. People are very patient. It's like Temple University. Very patient. They acquire land, turn it into a parking lot, sit on it 15, 20 years, and boom next thing you know, here comes a resident hall, here comes a this, here comes a that…these guys are shrewd. They are so patient. And they have means. When you have means you can afford to be patient…*

> *The impact here for us in the community from a neighborhood transformation and a blight elimination standpoint – and the withholding of the Community Block Grant revitalization dollars – the house begins to deteriorate. They're approaching 100 years old as it is…Whoever owns the house has less of an ability to fix it up - those kinds of dynamics are happening. And then you have people in the community who call up and say "you need to tear this house down" - we're actually cast into a situation we're you're asking people to tear your neighborhood down because of neglect. Not your neglect, their neglect…You see the trap of it all.*

> *And to answer your question of what's happening now – is being unprecedented gathering of land, packaging of land, basically to convey to the redevelopment authority which is the City's eminent domain big gun, to capture this land – on a part of people who are here, some of them are all "well someone do something with this vacant lots." The vacant lots are the product of [the previous mayor]. He created the vacant lots. We didn't have vacant lots…I see what you [the mayor] robbed us of and you were in position to help and you hurt us. And the blood is on your hands…Because it wasn't part of the scheme futuristically of clearing this neighborhood. We don't care where y'all go – just go somewhere. So we have so many of our young people who are in the grave now. In the jail now...*

> *The decades have shown [redevelopment efforts] never benefited me and my neighbors and the people that I care about…The planners that have been a part of planning for our neighborhood, have played us out of position. They've torn down our houses, they've withheld the resources that exist for building up communities versus tearing down communities, and it's been done strategically…What about the homes where people live? What about the homeowners like my family? 65 years in the same property? What the hell is there for us?*

The City Planning Commission hasn't looked out for us. The Office of Housing hasn't looked out for us. The Council people haven't looked out for us. The ward leaders, committee people – nobody's looking out for us. So what the hell makes me think that I can go to a meeting, sign a sign-in sheet, look at your plans and charts and say, "Wow, that's going to help us"? No it's not. No. It's. Not. Going. To. Help. Us. We're going to be struggling to keep ahold of our properties. And we're not a part of that plan. You're not interested in us benefiting from this. Truly. I don't see it…Because you know how it really works in Philly. That s**t looks good on paper. It looks good for documenting that there was a process. And you use that to process people out of position. That's what has consistently happened. This is consistent with the birthplace of America. It happened here. And the deception continues.

It's not a conspiracy theory – when you look at the fact of where we are today versus where we were. It ain't progress – not here. You can go to other parts of the city - where not one building has been torn down. It's a process that has worked throughout the country for flipping neighborhoods and it's been happening as far as I know – it's something that has been talked about by grassroots people in community development since the 80s – that's when community development corporations began to come about and HUD invested dollars in that.

The modernization of cities and the catering to professionals and mixed income has taken precedent. So where the hell do we go? Where do we go? You don't have means, credit, or anything. That property across the street is the only property that has your family name on it. So where the hell are you supposed to go?

In response to a question about two specific closed schools in North Philadelphia and the impact on the neighborhood, this resident presents a long and circuitous narrative that travels from her experience as a child growing up in the shadow of Temple University in the 1950s and 60s to citywide redevelopment initiatives of the 2000s to the origins of the United States and back to the current situation in the neighborhood.

Her narrative carries not only across time, but also space. She is concerned about the immediate neighborhood where schools closed, but links that to other neighborhoods, citywide development and eventually to other cities as well. The substance and tone of her response is angry and righteous, situating these plans, policies, and redevelopment initiatives as a way to oppress communities living in poverty, particularly the African America communities in North Philadelphia. She also captures the tension between the long time horizons of developers and the shorter more immediate concerns of residents.

Just as decision makers positioned *crisis management* in opposition to *loss*, I also heard criticism and dismissal of *closure as oppression* from a few respondents. A staff member at the Philadelphia Housing Authority shared with me his thoughts on public housing residents' attitudes toward public services, including housing and education:

And there's a strong sense, particularly in Philadelphia, that they [residents] are victims of the change that does occur and victims of their current circumstance. So when you view your life as a byproduct of all things that have happened to you, you don't welcome change and you're going to fight anything the institution will try…people are focused on the invisible hand keeping them down. But in this city you have a black mayor, a black

*councilperson, a black state rep – where is the invisible white hand keeping you down? I
don't see it. I'm Hispanic and I don't see it.*

Recall the nonprofit leader cited in Chapter 4 who critiqued many parents and residents
opposition to closures and charter schools as "nostalgia":

> *[A] lot of what folks want out of neighborhood schools is nostalgia for a system that
> didn't ever – that doesn't exist. Which is this belief that before [the governor] or before
> charter schools, that black families in North Philly had this golden era where they sent
> their kids to – they walked their kids to school, and the crossing guard knew their name,
> and things were great. It's like, no. These schools have been failing for decades, multiple
> generations. And families still feel a romantic attachment to them, because it's their
> school, but it's important to recognize that those schools hadn't produced results for a
> long time.*

In Chapter 4, I highlighted how this comment pits schools' symbolic values of belonging against
their economic values of human capital building. It also problematizes and delegitimizes a
particular temporality – one grounded in a longer historical trajectory – as "nostalgia," and
instead argues for a more immediate focus on the present.

Despite these dismissals, the *closure as oppression* frame persists. The frame also
reinforces Dumas' (2014) suggestion that policies are experienced and suffered by those who are
subjects of their implementation. While Dumas focused on schools and school policy as sites of
social suffering for African Americans, the narratives that articulate the *closure as oppression*
frame suggest that planning and urban redevelopment are considered side by side with schools
and are arenas of social suffering.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed a cross-disciplinary scholarship that theorizes the relationship
between space and time. Building on the analysis in Chapter 4, I presented three frames, or
stories, of schools and school closures in Philadelphia: *closure as crisis management, closure as
loss,* and *closure as oppression.* Different values (economic, socio-spatial, symbolic) undergird
each frame, which also deploy specific spatial and temporal references.

As prior scholarship suggests, respondents articulated a braided nature between these
temporalities and the spatiality with which they situated school closures. I argue that these
divergent spatial and temporal perspectives contribute to tensions in the school closure decision-
making, sales, and reuse processes.

The *closure as crisis management* frame is predominantly a-spatial, instead focused on
quantifiable metrics of school building condition, utilization, academic performance, and
financial distress. It makes visible the process of quantification, and the ways in which diverse
stakeholders reify quantitative data, constructing knowledge in particular ways that focus on
present conditions and a future of financial stability and high quality education.

The *closure as loss* frame focuses on the specific school site and immediately
surrounding neighborhood, and brings attention to the acute and very present pain of losing a
school or school community. It recalls the immediate past, daily activities, and relationships
centered at the school site. Schools are understood as centers of social community and school

buildings as symbolic spaces of belonging; the loss leaves people with a *mournful resignation* of a future in the absence of these neighborhood schools.

The *closure as oppression* frame ties the specific school site and closure to broader patterns of disinvestment, redevelopment, and urban change. It articulates a spatial expansiveness and a temporal fluidity, moving back and forth across scales and time. It draws on not only on daily experiences and memory, but also on historical legacies, historical policy decisions, and cumulative collective suffering of people living in poverty and particularly the African American community. The *closure as oppression* frame reveals that for some, school closures are not divorced from broader conditions or other neighborhood policies of the past, present, and expected future. These closure decisions are experienced, lived, and – as Dumas (2014) suggests – suffered as part of a larger trajectory of systemic oppression for low income communities and communities of color.

These frames reveal a complex relationship between time, space, and positionality; a single frame is not easily attributable to a single category of people. For example, relying on Lynch, we may have expected that only decision makers would have articulated a *closure as crisis management* frame. However, as my research shows, a range of people espoused these logics.

Further, although each frame points towards a future, none did so with a level of specificity. *Closure as crisis management* indicates that there is some future that will include fiscal stabilization and an adequately resourced school district. It points towards a vague idea of creating schools for 21st century learning, but without offering what characterizes or defines this kind of education. The *closure as loss* frame maintains a future that is perhaps best seen in its *mournful resignation*, which is less about defining an alternative future and more about an expectation that the future will come even in the absence of these once-precious resources – neighborhood schools. The *closure as oppression* frame implies a future that is perhaps not that much different than the past and present. The cumulative personal and collective suffering experienced at the hands of government actors yields a level of pessimism, even in the face of continued persistence.

The *closure as oppression* frame suggests that understanding the perceived impacts and lived experience of school closure policies requires – at least in part – situating this education reform policy not only in the context of today's budget and academic performance data, but also within a longer history of place-based anti-poverty policies that have sought to improve poor neighborhoods (Halpern 1995; Katz 2013). As my research demonstrates, for many, school closures represent the latest act in a protracted effort of urban demolition – dating from slum clearance at the turn of the 20th century through blight removal and Urban Renewal in the 1950s – in which officials advanced the demolition of neighborhoods of color in the interest of revitalization.

These findings have relevance for practitioners and ongoing scholarship at the nexus of city planning and public education, on which I elaborate in the following concluding chapter.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The provision of public education is simultaneously an educational, social, political, and spatial process. The extreme case of public school closures presents a new imperative for planning researchers and practitioners. School closures offer a "physical, political, and discursive space" to understand how policies enacted through educational and urban arenas "[manifest] as material landscape changes" and affect lived experiences in neighborhoods (Hackworth 2007, 13). My study in Philadelphia has identified the frames or discursive logics of school closures, sales, and reuse, extending current scholarship on school closures and the nexus of planning and education.

6.1 Summary of Study Findings

Through this study of the complete trajectory of closures, sales, and reuse, I have argued that schools and education are shaped by larger urban transformations, and also have demonstrated how education policy can be recast as a key element of urban change and planning. Following the trajectory of school buildings from vacancy to the transformation of schools into capital assets to the reimagining of school reuse has required a multi-scalar (from local school site to neighborhood to city) and multi-sector (school district, city, non-profit) analysis. This approach foregrounds the complex and blurred boundaries between urban and education policy-making and advances understanding of the role of education and schools in neighborhoods, cities, and regions.

In Chapter 3, I outlined the contours of the debate about the benefits and costs of school closures as it has been represented in newspaper media. As one of the first studies of media framing of school closures, I used coverage across 13 cities to situate the in-depth Philadelphia case in a national context. I found that news media coverage fosters a conflictual and dichotomous framing of closures, reducing complicated and plural meanings of schools to two competing and singular arguments: Proponents deploy rationality, data, and technical expertise to mange an inevitable and dire crisis. Opponents express their concerns through emotionally laden messaging. Media are predominantly sympathetic to the problem definition and causal interpretations of school closure proponents. This analysis reveals how newspaper media do not maximize their role as a democratic institution, and affirms the findings of previous studies on media coverage of educational reform policy issues, especially the general tone of inevitability and neglect of the disproportionate and racialized impact of closures.

In Chapter 4 I moved to my in-depth case site, and used Philadelphia's school closures as a revelatory case to shed light on the multifaceted values that schools have to neighborhoods, planning, and urban governance. My research in Philadelphia affirms and complicates current scholarship on the nexus of cities and schools. As prior research has shown, I find that schools are valued economically, socio-spatially, and symbolically, and my work expands the scope of these values.

In the literature and in my research, schools have economic value along a number of dimensions. First, schools are an instrument to improve individual earnings and social mobility through human capital investments. Second, they contribute to housing market dynamics, in which school quality drives housing location choices and high quality schools are capitalized into housing prices. Third, schools support neighborhood, city, and regional economic growth through workforce development and as a tool of firm attraction and retention. I found three additional dimensions of economic value of schools: schools are an employment center, often for

neighborhood residents; schools are assets or liabilities that contribute to school district fiscal solvency; and schools are redevelopment sites, linked to neighborhood real estate markets and vehicles for private profit making.

The case of Philadelphia's closures, sales, and reuse affirms and clarifies the socio-spatial value of schools. Philadelphia's schools function as both social and physical centers in neighborhoods. The rhythm of daily life shaped by the specific morphology of Philadelphia's neighborhoods shifts when schools close. Additionally, closures reveal how school buildings also have potentially negative socio-spatial value, as attractive nuisances in the absence of stewardship. Schools are key physical landmarks in the urban fabric of neighborhoods and the city. They are nodes on pathways throughout the neighborhood, shaped by individual perceptions of safety and community. The routes to and from and access through school sites are core pieces of individuals' mental maps of neighborhoods.

Finally, school closures, sales, and reuse in Philadelphia illustrate the ways that schools hold symbolic value as spaces of belonging and are important to place-identity. This case also reveals two additional dimensions of the symbolic values of schools. First, closures stand in for larger processes of neighborhood change and what is to come in neighborhoods, triggering or exacerbating fears about gentrification or continued disinvestment. Second, decisions about schools represent a larger and historically racialized relationship between particular communities and the public sector, one that is defined by systemic respect or disrespect.

Tacit values undergird frames and ultimately the policy decisions that emerge from their logics. In Chapter 5, I built on the values identified in Chapter 4 and find three frames of school closures: *closure as crisis management*, *closure as loss*, and *closure as oppression*. Each one places schools in a different spatial context – from the a-spatial market (*crisis management*) to the school site and/or neighborhood (*loss*) to broader citywide patterns of re/development (*oppression*). This variation is tied to different notions of time, which foreground the past, present, and future in divergent ways. Respondents articulated a braided nature between these temporalities and the spatiality with which they situated school closures.

My findings demonstrate that to understand the consequences of school closures, research needs to examine not only the moment of closure, but also the subsequent sales and reuse of school buildings. "Placing" schools in this way situates this education reform policy in its spatial context. My research also illustrates the importance of situating closures, sales, and reuse temporally, building understanding of connections to the history of place-based policies that have sought to improve poor neighborhoods (Halpern 1995; Katz 2013). Respondents revealed how school closures, sales, and reuse are the latest act in a protracted effort of urban demolition – dating from slum clearance at the turn of the 20th century through blight removal and Urban Renewal in the 1950s – in which officials advanced the demolition of neighborhoods of color in the interest of revitalization. Like Urban Renewal, some in Philadelphia argued that closures result in dubious impacts on existing residents, despite narratives from decision-makers to the contrary. These efforts today may not have explicitly racist motivations; negative consequences, however, are undeniably born by marginalized communities of color.

6.2 School Closures as a "Racial Project"

The disproportionate impact felt by communities of color is a worthy of a larger treatment. Here, I offer some concluding reflections that situate my findings within the larger theoretical

framework of Racial Formation Theory (RFT) (Omi and Winant 1994). RFT as a lens opens up new questions for planning research and practice (now and in the future) on the issues of race, neighborhood change, and public education. It deepens the way in which I grapple with the tensions and "constant discursive struggle" (Fischer and Forester 1993) inherent in multi-sector, multi-scalar policies like school closures, sales, and reuse.

RFT links individual and collective identity with questions of institutions, policy, and broader societal structures embedded in particular socio-historical contexts. Racial formation is "the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (1994, 55). These processes are linked to social and cultural practices and representations, and then tied to political and economic systems through simultaneous "structuring and signifying." This combination of practices and representations are "racial projects," which run the gamut in scale and scope, including "large-scale public action, state activities, and interpretations of racial conditions in artistic, journalistic, or academic fora, as well as the seemingly infinite number of racial judgments and practices we carry out at the level of individual experience" (Omi and Winant 1994, 60–61). The diversity and volume of racial projects form a complex web that "mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other" (Omi and Winant 1994, 60).

The double helix of signifying and structure is another way to understand the relationship between framing and material reality, and offers an analytical tool to understand key moments and practices of school closures, sales, and reuse processes as racial projects. Ultimately, using RFT in conjunction with theories of policy framing to understand urban policy and public education serves a greater purpose: to contribute to the mitigation of the inequitable distribution of risks and resources by race in the United States, of which school closures, sales, and reuse represent just one manifestation.

Historically, public school facilities have a long history as a tool to manage racial segregation in the United States (Lassiter 2012; Erickson 2012; Highsmith and Erickson 2015). What was previously explicitly intended through school facilities management now persists as an implicit racial project through closures, sales, and reuse. In Philadelphia (as elsewhere), school closures are more likely to occur in low-income African American neighborhoods (Good Forthcoming).

My findings suggest that inequities in access to the political and decision-making process also disproportionately negatively affect these communities. The privileging of one set of values above others led to a process in which many low-income communities of color felt unheard and disenfranchised in both education and planning decision-making. During the closure and sales process, Philadelphia City and District leaders recognized the loss of an educational space, but were focused most intensely on the economic values of school buildings to the district. This focus devalued schools' broader functions and their social and spatial centrality in neighborhoods. It also largely ignored the broader historical lens evident in schools' symbolic values and perspective articulated through the *closure as oppression* frame. The ahistorical nature of decision-making and the privileging of economic values obscure these concerns, reifying and solidifying racially discriminatory practices and outcomes. School District decision makers could better honor the frames of loss and oppression, and explore strategies and rubrics beyond the quantification strongly present in the crisis management approach, including the use of narrative and other qualitative data in policy making. City leadership also could consider the

ways that policies, plans, and investment decisions in particular neighborhoods have deeply influenced the perception and experience of school closure.

6.3 Implications for Practice and Research

Uncovering the values and frames of school closures, and tracing the tensions across them in Philadelphia point to broader questions for urban and educational policymaking and research along three dimensions: scale, land commodification, and accountability structures.

Economic values that center on a preoccupation with district fiscal health, coupled with the prominent socio-spatial value of schools in Philadelphia's neighborhoods complicate the way that urban scholars and practitioners think about scale and spatiality. Urban scholars and practitioners tend to focus on neighborhood, city, or regional jurisdictional boundaries, and the ways that people reflect these administrative boundaries in their daily experience. However, this research – by examining schools' economic value to the district and the divergent mental maps and socio-spatial value to residents – reveals that the administrative boundaries of the school district and school attendance catchment areas may be as important to people's mental maps of their neighborhoods. Future research could consider more deeply the ways that planners can use the school district or school attendance boundaries as a spatial unit of analysis.

The intersection of economic and socio-spatial values also ties public schools to land and development. School closures are among the "catalytic moments in the urban land-use decision process when use value and exchange value collide to make commodities out of the land and improvements thereon" (Harvey 2009). The extreme case of closures serves as a prism that helps refract the ways that the provision of public education and schools are also bound up in processes of spatialized capital along with private assets like housing. The use of the *closure as crisis management* frame echoes prior policy approaches of housing segregation, Urban Renewal, and public housing construction. These used particular discursive logics to help further policies that reshapes urban landscapes in ways that systematically privileged private developers over low-income residents of color (Weber 2002; Vale 2000; Goetz 2013). Future research could consider more deeply the ways that planners can recognize deep connections to schools, and consider schools as sites of contestation not only over issues of education, but also in the politics of place and neighborhood change.

The connections between school closures' symbolic value and non-school policy decisions confuse lines of accountability across agencies that have enabled, promoted, and enacted school closures, sales, and reuse. This nexus of organizations includes public and quasi-public agencies, private development companies, philanthropy, non-profit think tanks, advocacy organizations, and neighborhood associations. For some, the administrative distinctions between City and School district are blurred. School policies as indistinguishable from other urban policies, and therefore the politics of education and the politics of place are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in the lived experiences of many residents. Practitioners may consider the experience of residents and acknowledge the interconnected nature of their work through engagement processes. Future research could consider the ways in which these perceived lines of accountability influence political action and resistance around school closure and neighborhood change.

The centrality of schools as educational, social, political, and physical infrastructure in neighborhoods creates an imperative for planning scholars and practitioners to consider the

consequence of this significant moment of physical and functional transformation. This dissertation bridges current research on school closures that defines the community institutionally (by school site) with the larger geographic scales of neighborhood and city.

Ultimately, this study helps further understanding of the geographic and geopolitical boundaries that are tied to school sites and school districts, and enhance planners' conceptualization of and work at the nexus of place and schools. From an urban policy or planning perspective school closures call for a recalibration or assessment of interventions in neighborhoods, cities, and regions. The links established in scholarship to-date about schools and policies for revitalization set the stage for a deeper interrogation of school closure and broader patterns of urban development.

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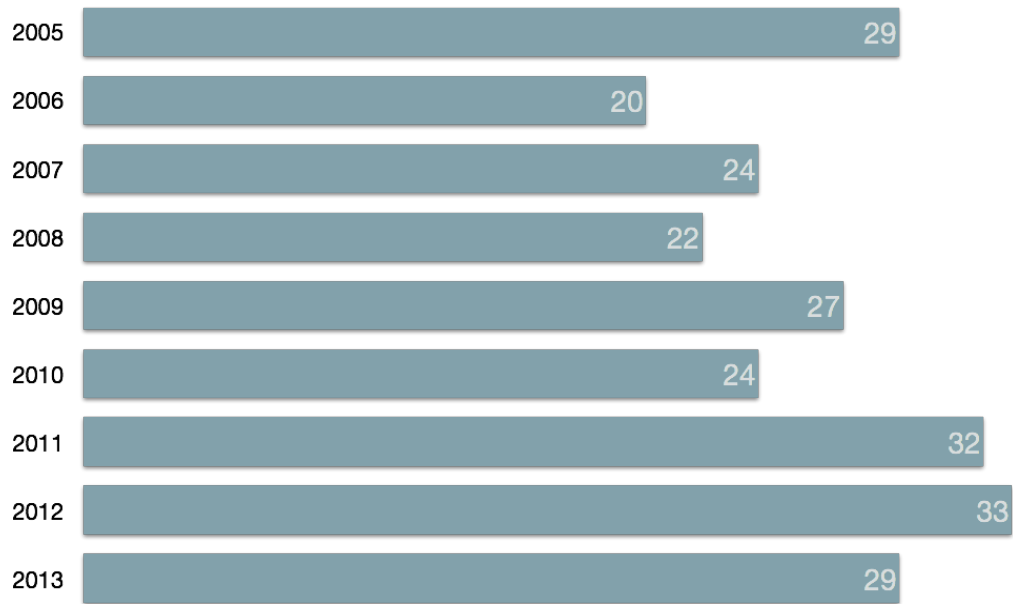
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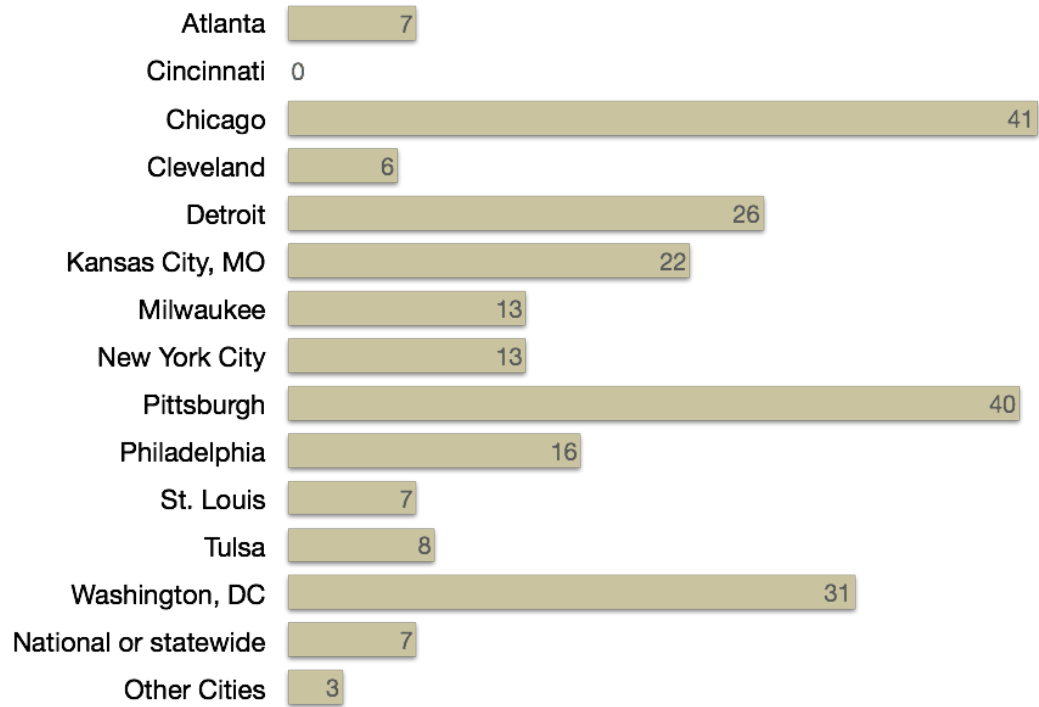
Appendix A. Newspaper Publications Searched for Coverage of School Closures

City	Newspaper	Publishing Frequency	Database
Atlanta	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	daily	Access World News
	Atlanta Daily World	weekly	Access World News
	Atlanta Examiner	daily	Access World News
Chicago	Chicago Sun-Times	daily	Access World News
	Chicago Examiner	daily	Access World News
	Chicago Tribune	daily	ProQuest Newstand
Cincinnati	The Cincinnati Post	daily	Access World News
	The Cincinnati Examiner	daily	Access World News
Cleveland	The Plain Dealer	daily	Access World News
	Cleveland Examiner	daily	Access World News
Detroit	The Detroit News	daily	Access World News
	Detroit Examiner	daily	Access World News
Kansas City, MO	The Kansas City Star	daily	Access World News
	Kansas City Examiner	daily	Access World News
Milwaukee	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	daily	Access World News
	Milwaukee Examiner	daily	Access World News
New York City, National	The New York Times	daily	Lexis Nexis
National	USA Today	daily	Access World News
	The Wall Street Journal	daily	ProQuest
Philadelphia	The Philadelphia Daily News	daily	Access World News
	Philadelphia Examiner	daily	Access World News
	The Philadelphia Inquirer	daily	Access World News
Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh Examiner	daily	Access World News
	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	daily	Access World News
	Pittsburgh Tribune-Review	daily	Access World News
St. Louis	St. Louis Examiner	daily	Access World News
	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	daily	Access World News
Tulsa	Tulsa Examiner	daily	Access World News
	Tulsa World	daily	Access World News
Washington DC, National	Washington Examiner	daily	Access World News
	The Washington Times	daily	Access World News
	Washington Post	daily	Lexis Nexis

Appendix B. Article Sample by Year

Year	Count
2005	29
2006	20
2007	24
2008	22
2009	27
2010	24
2011	32
2012	33
2013	29

Appendix C. Article Sample by Location

Location	Count
Atlanta	7
Cincinnati	0
Chicago	41
Cleveland	6
Detroit	26
Kansas City, MO	22
Milwaukee	13
New York City	13
Pittsburgh	40
Philadelphia	16
St. Louis	7
Tulsa	8
Washington, DC	31
National or statewide	7
Other Cities	3

Appendix D. Article Sample by Newspaper

City	Name	Frequency	Percentage
Atlanta	Atlanta Daily World	1	0.4%
	Atlanta Examiner	0	0.0%
	Atlanta Journal-Constitution	6	2.5%
Chicago	Chicago Examiner	2	0.8%
	Chicago Sun-Times	21	8.8%
	Chicago Tribune	16	6.7%
Cincinnati, OH	The Cincinnati Post	0	0.0%
	The Cincinnati Examiner	0	0.0%
Cleveland, OH	Cleveland Examiner	10	4.2%
	Plain Dealer	0	0.0%
Detroit	Detroit Examiner	1	0.4%
	Detroit News	25	10.4%
Kansas City, MO	Kansas City Star	20	8.3%
	Kansas City Examiner	0	0.0%
Milwaukee	Milwaukee Examiner	0	0.0%
	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	13	5.4%
National	USA Today	0	0.0%
	Wall Street Journal	10	4.2%
New York City, National	New York Times	11	4.6%
Philadelphia	Philadelphia Daily News	5	2.1%
	Philadelphia Examiner	0	0.0%
	Philadelphia Inquirer	11	4.6%
Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh Examiner	0	0.0%
	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	17	7.1%
	Pittsburgh Tribune Review	23	9.6%
St. Louis, MO	St. Louis Examiner	0	0.0%
	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	8	3.3%
Tulsa, OK	Tulsa Examiner	0	0.0%
	Tulsa World	8	3.3%
Washington DC, National	Washington Examiner	1	0.4%
	Washington Post	28	11.7%
	Washington Times	3	1.3%

Appendix E. Newspaper Article Analysis Codes, Subcodes, and Definitions

Code	Subcode(s)	Definition
City-related		Refers to overall declines in city population, shifts in population across neighborhoods, neighborhood conditions or revitalization, citywide segregation
Core Education	Academics + school climate	Refers to issues of academic performance, teaching and learning, curriculum or programming, school climate education reform and/or charter schools
	Charter schools + education reform	
Facilities	Conditions + utilization	Refers to anything related to the school building, including: building condition and maintenance issues; utilization or vacancy rates; consolidation from one or more buildings into one school building; sales, reuse, or other disposition of the school building
	Consolidation	
	Enrollment	
	Reuse + Disposition	
Force	Inevitability	Refers to closures as a function of abstract forces, including inevitability; unprecedented nature; issues of crisis, disaster, or dire circumstances
	Unprecedented or Crisis	
Funding		Refers to financial constraints from federal, state, local, or district levels
Governance	Elections or voter measures	Refers to elections or ballot measures on school-related issues; leadership of school board members, superintendents or other individuals during the closure process; legislation at the local, state, or federal level; or litigation around school funding or closures
	Leadership	
	Legislation	
	Litigation	
Labor		Refers to school site and district faculty and staff, unions, contract negotiations, or lay-offs
Phase	Pre-closure catalysts	Refers to a specific phase of school closures, including: catalysts or drivers of closures, the decision making process, or post-closure impact. Closure process refers to district decision making criteria or plan; public meetings and other modes of public engagement with decision makers; protests at public meetings or rallies; emotional reactions to closures; and anticipated or actual impacts of closures for students, school site or district staff and faculty, parents, or neighborhoods.
	Closure process Emotion Protest + Opposition	
	Post-closure impact	
Transportation		Refers to routes to closed or reassigned schools or safe passage to/from home and school

Values	Economic	Refers to the implicit values projected onto schools including: economic, socio-spatial, or symbolic.
	Socio-spatial	Economic value refers to human capital development; costs of operating schools or deferred maintenance; potential revenue from sales of closed school buildings; neighborhood property values; trade-offs of funding for some schools over others or other district budgeting.
	Symbolic	Socio-spatial value refers to role of school in a neighborhood; school as center of community; the use of school for non-school purposes; schools as places for social capital building and stability; or community ties through schools. Symbolic value refers to multi-generational importance of schools; schools as places of belonging; school closures as part of urban investment or disinvestment; closures as instruments of segregation or inequality; racial or class disparities through education.