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School District Policymaking Responses to Demographic Change
in New Immigrant Destinations

By

Erica Owyang Turner

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Cynthia Coburn, Chair

Professor Margaret Weir

Professor Daniel Perlstein

Fall 2011

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Abstract

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Since the early 1990s, immigrants from Latin America and Asia have been arriving in parts of the United States that have had little recent experience with immigration. How school district leaders respond to these demographic changes has significant consequences for students, families and communities. Yet, there is little research on why and how school district leaders are coming to enact some policies, and not others, in response to their changing demographics. This study examines policymaking in two Midwestern, urban school districts experiencing the arrival of growing numbers of immigrant families, increasing ethnic-racial diversity, and rising levels of poverty. The study offers a unique perspective on school district policymaking by bringing together theoretical insights from urban regime analysis and interpretive policy analysis to connect the economic and political dynamics in school districts with district administrators' on-the-ground policymaking. Drawing on interviews, observation, and archival research, I trace policymaking in each district between 2000 and 2010.

I find school district administrators perceived the need to change their school districts to be responsive to new pupils. While middle-class parents' threat of exiting the districts confined administrators' attempts to do so, some school staff members', parents' and community leaders' organizing efforts created possibilities for district policymaking. Working with these limitations and possibilities, district administrators advanced policies that sought to respond to the new students in their schools. They did so by adding programs to the existing structure of schooling rather than restructuring schooling to meet the needs of new entrants and by framing policies to generate agreement from local stakeholders. The resulting policies were influenced by community actors but also shaped by district leaders' self-interests and particular concerns. This study illuminates school district decision-makers' interpretations of educational problems and policy solutions, their strategic actions, as well as their negotiations and compromises with community actors as central factors in school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations. Furthermore, this study contributes to urban regime analysis by offering greater insight into the processes of framing and interaction between community actors and school district administrators that produce important policy outcomes.

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Chapter 1

Policymaking in New Immigrant Destinations

Signs welcoming you to school buildings are posted in Hmong, Spanish, and English. Faces on district websites show smiling children, little girls with pigtails and gap-toothed little boys of various skin tones, holding pencils and working in small groups with their teachers. These scenes are not in Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York, cities that have been among the most diverse and traditional sites for immigrants in the country, but in two medium-sized school districts in the Upper Midwest. In fact, these locations have changed in a generation or less and look very different from what children growing up in earlier decades would recognize. In one of these cities, Lake City, the school district student population was about 90% white in 1980 (Cullen, 2006).¹ By 2009 that figure was about 50%. In River City, the change has been similar, but has come about much more quickly. As recently as 1996 the school district was about 80% white; in 2009 that figure was about 60% white (New Midwest Department of Education, 2011a). Much, but not all of this change, appears to be the result of the arrival of immigrant families. As Asian and Latino immigrants move to new destinations in the United States, these photos and statistics are just one glimpse at the story of demographic change unfolding in communities across the Upper Midwest and across the country.

Since the late 1980s, immigrants from Latin America and Asia have been moving to parts of the Midwestern and Southern United States that have had little recent experience with immigration (Capps et al., 2005; Marrow, 2005; Massey, 2008; Singer, 2004; Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002). During the 1990s alone, the foreign-born population in the United States grew by 11.3 million, or 57.4 percent, and by 2000 almost one-third of U.S. immigrants resided outside states of traditional immigrant reception (Singer, 2004). While recent immigrants to the United States are quite diverse in their backgrounds, educations, and reasons for immigrating, those who are moving to new immigrant destinations are more often living in poverty, have lower rates of English proficiency and have lower rates of U.S. citizenship than the native-born population (Singer, 2004). Groups with these characteristics typically have few avenues of political and economic influence in their new communities. Thus, along with the greater ethnic or racial diversity represented by the faces of smiling school children there are also important issues of inequality that arise with the arrival of new immigrant groups. Indeed, tensions over the distribution of local resources and local identity and belonging are common in new immigrant destinations (Bean & Stevens, 2005; Johnson, Farrell, & Guinn, 1997; Wortham, Hamann, & Murillo, 2002). At the center of demographic change are questions of politics, equality, and inclusion.

These questions are central to the schooling of immigrant children in new destinations, where the responses of school districts is likely to establish how new residents will be included, or not, in the schools. Public school leaders are struggling to deal with increasing linguistic, racial, and socio-economic diversity, often under

¹ Lake City and River City are pseudonyms for the two cities examined in this study. Names of places, such as schools and the state “New Midwest,” have also been changed to protect the anonymity of the respondents who graciously agreed to participate in this study.

conditions where there is community resistance to and debate about educating immigrant students (Hamann, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2005). These leaders are making policy with significant consequences for students, families and communities. This includes: what children will learn, what educational opportunities will be available, who will benefit from these opportunities, and who has the power to decide. Despite the importance of the policy response to new immigrant populations, and the ways it may promote or undermine educational equality and the inclusion of new immigrant groups in society, little is known about why and how school district leaders come to enact some policies and not others.

This dissertation examines school district policymaking in two cities experiencing growing numbers of immigrant families, and growing racial and socio-economic diversity. The controversial nature of immigration in the United States suggests that school district policy responses are likely to involve political considerations in addition to internal school district policymaking processes. In contrast to previous studies of school district policymaking, I examine both the politics and the processes of school district policymaking. In particular, this study addresses the questions: How do school district administrators in two urban school districts with changing demographics respond to the new student populations in their schools? What are the politics of policymaking in these districts? What are the processes by which policymaking develops and evolves in these districts?

In the sections that follow, I review the literature on school responses to new immigrant destinations. Then, because there is little research on policymaking responses in new immigrant destinations, I turn to two sets of research that provide insights on school district policymaking more generally: emerging literature on school district decision-making and urban education politics literature. I argue that taken together, the existing research suggests the need for greater understanding of how education politics and school district processes influence the policy response in new immigrant destinations. Then, I introduce my unique conceptual approach to understanding school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations by bridging insights from urban regime analysis with interpretative policy analysis to illuminate policymaking processes as set within the political and economic dynamics of urban school systems. The chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation argument and chapters to come.

School Responses to New Immigrant Groups

Prior research on the educational response to immigration in new destinations suggests that schools are making an effort to adjust their programs to meet the needs of new immigrant students. Viewing their school systems and immigrant students as in need of change, school districts are adapting programs and policies to serve an influx of immigrant students and this policymaking is contested. First, research on the bureaucratic incorporation of immigrants finds that public schools, like other local public institutions, have been adapting to serve immigrants in schools (Dunn, Aragonés, & Shivers, 2006; Jones-Correa, 2008; Kandel & Parrado, 2006; Marrow, 2007). Second, research specifically within education, suggests that school districts are responding to the arrival of immigrants with language programs for English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as a variety of instructional policies—policies aimed at addressing curriculum, instructional programs, assessment, and teachers' professional development, (Hamann, 2003;

Lowenhaupt, 2010; Zehler et al., 2008). Yet, while we know that schools and school districts are developing new programs for immigrant students, we have little information about why and how school district administrators adopt some approaches and not others.

Two lines of research provide hints. In work on the bureaucratic incorporation of immigrants in new destinations, scholars find that educators' professional norms and ethos play an important role in establishing inclusive responses to immigration (Jones-Correa, 2008; Marrow, 2007). For example, Jones-Correa (2008) studied two wealthy suburban Washington, D.C. school districts with growing multi-ethnic immigrant populations and found that school superintendents' ethos of commitment to serving all, equity in education, and redistribution of resources to those most in need strongly influenced their inclusive policy responses to new immigrant groups. These superintendents enacted redistributive policies—policies that transferred resources from the better off to the less well off—as a response to the needs of their new immigrant populations. In addition, Marrow (2007) notes that inclusive state policies towards educating immigrant students also play an important and intertwined role with educators' professional norms and ethics in contributing to the inclusive response to immigrants in schools.

Another line of research on education in new immigrant destinations finds that despite good intentions, all too often, educators and other community members view immigrant students' language and culture as problems or deficits that must be overcome (Beck & Allexaht-Snyder, 2002; Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002; Lowenhaupt, 2010; Murillo, 2002; Villenas, 2002; Wainer, 2006), rather than as resources to draw upon in these children's educations. In addition, scholars find that educators in new immigrant destinations often do not see their own responses as problematic. Margaret Gibson (2002) summarizes: "educators frequently identify Latino students and their families as "the problem," unaware that their own lack of preparedness is, itself, a major obstacle and one that needs urgent and sustained attention" (p. 244). Indeed, scholars report schools and teachers who are unqualified or ill prepared to teach their new students and lack appropriate resources and materials for doing so (Martinez, 2002; Wainer, 2006; Zehler et al., 2008). These two lines of research suggest school district leaders' orientations towards immigrant students, but provide differing characterizations of district administrators' perspectives. From the perspective of the bureaucratic incorporation literature, district administrators see the need to change schools to respond to immigrant students, whereas from the education literature administrators view students as in need of changing. Furthermore, this research still leaves open the question of how these views translate into policymaking.

A few studies of the policy response to new immigrant groups highlight their political nature; policy making related to immigration is frequently characterized as contested. Scholars find that many school district policies begin as disorganized, ad hoc initial responses to immigration, particularly in locales where the growth of the immigrant population is rapid and large (Gershberg, Danenberg, & Sanchez, 2004; Hamann, 2003; Martinez, 2002; Zehler, et al., 2008). Community actors, particularly business groups and local churches, play important roles in initiating and supporting school district policies (Hamann, 2003; Kandel & Parrado, 2006). These later give way to more considered policy and revision. Immigrants, however, are infrequently involved in

giving input or participating in school district policies (Dorner, 2006; Hamann, 2003; for an exception, see Brunn, 2002).

However, early policy efforts may be reversed based on the development of community or educator opposition (Hamann, 2002; Hamann, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2008). Not all community members favor policies to respond to immigrant newcomers and this presents tensions for school district administrators. In Jones-Correa's (2008) study of two suburban Washington D.C. school districts, district administrators' decisions to redistribute resources towards new immigrant students were reversed after protest from parents who felt this disadvantaged their children. In Hamann's (2002, 2003) ethnographic study of a unique partnership between leaders in Dalton, Georgia and a Mexican university, found opposition to the bilingual education aspects of the program from community members who opposed the arrival of immigrants. Hamann (2002) argues that school district leaders "were uncomfortable facing any doubts raised by the Anglo public about the new educational course promised by the partnership" (p. 90) and that weakened their support of the innovative program.

In a similar manner, scholars report that policies instigated by local community members to support new immigrant groups seem to threaten or undermine district administrators' or school site staff's professional prerogative to make decisions (Hamann, 2002; Brunn, 2002). These policies often threaten district leaders' control over school district decisions. According to Hamann (2002): "policies responding to demographic change became linked to various leaders' attempts to gain or protect their power and decision making prerogatives" (p. 68). In these circumstances, scholars report that district leaders may oppose policies explicitly, or undermine the strength of these policies. Brunn (2002), for example, described one Midwestern city where Latino immigrant student and parent groups, as well as native-Anglo teachers and school leaders, and a university-based consultant worked together to develop a policy response to the education of Spanish-speaking English language learners. After the working group came to agreement, educators resisted the idea that the document should be considered a policy that educators were required to follow. The school board backed the educators, and so the policy that had been developed became a suggestion rather than an assurance for Latino students and parents.

In sum, prior research on new immigrant destinations has documented that schools are responding to an influx of immigrant students with a variety of instructional policies. Only a few studies speak to how school district policy responses come about and these point to the importance of: (a) district leaders' interpretations of their responsibility to change schooling to respond to the arrival of immigrants and their views of these students as in need to change and (b) the political nature of school district administrators and community actors support or resistance to policies responding to new immigrant groups. However, previous research has not addressed the processes and politics of school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations.²

² Hamann's (2003) study of a unique partnership between leaders in Dalton, Georgia and a Mexican University is an important exception here.

Inside School Districts: Policymaking Processes

While there is not much prior research on policymaking in response to the arrival of immigrants, there is an emerging line of research on school districts that looks inside central offices to examine school district policymaking more generally. Scholars have found some school district central offices taking an active role in developing instructional policy (Chrispeels, 1997; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Kirp & Driver, 1995; Spillane, 1996). While not directly addressing policymaking processes, these studies suggest the factors that influence district administrators' decisions. These studies have fore-grounded district capacity, size, cognition, leadership, organization, and reform histories as explanations of district action (Marsh, 2000, 2002). For example, both Firestone (1989) and Chrispeels (1997) identified district leaders' "will and capacity" as factors in their decision-making about district policies. This literature paints a somewhat optimistic picture of school district leaders trying to improve the schooling of the students they serve but whose ability to do so is mediated by a number of individual and organizational factors.

A few studies have examined the processes by which decisions or policies are actually made in school districts. This literature highlights the key role that district administrators' interpretation plays in district policymaking processes. For example, Kennedy (1982), in her study of the use of evaluations and test data in 16 school districts, found that although evidence played a role in decision-making it was more due to the "interpretative predilections of decision makers than to any inherent truth contained in the evidence itself" (p. 98) since evidence was often ambiguous or complex enough to be interpreted in multiple ways. District administrators, individually and across district offices, hold differing interpretations of educational problems, evidence, and appropriate policy solutions (Binder, 2002; Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Spillane, 1998). For example, in Coburn, Toure and Yamashita's (2009) study of evidence use in policymaking in one urban school district, district administrators held varying interpretations of the source of low test scores in middle school mathematics. Administrators who disapproved of the approach to mathematics instruction in the elementary mathematics textbook interpreted that textbook as the source of low middle school scores. Other district administrators, who believed in the elementary mathematics approach, attributed low middle school achievement to a lack of sufficient professional development for teachers in the existing approach. Thus, district administrators had conflicting interpretations of the problem they faced. Differences in interpretation reflect, in part, the organization of the district central office into subunits where differing ideas take hold (Spillane, 1998) affecting the ability of individuals from various subunits to agree on decisions (Coburn, et al., 2009).

Given the varying interpretations of policy problems and appropriate solutions circulating in school districts, the interaction between district administrators in reconciling these differences also plays a central role in policymaking. Prior research suggests the importance of district administrators' conversations, argumentation, and persuasion in establishing agreement on a policy decision (Coburn, et al., 2009; Kennedy, 1982). In Kennedy's (1982) study, committee work and circuits of communication common in district offices facilitated agreement on decisions across different actors, as district administrators talked to each other over time, eventually coming to agreement on how things should be. In Coburn and colleagues' (2009) study, district administrators with different interpretations of the source of low mathematics test scores presented their

arguments to the superintendent. The superintendent, persuaded by both, ultimately decided to adopt policies to provide additional professional development as advocated by proponents of the existing approach to mathematics instruction and also to promote an alternative instructional approach advocated by opponents of the existing mathematics approach. In this way, interactions between district administrators, through their argumentation and persuasion, shaped policymaking in this school district. Yet, Coburn and colleagues also find that the internal politics of district administrators' interactions shape decision-making. When agreement on a policy direction cannot be achieved, disagreements are resolved by altering who is involved in decision-making, compromise, or use of authority to make a decision despite disagreement (Coburn et al., 2009). Furthermore, actors with authority and status are more persuasive in policymaking (Coburn, Bae, & Turner, 2008; see also Coburn, 2005). Thus, interactions between district administrators, sometimes characterized by politics and power, complicate the role of interpretation in district policymaking.

This emerging work on school district decision-making indicates that an important place to begin investigating district policymaking in new immigrant destinations is with district leaders' interpretation and efforts to persuade others in social interaction. These interpretations may be complicated if they are shaped both by an ethos to be inclusive of new groups and a view of immigrant students as problems. However, the school district policymaking literature has yet to address the role of community political dynamics (as opposed to internal organizational politics) in these policymaking processes. For this, I turn to the scholarship on urban education politics.

Urban School District Politics

Scholarship on urban education politics illuminates the role of political power in school district reform efforts. This literature focuses on two intertwined conclusions: a variety of actors external to the school system influence school reform efforts, and economic and social conditions contribute to political constraints on school district policymaking.

First, the urban education politics literature finds school district policymaking is strongly influenced by a variety of community actors with varying levels of political influence and stakes in public schools. These scholars highlight the influence on district policymaking of urban elites (Shipps, 2006; Tyack, 1974), affluent or middle-class parents (Noguera, 2003; Peterson, 1981; C. N. Stone, 1998a; Wells & Serna, 1996), and teachers unions (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999) and argue that these groups use their influence to maintain their privileges in the school system. For example, some studies point to the influence of middle-class parents in blocking equity-oriented policymaking that redistributes resources or opportunities away from their children (Wells & Serna, 1996). These parents have greater political influence and can get their preferences reflected in policy (Noguera, 2003). Meanwhile, poor and minority parents generally have less political power, fewer economic resources, and lack the social capital to influence educational policy (Lipman, 1998; Noguera, 2003, 2004; C. N. Stone, 1998a). These findings suggest the difficulty that immigrant parents, who generally have little political power and few economic resources, will have influencing policymaking, particularly if their policy preferences mean challenging the privileges of more advantaged community actors. Furthermore, unlike in traditional areas of immigrant

settlement where there are often established co-ethnics or immigrant advocates who may act on behalf of new arrivals and mitigate their relative lack of political power, in new immigrant destinations, these actors have not yet been established either (Singer, Wilson, & DeRenzis, 2009).

In this literature, school district administrators are one of the groups working to maintain their interests in the school system; however, their influence on school district policymaking remains open to debate (Wong, 1992).³ Some scholars find that school district leaders are insulated from external actors but largely reflect the dominant community and are little influenced by immigrant and minority communities (Boyd, 1976; Tyack, 1974). A few researchers deemphasize the influence of school district administrators, reporting that school district staff, superintendents and school boards only play a modest role in initiating and sustaining major reforms on their own (C. N. Stone, 1998a), while others suggest that school district administrators may be more influential over issues that are uncontroversial in their communities, such as curriculum issues (Boyd, 1976; Kirst & Walker, 1971) or general educational quality (Wong, 1992).

The second major conclusion in the urban education politics literature is that economic and political conditions, as well as race, intertwine in ways that shape policymaking and limit the prospects that educational policy will lead to significant reform. Research on education reform from the perspective of urban regime analysis suggests that within cities, tensions across racial groups and economic competition are two political factors that can present a barrier to policymaking efforts as both make conflict around policy more likely (Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2006; Henig et al., 1999; C. N. Stone, 1998b). Furthermore, the lack of resources in many urban districts means that the distribution of school district resources becomes a political consideration that influences district policymaking (Anyon, 1997; Henig et al., 1999; C. N. Stone, 1998b).

These conditions create significant obstacles to local governments carrying out redistributive policies—policies that are perceived as reallocating resources from the wealthy to the poor. Peterson (1981) argues that because cities must compete with other localities for wealthy residents, jobs, and capital, local governments tend to make policy that favors wealthier families in order to keep them in the city and paying city taxes. According to Peterson, wealthy residents and companies will leave if there is too much redistribution. Indeed, advantaged parents can and do move across school district lines in order to secure what they see as better educational opportunities for their children in the suburbs (Henig, et al., 1999; Katznelson & Weir, 1985; Walters, 2001; Wong, 1992). These exit decisions decrease school funding through loss of property taxes and per pupil funding tied to enrollment (Peterson, 1981; Kozol, 1991). According to Peterson it is these economic considerations that limit school district leaders' efforts at redistribution in school district policymaking and make district policymakers more likely to enact policies that have neutral or beneficial effects on the bottom-line. This suggests that district administrators will be unlikely to redistribute resources to immigrants in new destinations or that doing so will be difficult (Jones-Correa, 2008).

³ Often studies of school system influence in the urban politics literature have focused on school boards rather than district administrators. I do not include those studies in this review of the influence of district administrators.

In short, research on urban school politics indicates the economic and political constraints on policymaking and the power of a variety of influential community actors yet, there has been less attention to how school district administrators actually negotiate policy and the processes by which school district policies are made. The school district policymaking literature highlights policymaking processes and the roles of interpretation and meaning making in those processes, but with little focus on new immigrant destinations on the one hand and the political factors illuminated in the urban education politics research on the other. These literatures have developed in isolation from each other. We lack work that bridges the education politics of communities with the policymaking processes in school districts. This dissertation addresses this gap in the literature. I use the case of school district policymaking in response to demographic change in new immigrant destinations to understand the relationship between local education politics and school district administrators' interpretations and interactions in policymaking. To do so, I draw together conceptual tools from two traditions: urban regime analysis and interpretative policy analysis.

A Conceptual Framework for Understanding School District Policymaking

Drawing on urban regime analysis and interpretative policy analysis, my conceptual framework offers a unique approach to understanding school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations by connecting the local education politics in new immigrant destinations with the intertwined processes of interpretation and interaction involved in school district policymaking. Urban regime analysis provides tools for locating the influence of community actors with differing degrees of economic and political influence on school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations. Interpretative policy analysis provides tools for investigating the processes of interpretation and social interaction in school district policymaking.

Urban regime analysis, as developed by political scientist Clarence N. Stone and colleagues, connects economic and political dynamics in cities to local policymaking. The approach draws attention to what Stone (1993) calls “the social production model of power” or “power to”—the ability to bring about change or capacity to get something done with others (C. N. Stone, 1993) rather than the related idea of “power over”—the ability of one set of actors to prevail over others who are resistant. This perspective is interested in how major reforms, rather than piecemeal ones, may be achieved. It is also concerned normatively with addressing social and economic inequality. Given the challenging economic circumstances and diverse constituencies in cities, urban regime scholars emphasize that local government requires the cooperation and resources of non-governmental groups in order to make major policy reform (Mossberger & Stoker, 2001; C. N. Stone, 1988, 1993).⁴ By focusing on coalitions between community actors and school district actors as a unit of analysis to understand what policies are actually made, the approach connects the political and economic circumstances in the city with policymaking through attention to the actors who are involved in policymaking

⁴ While urban regime analysis, and work by these scholars on civic capacity, has typically focused on explaining major, sustained reform efforts in cities, I draw on these same concepts as a way to understand the political and contextualized nature of urban school district policymaking, but do not emphasize the importance of institutionalized coalitions since my primary concern is not systemic or sustained reforms but agreement on policies in the first place, which may or may not end up to be systemic and sustained.

coalitions. The focus on coalition points to two important aspects of this cooperation: actors' resources and the development of policy programs and agendas actors can agree upon.

Central to urban regime theory is the notion of civic capacity: the mobilization and commitment of stakeholders from different sectors of the city to come together to address a shared problem and sustain major reforms (C. N. Stone, 1998b; C. N. Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). Here, actors' resources are a key factor in forming coalitions. Attention to actors' resources illuminates the unequal influence actors are likely to have in coalitions as well as their involvement in the first place. Material resources are a necessity in urban school districts with challenging economic circumstances; therefore the theory predicts that those with material resources are more likely to be included in coalitions and to be influential in shaping policymaking directions. However, the conceptualization of resources and the role they play in policymaking extends beyond material resources and also helps to explain the involvement of actors who are among the most moneyed or elite. Resources may also include: skills, persuasion, expertise, and organizational capacity (C. N. Stone, 1993). Thus, the conceptualization of actors' resources explains policymaking coalitions that may include neighborhood organizations, non-profit organizations, and middle-class racial-ethnic "minority" groups, depending on local demographics, economy, local governance structures, and local histories of reform (Shipps, 2003; C. N. Stone, 1998a).

The concept of civic capacity also points to the importance of agreement about policy problems or policy agendas in order to build coalitions to support policymaking. Scholars of civic capacity conceptualize agreement on policy problems and agendas as both helping to join local actors together to address a problem or agenda, but also as shaped by coalition membership (C. N. Stone, 1993). Actors with greater resources can use those to build support for the policy problems or agendas they see as important. Thus, urban regime analysts stress that there is a relationship between the involvement of actors with various resources and the directions that are pursued in policymaking. Agreement on policy directions, in other words, is a political process of coming to agreement by people with unequal resources (Stone et al., 2001).

In this study, I draw on the conceptualizations of coalition, resources, and the nature of agreement on policy problems and agendas in policymaking. I focus on school district administrators' interactions with and connections to community actors in school district policymaking, over time. At key policymaking junctures, I analyze with whom school district administrators are working or interacting and the resources that those actors bring to policymaking efforts and how that relates to agreements about policy problems or policy direction.

To capture coalition, I investigate the key actors involved in district policy making, including district administrators, school board members, advocates for English language learners, leaders in the Latino community, middle-class parents, and school staff. I conceptualize *resources* as encompassing: money, influence over school funding, educational expertise, persuasion, political and organizing skill, and knowledge of local communities. And, I attend to the nature of agreement over policy problems and agendas by comparing the problems various community actors and school district administrators identify or the policies they suggest at a given point in time. In looking at the relationship between actors, resources, and agreement on problems and policies, I am able to

illuminate the involvement of school district administrators and community actors in policymaking.

To understand the process by which agreement on policy problems and policy direction comes about in interaction between these various policy actors, I turn to interpretive policy analysis. Interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 1996) provides a way of understanding how agreement about policy problems and policy agendas comes about. From this perspective, the meaning of events, problems and policies is not a given (Rosen, 2009; D. Stone, 2002). People construct meaning and negotiate meanings among themselves. This is done through the strategic use of framing or less consciously as actors put forth their taken-for-granted interpretations of a situation.

The concept of framing is a useful tool for understanding how people come to agreement or fail to do so in policymaking. Framing is a dynamic effort to highlight certain aspects of perceived reality and promote a particular point of view (Benford & Snow, 2000). People may engage in frame contests by attempting to reframe or counter frame others' interpretations (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). In policymaking, actors may frame, contest, re-frame, negotiate, reconceive and rearticulate policy problems and solutions. The degree to which framing persuades others depends upon the actions of the framer and the reception of the audience. Frame alignment is an effort by framers to strategically link the beliefs of an audience with the frames that they espouse (Snow et al., 1986; Williams & Kubal, 1999). Framing that generates agreement or that motivates people to action is said to have resonance (Snow, et al., 1986; Williams & Kubal, 1999). Actors' ability to persuade others is also based on their access to policy processes, authority, legitimacy, and resources, which tends to privilege those seen as experts or professionals (Kingdon, 2003; D. Stone, 2002).

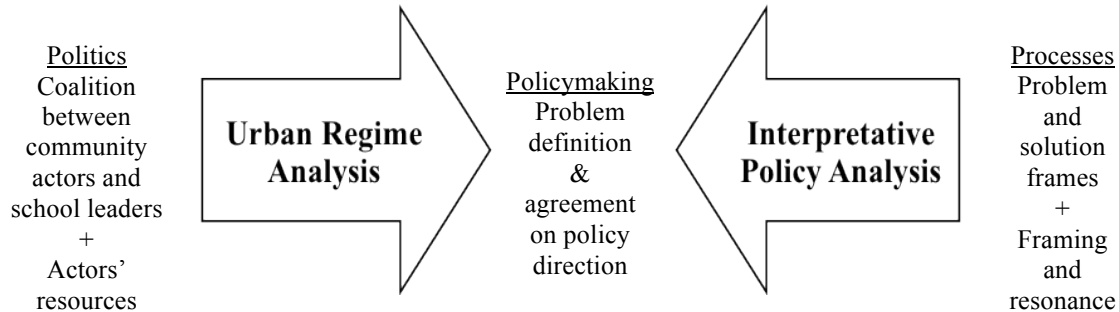
A problem definition is one kind of frame or story that plays an important role in policy processes (Kingdon, 2003; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; D. Stone, 2002). In naming who or what is a problem, a problem definition, or "diagnostic framing" (Snow & Benford, 1988), defines the nature of the problem, attributes causes to it, assigns responsibility and blame or praise (Kingdon, 2003; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; Snow & Benford, 1988; D. Stone, 2002). A problem definition also suggests who or what needs to change and in doing so, it has implications for policy alternatives and how they will be framed (Snow & Benford, 1988). "Prognostic framing" and problem framing (Benford & Snow, 2000) proposes a solution to a problem and the strategies, tactics, and targets that go with it (Snow & Benford, 1988).

In school district policymaking literature, scholars have used framing and resonance to understand how actors with differing interpretations negotiate their differences to agree on a policy direction. In this study, I follow on this path, identifying the problem frames and solution frames that actors use over time. I define problem frame as a statement about challenges or pressures related to demographic change; solution frame as a statement about what should be/has been done in relation to demographic change. I also attend to the degree of resonance a frame elicits, with resonance defined as agreement and support of a problem frame or policy direction.

Thus, as illustrated in Figure 1, this study bridges conceptual tools from interpretative policy analysis and urban regime analysis to understand the connection

between local education politics and processes of interpretation and interaction in school district policymaking.

Figure 1. Connecting the Politics and Processes of Policymaking



On the left of Figure 1, I begin by mapping the composition of actors involved in policymaking and the resources they bring to that effort. Coalition membership likely influences the policy directions the group pursues and how and why some issues gain traction while others do not (Stone, 1998) and actor's resources are important because these help determine inclusion in a coalition and help actors gain support for a policy direction (Stone, 1993).

I then attend to the nature of the problem and solution frames that these actors marshal in negotiation over policy direction, depicted on the right hand side of the diagram. Coalition members put forth problem definitions and advocate policy directions that make sense to them. Coalition members will also try to align their frames in ways that appeal to others in the group (Snow et al., 1986; Williams & Kubal, 1999). Attention to problem frames and solution frames provides insight into the grist of policymaking. Attention to the degree to which problem frames and solution frames resonate with this group helps explain which policy solutions become embedded in policy and which do not (Snow et al., 1986; Williams & Kubal, 1999).

As suggested in the center of the diagram, resources matter for the dynamics of framing. Actors with the greatest resources to support policymaking likely have greater influence in framing. Policymaking is a political process of people with unequal resources coming to agreement on a policy direction. Attention to frame dynamics will help me see how this process occurs. Some coalition members are likely to be more politically and economically influential community stakeholders. Those with the most resources, particularly material resources, have greater opportunity to gain support for their preferences since they can use their resources to build support for a policy direction (Stone, 1993). Furthermore, school district administrators or other coalition members are likely to try to align their problem frames and solution frames in ways that resonate with actors who have greater resources in order to gain their support and resources for policymaking.

Yet, framing can influence those with greater resources, mediating the importance of resources in the process of agreeing upon a problem or policy direction. As community actors with greater material resources interact with school district actors or other

community actors with fewer material resources, those with fewer resources may be able to frame problems and policy directions in ways that resonate with those who have greater resources. School district actors, in particular, may have expertise, language, and legitimacy that are resources in framing (Kingdon, 2003; D. Stone, 2002). Furthermore, actors with greater resources who wish to gain support of less well-resourced coalition members, must also frame in ways that achieve resonance with the beliefs of those other coalition members. Thus, framing may lead to agreement on problem definitions and policy directions that seem unexpected based purely on an examination of who has the greatest resources. Agreement on policy problems and policy directions is shaped by the influence of actors with resources but policy directions are negotiated with other coalition members and thus not determined by those with the greatest resources. Thus, bringing together concepts from urban regime analysis and interpretative policy analysis allows a consideration of the influence of those with greater political and economic influence on policymaking while still recognizing policymaking as a negotiated process among many stakeholders.

I apply this conceptual lens to the study of policymaking in two urban school districts in new immigrant destinations in order to examine the intersection of interpretative processes and local educational politics in school district policymaking. I use these tools to trace problem and solution frames over time, and pay attention to key policy negotiations as both bringing together coalitions of actors with differing levels of resources and as being shaped by these actors. In this way, I connect the politics with the processes of school district policymaking.

Dissertation Overview

In the chapters that follow, I argue that school district administrators' interpretations of educational problems, their strategic actions, and their negotiations with community actors are central factors in school district policymaking. District leaders are oriented towards making changes to their districts to be responsive to new students and expand opportunities for these pupils. But, their efforts are limited by the economic and political influence of some community members and yet other community members' political organizing creates possibilities for their policymaking. Working with these limitations and possibilities, school district administrators engage in compromise strategies to move forward policies that expand educational opportunities for the new groups of students in their school districts. Through these strategies they advance policies that are influenced by community actors but that are also shaped by district leaders' own self-interests and concerns about their school districts. These findings were consistent across two school districts, in spite of the fact that the districts were in cities with differing levels of acceptance of the arrival of immigrants.

In the chapters that follow, I describe the study and elaborate the main argument of the dissertation. In Chapter 2, I describe the design and methodology used in this study. Chapter 3 examines central office administrator's perspectives on demographic change in their districts and the challenges that accompany these changes. I show that district leaders conceptualized the demographic changes taking place in their communities within the broader frames of increasing poverty and growing racial and ethnic diversity in their cities. Furthermore, in identifying district administrators' problem definitions, I argue that they hold some perspectives that make them amenable to trying

to improve schooling and being more inclusive of new groups, though the findings also suggests that district administrators shy from critiquing the school system as a whole, including their own roles.

In Chapter 4, I examine policymaking around school district administrators' efforts to educate their growing population of students of color and students living in poverty in the same schools and classrooms with the white and wealthier students in the district—a controversial issue in each city. I show that the threat of exit by wealthy families places confines on district policymaking in addressing the needs of new students. Yet, district leaders work within these limitations by adding on programs to the existing structure of schooling rather than restructuring the way schooling is organized to meet the needs of new entrants. The resulting policies tend to expand opportunities for new groups of students but are determined by district administrators' ongoing policymaking agendas, which varied across the two school districts.

Chapter 5 traces the development of language policy—one policy area that did not raise significant opposition from community actors. I show that some community actors' earlier efforts to organize experimental bilingual programs create some of the conditions of possibility for later policy change. District administrators, by bringing together important stakeholders and framing policy directions school district administrators played a critical role in generating agreement on widespread bilingual education policy changes. However, in the policymaking process, many of district administrators' choices about who to involve and what policy directions to take are shaped by their own concerns and self-interests. In the conclusion, Chapter 6, I draw out themes across the chapters of the dissertation and discuss the implications of this study for research and reform.

Chapter 2

Research Design and Methodology

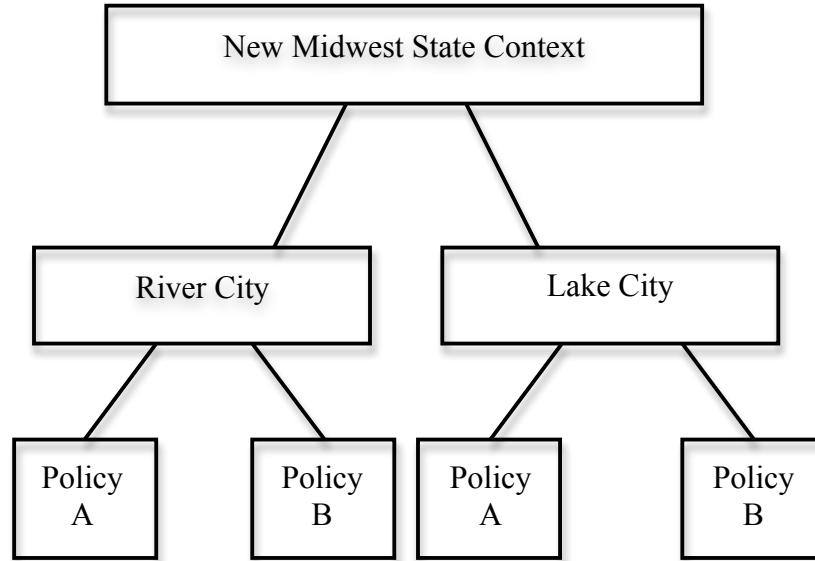
To understand the connection between school district politics and processes of policymaking in new immigrant destinations, I used an embedded, historical, comparative case study design. This study focuses on the development of policy within two school districts with changing demographics, over time. The state context is held constant across the two cases; both districts were in one state in the Upper Midwest region of the United States.

In addition, the comparative design of the study allowed for greater understanding of the politics and processes of school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations. First, the study is comparative across policies within each school district. I examined two sets of policies across the two school districts to explore how policymaking differed by level of community conflict the policy or proposed policy engendered. One set of policies involved little community conflict and one set of policies involved repeated or sustained opposition. This provided an opportunity to compare the policymaking when local groups were involved in opposing district policies with when community actors did not oppose a policy direction. Second, the study is comparative across districts. Comparative case studies are a particularly appropriate research strategy for examining contextual conditions and how they might relate to a phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009). Comparing two school districts illuminates how differences in local context, in this case economic conditions and community responses to immigration, affect school district policymaking.

Furthermore, this study employs a historical design to investigate how policies in each district have changed from the 1999-2000 school year through the 2009-2010 school year.⁵ This historical design helped to illuminate policy change over time. This is necessary as research on school district responses to immigration points to a tendency for policy directions to develop, change, and reverse over time (Gershberg, et al., 2004; Hamann, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2008; Martinez, 2002). In addition, the study was also designed to focus on school district policymaking in each city during the fall and winter of the 2009-2010 school year for a closer look at the policymaking processes as they unfolded. Figure 2 presents a diagram of this research design.

⁵ In the following chapters, I have also included description of a few key policy developments that unfolded in the four months after the end of this period but that were highly relevant to the policy developments discussed here.

Figure 2. Embedded, Cross-Case Design



Site Selection

The state. The state in which this study takes place provides a good site for examining “new immigrant destinations.” While not among the states with the largest percentages of growth in immigrant population, New Midwest’s⁶ immigrant population more than doubled between 1990 and 2006 (Applied Population Lab, 2007). Furthermore, the Midwest has not been studied to the degree that sites in the South have been investigated and it provides a different context for immigrant settlement. Like other Midwestern states, New Midwest had significant European immigration from the mid-1800s through the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, seasonal migrant workers from Mexico came to New Midwest to work in agriculture for much of the 20th century. However, new patterns of immigrant disbursement across the United States are also evident in New Midwest. Since the 1970s New Midwest has been the site of growing immigrant populations that are permanently settling in locations throughout the state. Beginning in the late 1970s, New Midwest hosted the resettlement of Hmong refugees to the United States and by 1990 there were almost 17,000 Hmong living in New Midwest (Zaniewski & Rosen, 1998). In 2006 a second group of approximately 3,000 Hmong refugees were also resettled in New Midwest. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, New Midwest has seen significant growth in its Latino immigrant population (about 10-fold growth), as well (Applied Population Lab, 2007). In 2000, Mexico was the country of birth for the largest number of New Midwest’s foreign-born population. The state’s overall immigrant population, Hmong and Mexican immigrants in addition to many other immigrant groups, more than doubled between 1990 and 2006 from 122,000 to 245,000 people (Applied Population Lab, 2007).

In addition to the growth of immigrant groups, there has been a general growth of the state’s non-white population. As an “emerging” Hispanic state, New Midwest

⁶ All names are pseudonyms.

experienced more than 200% growth of its Hispanic population between 1980-2000 (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Furthermore, the African American population in the state has also grown each decade since World War II (Zaniewski & Rosen, 1998) with a 25% increase in this population from 1990 to 2000 (Applied Population Lab, 2001) and this growth appears to have continued during the 2000s. Taken together, these developments suggest that New Midwest is a state experiencing demographic changes that reflect the growing racial and ethnic diversity occurring across the United States.

The districts. To select the two school districts for this study, I purposively sampled (Patton, 1990) from among the state's medium-sized urban school districts that had sustained increases in their immigrant populations. I chose to investigate mid-sized urban districts in order to be able to compare like-sized school districts and to make data collection and analysis possible given time and resource constraints. In New Midwest, there were five mid-sized school districts at the time of this study (15,000-25,000 students).

To determine if these districts were new immigrant destinations, I drew on US Census statistics for foreign-born populations found on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's State and the Cities Data Systems website and 2008 estimates from the American Communities Survey. Three of the districts showed their foreign-born populations to be 2.8 times greater or more since 1970 and two showed little change over that time. I further drew on district-level student enrollment data for English language learners (ELLs) from the state's online student data system to get data more closely linked to changes in school populations. Looking at state data from the 1998 to 2008 school years, I found that the number of ELL students had more than doubled in four districts. However, this is a rough measure of immigration. ELL and immigrant student are not identical populations. Immigrant students may be English language proficient; similarly children who are US citizens may not speak English as their first language. Nonetheless, ELL designation provides a rough estimate of immigrant students and substantial shifts in these numbers suggest that schools are experiencing some change in their student populations that is likely tied to the arrival of non-English speaking immigrant families. Using these combined data sources, three of the five school districts appeared to have consistent indications of being new immigrant destinations.

Of the three school districts that met the above criteria, I chose two districts based on the logic of theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989). I purposively sampled districts to capture variation in economic context and level of acceptance of the immigrants settling in their communities. Based on the literature on urban education politics and new immigrant destinations, I expected that a weaker economy and low level of acceptance of immigrants would lead to greater challenges in school district policymaking in relation to demographic change. Urban regime analysis highlights the challenges that local fiscal context and political dynamics related to race can make coalition around education difficult even if these factors are not determining (Henig et al., 1999; C. N. Stone et al., 2001). Furthermore, Dentler and Hafner's (1997) study of new immigrant destinations in California, Nevada and Arizona during the 1980s, found that districts in proactive and adaptive communities responded to immigration in ways that enabled them to become high-performing districts in comparison to more conservative communities. Together this literature suggested that the level of acceptance of the arrival of immigrants might be a factor shaping school district policymaking in new immigrant destinations. Thus, I

looked for districts that varied by economic conditions and level of acceptance of the arrival of immigrants. To identify each city's economic circumstances, I used data from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics to examine current unemployment rates and the major employing industries in each city (which I define as employing greater than 10% of the civilian workforce) and data from the 2000 U.S. Census on household income and poverty. To identify the sentiment towards that arrival of immigrants, I reviewed newspaper articles about recent immigration and local government policy with regards to immigrants. Based on these criteria, I selected River City School District and Lake City School District for this study.

River City School District. River City School District is a medium-sized, urban school district that has sustained an increase in its immigrant population primarily through the resettlement of Hmong refugees by the United States government over the last 30 years with a recent arrival of Hmong immigrants arriving in 2006 and the arrival of Mexican immigrants, in part due to the recruitment by a local food manufacturing company of immigrants around 1990, that has led to an increase in Mexican immigrants primarily over the last 20 years. While Hmong and Mexican immigrants represent the largest groups of immigrants, other smaller groups of Central American, Asian, African, and European immigrants have also settled in River City. In 2009 approximately 8% of the River City population was foreign born in 2009. This was a growth of 15% from 2000.

Some of the changes in the foreign-born or immigrant population are reflected in the changes in the student population in River City. According to student demographic data available in the state online student data system, between 1998 and 2009, the population of students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) has roughly doubled in River City, as indicated in Table 1. This increase has primarily been driven by a growth in Spanish-speaking students. In 1990 River City had just 17 Spanish-speaking students, according to their director of programs for English language learners. In 1998 Spanish-speaking English language learners were approximately 4% of the student population and this number had jumped to 14% by 2009, more or less accounting for the overall increase in percentage of English language learners in the district. River City has also seen a growth in its ethnic/racial minority populations. In River City, ethnic-racial minorities (students identifying as American Indian, Asian, Black, and Hispanic) were 21% of the student population in 1998 and 39% in 2009. Although the African American population in the district has increased over this time period, from 2% in 1998 to 7% in 2009, the majority of the increase in the percentage of ethnic-racial minorities in River City is attributable to the growth in the Hispanic population, which was 5% in 1998 and 19% in 2009. However, some of this change in the percentage of students identified as ethnic-racial minorities is also likely attributable to the departure of white students from the school district.

Table 1. River City School District Student Enrollment, 1998 and 2009

	Total enrollment	% ELL	% by Language	% Minority	% by Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty^a
1998-1999	20,000	10%	4% Spanish 5% Hmong 1% Other	21%	5% Am Ind. 9% Asian 2% Black 5% Hispanic 79% White	33% ^b
2009-2010	21,000	20%	14% Spanish 5% Hmong 1% Other	39%	5% Am Ind. 8% Asian 7% Black 19% Hispanic 61% White	52%

Note. Percentages reflect percentages of district total student enrollment. Source: New Midwest State Department of Education (2011), New Midwest State Information Network for Successful Schools [data retrieval site].

^a% Poverty indicates the percentage of students who qualified for the federal government’s free or reduced-price lunch program.

^bThe state student data system did not provide poverty data for the years in question. Instead data from the 2000-2001 school year is included.

In River City, the economy was traditionally manufacturing-based but has diversified particularly with the growth of the healthcare industry. In River City, approximately 20% of employed workers were employed in manufacturing and another 20% were employed in health, education or social services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The estimated median household income in River City was \$43,000 for 2005-2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). During the ten years covered in this study, the country went through a housing crisis and economic recession. The city, where the 2008 recession appeared to have hit particularly hard, had a relatively high unemployment (12%) rate in 2009 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011) when compared to the also high nation-wide rate of 9%. Neither city was immune from these economic developments and the increase in the percentage of students identified as economically-disadvantaged in both districts may also reflect this change. While an already large percentage of students in the River City School District were living in poverty in 2000 (33%) this rate had climbed to an astounding 52% of district students in 2009. Furthermore, the district had approximately 450 homeless students in 2009 (McBride, 2009a).

In River City, local residents expressed a variety of political opinions, including about how much they should welcome immigrants and accept their arrival. Yet at the official and symbolic city level, River City was not a welcoming place for immigrant arrivals. In 2002, the county in which River City is located passed an ordinance making English the official language. The county executive vetoed the English as an official language resolution, saying: “One has to ask, Why are we doing something which supporters say changes nothing when we know it hurts members of our community?” (as quoted in Wilgoren, 2002). Nonetheless, the county board overturned her veto by a vote of 18 to 26 (Wilgoren, 2002). In 2007, the River City Council passed an ordinance barring businesses with city licenses from hiring undocumented workers by a vote of 9-2. The council president said: “It’s a message to the illegal alien community that says you are not welcome. Don’t come here” (as quoted in Pabst, 2007) and the mayor, noting that the ordinance was controversial, nonetheless supported it and said it was “the right thing to do for our city” (as quoted in Pabst, 2007). Some residents interviewed in this study described these laws as examples of the overall “conservative” orientation in the city.

Other evidence of a less welcoming orientation to inclusion of non-whites was the lack of representation of these groups in city government; River City did not elect its first non-white official until 2000.

Lake City School District. As is River City, the Lake City School District is a medium-sized, urban school district. The two largest groups of immigrants have been Hmong refugees who first arrived 30 years ago and a second group of whom arrived in 2006, and Mexican immigrants first began arriving in larger numbers also in the early 1990s.⁷ As in River City, smaller numbers of Central American, Asian, African, and European immigrants have also settled in Lake City. Importantly, Lake City has had a history of foreign-born residents, often students or professionals, who have come to attend or work in local educational institutions and businesses. In 2009 about 8% of the Lake City population was foreign-born, a growth of 10% from 2000.

In Lake City, the growth in the foreign-born population is, in part, reflected in changes to the student population in the school district. Student demographic data available in the state online student data system indicates that between 1998 and 2009, the population of students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) roughly doubled in the Lake City school district. In 1998, the school district’s ELL population was 8% of its student body, while 2% of the student population were Spanish-speaking English language learners and 3% were Hmong-speaking English language learners while 3% spoke some combination of other languages. In 2009, 17% of Lake City students were English language learners and the majority of these students were Spanish-speakers, as indicated in Table 2. In contrast to River City, Lake City had a larger ELL population in 1990, with approximately 1,000 ELLs total, according to the ELL director in that district.

Table 2. Lake City School District Student Enrollment, 1998 and 2009

	Total enrollment	% ELL	% by Language	% Minority	% by Race/Ethnicity	% Poverty ^a
1998-1999	25,000	8%	2% Spanish 3% Hmong 3% Other	33%	1% Am Ind. 9% Asian 17% Black 5% Hispanic 68% White	27% ^b
2009-2010	24,500	17%	11% Spanish 2% Hmong 4% Other	50%	1% Am Ind. 10% Asian 24% Black 15% Hispanic 50% White	47%

Note. Percentages reflect percentages of district total student enrollment. Source: New Midwest State Department of Education (2011), New Midwest State Information Network for Successful Schools [data retrieval site].

^a% Poverty indicates the percentage of students who qualified for the federal government’s free or reduced-price lunch program.

^bThe state student data system did not provide poverty data for the years in question. Instead data from the 2000-2001 school year is included.

⁷ According to one respondent, Lake City also had also been a long time Latino population in the city, but the numbers of this group were relatively small when compared to the growing numbers of newly arriving immigrant families. So while this change was “new” in some respects, this is not to deny the existing Latino families, immigrant or otherwise, in Lake City.

In Lake City, 33% of district students identified as belonging to an ethnic-racial minority group in 1998 and that percentage had risen to almost half of the school district in 2009. During that time period, the percentage of students identifying as black, and Hispanic increased and percentages of American Indians remained stable. The growth in the percentage of racial-ethnic minorities primarily reflects an increase in students identified as Hispanic during that time period. Student demographic data from the school district indicates that in 1991 ethnic-racial minorities were about 20% of the student population in that year with 12% identified as black and the next largest group being 5% Asian. Hispanics were 3% of the school district at that time (Lake City School District, 2008). As the percentage of non-whites has increased in each district, the percentage of whites has decreased. As in River City, this is likely due to the exit of whites from the district as well as the increase in students identified as non-white.

In contrast to the River City economy, Lake City has a stronger local economy. In 2009, during the housing crisis and economic recession noted earlier, Lake City had a relatively low rate of unemployment (6%) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). In Lake City, approximately 30% of city residents worked in the health, education and social services with another approximately 12% employed in the professional, scientific, management and administrative fields (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). These fields represent industries that tend to be more stable in recessionary times and in Lake City there was less evidence of the impact of the national recession on the local economy. The estimated median household income in Lake City was about \$51,000 for 2005-2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). All of these factors made the economic picture in Lake City more favorable than in River City during the same time period. However, there was still substantial, and growing, poverty in Lake City. At the city level, there was a 29% increase in residents living below the poverty line between 2000 and 2008, making the poverty rate higher than in the country's 95 largest cities (Ivey, 2010). In Lake City, 27% of students were living in poverty in 2000 and this number had jumped to 47% of the enrolled students in Lake City in 2009. In 1990, students living in poverty were about 20% of the district (Ivey, 2010).

In Lake City, the official political response to the arrival of immigrants appeared to be more welcoming than in River City. The city and the county in which Lake City is located have both passed laws prohibiting government employees from asking for proof of citizenship. Furthermore, recent amendments to the city ordinance calling for equal opportunity in employment, housing and use of city services added citizenship status as a protected status:

without regard to sex, race, religion, color, national origin or ancestry, *citizenship status*, [emphasis added] age, handicap/disability, marital status, source of income, arrest record, conviction record, less than honorable discharge, physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic identity, political beliefs, familial status, student status, domestic partnership status, or status as a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking. (Lake City, 2010)

This ordinance suggests the generally inclusive orientation to difference in Lake City and specifically inclusiveness toward immigrants as indicated by the use of characteristics relevant to immigrant families: national origin and citizenship status. However, it should also be noted that the local sheriff's office was cooperating with U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) in carrying out immigrant raids, according to respondents in my study. Furthermore, a 2006 editorial in the daily newspaper read:

It is not a dramatic increase in the number of minority, immigrant and low-income students requiring extra services. That is not a problem. That is a fact. The problem is the community's response to the stunning change in the student population. We must find ways to cost-effectively educate the new and vastly more diverse generation of [Lake City residents]. Adapting will not be easy, given the budget constraints the School District faces. The solution requires that as the community decides what school services to cut, keep and add, high priority should be given to maintaining and adding programs for minority, immigrant and low-income students. (New Midwest State Press, 2006).

Thus, in terms of official and public acceptance towards the arrival of immigrants or other newcomers to the city, Lake City presented a strong contrast to River City.

Finances in both school districts. While the cities varied in their economic standing, there were nonetheless some important similarities in financial picture in both cities and both school districts that bear noting. Despite the greater wealth and lower unemployment in Lake City, both cities and the residents in them were impacted by the recession, housing foreclosure crisis and rising income inequality that were also affecting the entire country. Both districts were also experiencing fiscal decline and during the ten years of this study were operating under increasingly tight budget constraints. Under a 1993 state law⁸ meant to curb the rise in local property taxes, school districts are limited in the revenues from general state aid and local tax levies that they can receive on a yearly basis, which can compromise from 70-90% of district budgets (New Midwest Department of Education, 2009). Local districts can exceed revenue limits and raise property taxes only by going to referendum for voter approval (Kava & Olin, 2009; Spicuzza & Barbour, 2010). In Lake City, citizens approved ballot measures in 2005 and 2008 allowing the city their to exceed these revenue limits; there were no such referenda passed in River City (New Midwest Department of Education, 2011b). Despite growing student populations and poverty levels within the districts, state aid has been flat. In Lake City, state aid decreased from \$57 million in 2007-8 to \$50 million in 2009-10 (New Midwest Department of Education, 2011b). In River City, state aid decreased by \$1.5 million between 2007-08 and 2009-10 despite increased enrollment (New Midwest Department of Education, 2011c). Due to this law, district leaders across the state say that revenues have not kept up with increases in costs (Spicuzza & Barbour, 2010). Both cities have had to address these constraints with ongoing budget cuts (for example, \$11 million in Lake City in 2007 and \$8 million in 2006; \$5 million in River City in 2009).⁹

The Policies. The typical approach to studying immigration and education has been to choose a particular policy issue that the researcher believes to flow from the arrival of immigrants and examine that issue in depth. In education, this has often been language policy. This has led to a lot of important research on language policy and

⁸ The law, originally only passed for a five year time period, was made permanent in 1995 (Kava & Olin, 2009).

⁹ As a further example, between 1993 when the state revenue limits went into effect and 2006, the Lake City eliminated \$46 million from what it would have otherwise spent on programming (Cullen, 2006).

related issues, and relatively little attention to other policy areas. My approach is different. I started by asking: what are the issues and policies that rise up around the arrival of immigrants as they are understood and experienced by policymakers on-the-ground? Then I looked at the policymaking processes and politics around those issues. The urban education politics literature suggests that some district decisions are more controversial with community actors than others (Boyd, 1976; Wong, 1992), and a few authors have indicated that there may be different policymaking dynamics for more and less controversial policies. With this in mind, I was interested in comparing policymaking around one set of policies that involved little community conflict and one set of policies that involved repeated or sustained opposition. To select the focal policies in each district, I drew on my observational and interview data to identify current policies that had been or were being developed that district leaders identified as related to the demographic change going on in their communities. Several policy areas emerged as ones that multiple school district leaders believed were related to demographic change in their cities. From among these, I chose one set of policies that district leaders described as fairly uncontroversial: bilingual education. The other set of policies that district leaders in both districts described as engendering greater opposition and conflict with community members were policies about who goes to school with whom. I consider this later set of policies to be redistributive policies since objections from community actors revealed that they perceived these policies to be redistributive. In this dissertation I focus on these two policy areas to understand district policy making.

Data Collection

Data collection was iterative and ongoing and data was primarily collected between the spring of 2009 and the spring of 2010. Some follow-up interviews and archival research were conducted in 2010-2011. I collected interviews, documents, and field observations, all of which contribute to this analysis.

Interviews. My data includes 70 interviews of current and former school district leaders, as well as leaders of community organizations, business, and local government. These interviews lasted between 35 and 90 minutes, with most lasting approximately 50 minutes. In particular, I interviewed 38 school district leaders in the two districts. This included interviews with people in positions such as: school board members, superintendents, assistant superintendents, executive directors of curriculum, directors of services for ELLs and special education students, those in charge of safety, and community liaisons. This included respondents who currently held these positions or had held these positions in the previous ten years. In addition, I interviewed four school site staff in River City.

Subjects were selected based on their positions and involvement in policy making in each district. I attempted to interview all senior level district administrators as well as all school board members, as well as district administrators with responsibilities for community outreach and working with immigrant students or English language learners. I identified interview subjects by beginning with a roster of central office staff. I also targeted administrators responsible for curricular decisions as well as those responsible for student engagement and safety to have a variety of perspectives on the intersections between demographic change and school district policymaking. I further used a snowball sampling (Weiss, 1994) technique to identify community members and other district staff

that I should interview, such as diversity liaisons at local higher education institutions. In addition to the snowball technique, I contacted the mayor’s office in each city, and community organizations, such as minority community groups, community service organizations, the local Chamber of Commerce. I interviewed teachers’ union leaders in both cities. However, I was not able to interview community members across all the potential involved actors. In both cities, I also interviewed school site staff for greater insight into the development of policies traced in this study; however, this was uneven across the districts. These interviews along with the larger number of executive level administrators in River City explain most of the difference in the number of interviews between the two districts. However, one possible affect of the difference in school site staff interviews between the two districts is that there is more of a school district and school board-centric perspective on school district policymaking in Lake City in my findings than in my River City findings.

Table 3. School District Interviews

Positions	River City	Lake City
Central Office Administration		
Superintendent	2	2
Executive Level Administrators ^a	11	9
Front Line Administrators	6	6
School Board Members	7	6
School Site Staff	5	1
Total	31	24

^aThis category includes: assistant superintendents, executive directors, and divisional directors and other members of the superintendents’ leadership teams.

Table 4. Community Interviews

Positions	River City	Lake City
Teachers Union Leadership	1	1
City or county representatives	2	2
Broad-based community organizations	0	1
Minority community organizations	2	3
Fiscal watchdog group	0	1
Chamber of Commerce	1	0
University partners	2	0
Total	8	8

Interviews followed semi-structured interview protocols (Patton, 1990). This allowed for a similar set of questions across interviews but also flexibility in following up interview subjects’ specific comments and cues in the course of the interview. I taped and transcribed interviews with all but four respondents. Instead, these interviews were recorded by hand as I spoke with the respondents, and I clarified and filled in notes after the interview concluded but within the same day.

Observations. I observed and collected field notes from 41 school board, school district decision-making meetings, community task-force meetings, and community engagement sessions. School district decision-making meetings included superintendents’

executive leadership team meetings, meetings of principals, and sub-unit meetings of different divisions (such as ELL staff or curriculum staff). I began observing school board meetings in the spring of 2009, with most observations occurring in the fall and winter of 2009-2010. I observed internal district meetings and district-community meetings between November 2009 and February of 2010. My observation of these meetings lasted between one hour and five hours. Field notes were generally taken by hand in the moment and were typed up within two days. For some school board meetings, I typed notes directly into the computer, since typing did not appear to be noticed by participants or interfere with those sessions.

Table 5. Field Observations

Meeting Group	River City	Lake City
Superintendent’s Leadership Team	3	2
Divisional/Sub-units	1	7
Central Office & School Leaders	4	0
Parent Advisory Group	1	0
School Board	4	10
Community Task Forces	0	6
Public Engagement	1	2
Total	14	27

One of the challenges of observing meetings was gaining access to meetings, particularly non-public meetings. I cast my net widely in part because I didn’t know when I would be allowed to join a meeting and also because I did not want to presuppose which policy issues or meetings would be connected to questions of demographic change. I began by attending as many school board meetings as I could. I began by attending some school board meetings early on in my study in Lake City, and was able to attend more of these than in River City. To some degree I was able to mitigate this discrepancy by reading school board meeting minutes. I also looked for other public meetings that I could attend in each district. Lake City had two community taskforces that were holding public meetings during the time of my study and I attended these meetings. River City had no community taskforces of this sort during the time of my study. Finally, I identified meetings by asking those I interviewed in each district to suggest or recommend meetings that I should attend. In the end, I was able to attend far more meetings in Lake City than River City and the meetings in Lake City were more often involved executive level administrators in River City while the meetings I observed in Lake City more often were of either sub-units meetings or public school board and community meetings. These differences may affect my findings if district leaders framed policy problems and solutions differently in public than in internal meetings. One hypothesis would be that district leaders are more cautious of their framing in public than in internal meetings. If this is the case, the greater observation of public meetings in Lake City and the greater observation of executive level meetings in River City might mean that my findings about district leaders’ framings are skewed towards being more “politically correct” in River City. I did not draw much on observational data of sub-unit meetings in Lake City, so the discrepancy between the number of these meetings in Lake City versus River City is less likely to have had an effect on my findings.

Archival documents. Finally, I collected archival documents, including: meeting minutes and agendas, demographic data, materials and reports on district programs, external evaluations, video of school board meetings, and newspaper clippings. Many of these were available on district websites, through newspaper searches of local and state newspapers, and from community groups and district personnel. I gathered a substantial number of documents from handouts at school board meetings and documents available on district websites. In addition, I set up a Google News search to alert me to newspaper articles related to education or immigration in each city. I also subscribed to each district's email update system to receive their own alerts about what was happening in each district and additional links to local news reports and followed blogs written about local education policymaking and politics in Lake City. Additionally, I followed up on documents that people mentioned in interviews and several respondents in each district provided me with copies of documents about their programs and policies. I collected documents beginning in the spring of 2009 through the winter of 2011.

Data Analysis

Data analysis took place concurrently with data collection and continued after data collection was complete in an ongoing and iterative fashion (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 2007). I used three primary methods of analysis: analytic and conceptual memo-ing, systematic coding using Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis software and codes developed from theory and through constant comparison with the data, and data displays.

Memoing. Throughout data collection, I wrote memos immediately after observations and interviews as well at regular intervals through data analysis to capture ideas, insights, and questions that have arose in the course of data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This allowed me to capture ideas, insights, and questions that have arisen in the course of data collection and to develop concepts and higher-level analysis while sticking close to the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Early reflection and preliminary data analysis was particularly valuable in developing two aspects of my study. First, through attending to and reflecting on the kinds of policies district leaders talked about, I was able to begin to identify and collect additional data on the focal policies related to demographic change in each district. In this way, I was able to enter my sites asking how districts construct the issues and challenges related to demographic change rather than assuming that particular policies were the most important ones to follow, but I was also able to focus my data collection by paying attention to the policy responses district leaders most frequently were mentioning.

Second, in my interviews, I learned that it was important to start by asking district leaders to define and characterize what demographic changes they were experiencing in their own terms. This became clear after about three interviews. I noticed that people were responding to my questions about immigration by telling me about other changes in the characteristics of their student populations, such as homelessness and the arrival of African Americans. It was clear that I needed to ground my inquiry by examining how school district and community members constructed and experienced the demographic changes going on in their districts. I began asking my respondents to tell me about the demographic changes they had seen.

Systematic coding. As I transitioned into formal data analysis, I developed a codebook drawing on theory and existing literature. Drawing on my conceptual framework, my initial codes included: “problems related to demographic change,” “policy responses to demographic change,” “resources,” “community influence,” “political-economic context,” and “coalitions-relationships.” I developed a codebook so that codes would be standardized throughout the coding process. However, revisions to the codebook were necessary to ensure that data was coded consistently throughout (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998). I added inductively developed codes through subsequent analysis using Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) method of using constant comparisons. Through conceptual memo-ing about the ways that district leaders described and explained demographic change, I developed an understanding of district leaders’ constructions of demographic change. I coded district leaders’ conceptions of demographic change into codes of “immigrant,” “poverty,” “race-ethnicity,” and “middle class–white flight.” In a similar manner, I developed codes for the different kinds of policies district leaders described enacting and their problem definitions in relation to demographic change. Then I systematically coded interview and observational data for these codes. I coded all interviews using NVivo 8, computer software for qualitative data analysis.

Data displays. To further answer the questions of this study, I used data-displays to organize data and discover and analyze patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These data displays included simple matrices, time-ordered matrices, and flow-charts. For example, to understand the relationship between respondents’ conceptions of demographic change and their definitions of the problems of demographic change, I developed simple matrices that linked individuals’ conceptions of demographic change and problem definitions expressed in their interviews. I examined these matrices to analyze patterns in the data and to compare across districts.

To understand how district policy evolved over time, I drew on interviews, observations, and document analysis. For examination of the focal policies that involved community opposition, those about who goes to school with whom, I examined interview and observational data coded “enrollment” for River City and “curricular differentiation” for Lake City. For the less controversial policies, policies about bilingual education, I examined data coded “language instruction” for both districts. I supplemented this with information from archival documents including district memos, newspaper clippings, school board meeting minutes, taskforce reports, and video. Using both the coded data and the documents, I created chronological summary memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of decision-making for the focal policies in each school district. I then created time-ordered matrices of policy development for each focal policy. The matrices systemically attended to each decision, actions of district leaders, community members and parents, school site staff, as well as local political and economic developments. This analysis helped to establish the actors involved and the political and economic pressures for a given decision. I used these and additional matrices to examine further patterns in the data.

To understand the role of persuasion and the negotiation of meaning that is highlighted in Chapter 4, I also drew on an approach based in interpretive policy analysis that I developed, under the direction of Cynthia Coburn, in previous work (see Coburn et al., 2008). I created a chronological record of the framings actors invoked in the course of

policymaking, drawing primarily on interview and archival data and supplemented by observational data where it existed. I then mapped these individuals' frames onto a flow-chart that linked the frames in chronological order with the decisions made along the way. This highlighted who was involved in the policy discussion at which points and which actors invoked which frames. Then, I analyzed the processes by which different frames and actors came together in the policymaking process to understand why a particular policy direction was pursued at a given time.

Through this accounting of my research design and methodology, I hope to provide greater transparency of the assumptions in the research design, the data that I draw on for my conclusions, and the methods of analysis that have led to my findings.

Chapter 3

The View from the Central Office

In each of the two school districts examined in this study, the changing demographics were a significant development for school board members and leaders in the central district office. These school district policymakers described the changes as both stunning and challenging. A former school board member in Lake City, the city with a higher level of immigrant acceptance and a stronger economy, emphasized the scale of this shift, explaining: “Lake City’s demographics in the last 10 to 15 years have changed dramatically....” A current school board member in Lake City echoed: “Well, I think that Lake City is a really interesting place to be experiencing the demographic change. I mean it is *very*, it’s really remarkable.” In the River City, the less wealthy and less immigrant accepting city, one district administrator said: “that’s our biggest issue right now: we have changing demographics. The demographics are very challenging, kids from very challenging backgrounds.” Every school district decision-maker I interviewed, except for one, indicated that demographic changes were quite important and had affected his or her work. But, what did demographic change mean to them? And, what challenges did they think they faced as a result?

To understand district policymaking around demographic change, an important place to begin is by examining school district decision-makers’ interpretations of how to respond to new groups. Recent research on school districts highlights the key role that district staff members’ understandings of their work, including various interpretations of educational goals, problems and appropriate policy solutions, play in district decision-making and policymaking processes (Binder, 2002; Coburn et al., 2009; Spillane, 1998). However, the civic capacity literature finds that district administrators identify few problems with their school systems (Stone et al., 2001). Based on their study of urban political reform across ten cities, Stone and colleagues (2001) argue that: “those involved are more attached to the status quo than critics from outside” (p. 101), suggesting that district administrators are unlikely to see problems with their school systems or the need to change their schools in response to the arrival of new groups.

Two lines of research on education in new immigrant destinations lend insight into the ways that school district leaders might understand the educational challenges in these locations. Nascent research on immigrant incorporation in schools in new destinations has noted the responsiveness of education leaders to immigrant groups, particularly in comparison to other local government agencies (Dunn et al., 2005; Marrow, 2007). These few studies suggest that educators are predisposed to respond to the needs of new groups and adapt their schools based on a “client serving ethic” and commitments to serving all students, to equity, and to the redistribution of resources to those most in need (Jones-Correa, 2008; Marrow, 2007) as well as due to requirements of state policy (Dunn et al., 2005; Marrow, 2007). Tyack’s (1974) work on urban school district administrators during an earlier era of immigration in the United States suggests that district administrators will hold views that reflect the class- and race-biases of dominant community members. This literature on immigrant incorporation in new destinations suggests that district administrators will take a more enlightened view than the communities they live in.

However, at the same time, research on education in new Latino immigrant destinations finds that educators often have a deficit perspective on Latino immigrant students, viewing students as lacking language, culture, resources or values (Beck & Allexaht-Snyder, 2002; Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002; Lowenhaupt, 2010; Wainer, 2006; Wortham, Mortimer, & Allard, 2009). Educators see students as the problem, but do not see their own responses as problematic (Gibson, 2002) despite the lack of appropriate resources and preparation for educating immigrant students (Wainer, 2006; Zehler, et al., 2008). This line of research has importantly investigated and given voice to the perspectives of immigrant Latino families and highlights their often troubling experiences with local communities and schools. To a lesser degree it has also investigated teacher and school staff perspectives. However, like the immigrant incorporation literature, it rarely looks closely at immigration to new destinations from the perspective of school district leaders. So, while research suggests that school district leaders play an important role in educational policymaking, we know little about how school district leaders understand changes in their student populations and related educational challenges in new immigrant destinations. In this chapter, I respond to this gap in the literature by bringing scholarship on school districts and scholarship on immigration in new destinations into conversation through an analysis of central office administrators' interpretations of the challenges of demographic change in two districts.

This chapter examines district administrators' interpretations of demographic change and the challenges it presented in 2009 and 2010, many years into the transformation of their student populations. I investigate district leaders' interpretations through close attention to district leaders' descriptions of demographic change and their problem definitions. Problem definitions are the bounding of a situation in a way that highlights particular actors and aspects of the situation as problematic (Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; Benford & Snow, 2000). I argue that district administrators have two central concerns in relation to their changing demographics: 1) the academic achievement of the growing numbers of students of color, students living in poverty, and English language learners in their districts; and, 2) the opposition of predominantly white and middle-class parents to district policies linked to this growing racial- and socioeconomic- diversity. School district administrators articulated the need for change in their school systems, particularly for district teachers' beliefs and instructional practices to change. However, pursuing school policies related to these changes sometimes brought them into conflict with community actors. This analysis suggests that district leaders do not simply uphold the status quo as suggested by Stone and colleagues (2001) or reflect and reproduce the biases and concerns of the dominant community in the ways that they navigate political pressures for reform (Tyack, 1974). Nor do they primarily locate the problem in students, as suggested in the literature on new Latino immigrant destinations (Hamann et al., 2002; Wortham et al., 2009). Instead, district leaders in this study perceived themselves as responsible for promoting change in their districts in order to meet the needs of new populations.

Understandings of Demographic Change

Despite the large numbers of immigrant families that had been arriving in their cities, school district administrators in both Lake and River cities did not view the demographic changes taking place in their cities purely in terms of the arrival of

immigrants. Understanding how district administrators viewed demographic change helps to clarify the challenges or problems district administrators focused on in each city. In what follows, I more closely examine how district administrators perceived demographic change in their cities.

While many school district leaders in both districts described the arrival of predominantly Hmong and Latino immigrant families as distinct phenomena occurring in their districts, the influx of immigrant families was also understood as part of a larger trend that included the arrival of blacks (whom respondents generally described as poor) to cities that had been predominantly white and middle class. The following quote, greatly condensed here, illustrates the narrative of demographic change as it was often described to me, in various incarnations in River City. As one River City respondent explained:

We've had a lot of demographic changes. [Previously,] we had basically an all-white district. We had a few American Indians. First we had changes in our demographics of poverty. And that was the first thing that came in. After that we had many more Hmong students had come in, because we became a central area for that. Our next big wave were (sic) really our Hispanic population. Now all along, we've had a few African-American students. Their parents were employed, usually as managers or above, CEOs, of some of our companies in the area. Then, as I said, then we had our Hispanic group of people who—we've had a lot. The first ones that came were really migrants, because of the farms around, and then we had the ones that were involved with [food processing]. And now we've got another group of African-American families that are living in the lowest-income areas. So the last year or two, we've had many more African-American students that have been moving in. They are moving from [large cities in the region].... Um, we do have a high incidence of homelessness, too. So a number of our families come because they are homeless and we've got—we've got good services here. So we've had a number of those families that have also been coming to our area.

Told as one large narrative of change, this story of the succession of various groups arriving to River City highlighted the movement from white to an increase in diversity in terms of ethnic-racial groups as well as an increase in poverty.

The arrival of immigrants was understood as part of a broader increase in people of color in Lake and River cities. As illustrated in the quote above, respondents in River City sometimes included Native Americans in their stories of demographic change.¹⁰ This was despite the static size of the Native American populations in River City and the fact that district leaders did not consider this group to be immigrants. The inclusion of Native Americans and blacks in district administrators' descriptions of demographic change in both districts further suggests that district administrators understood the changes taking place in their districts as about a broader shift in ethnicity or race in their school district rather than solely as the arrival of particular racial or ethnic groups.

Furthermore, like the speaker above, district administrators in both cities often described the arrival of new ethnic-racial minority groups as poorer than previous arrivals

¹⁰ River City students identified as American Indian were approximately 5% of the student population at the time of my study.

of the same race, emphasizing that the change taking place was not just one of race and ethnicity but also a change in levels of poverty. In these descriptions, district administrators seemed to acknowledge the ways in which race and poverty are intertwined in the United States; however, in doing so, they also seemed to attribute the rise in poverty in their cities to the arrival of new populations. Yet, demographic changes were occurring at a time of rising income inequality across the country beginning in the 1980s (Smeeding, 2005), the crash of the housing market in 2007, and an economic recession that was setting in at the time of this study. Thus, this conceptualization of demographic change appeared to mask changes in the economy that were also likely responsible for the growing poverty in both cities and instead focused problems of poverty on new arrivals.

In both cities, district administrators drew on official school district statistics and categories in their descriptions of demographic change. This seemed to shape their understandings of the changes that had taken place. District leaders' understandings of demographic change often drew from the government established categories of race-ethnicity (white, black, Hispanic and Asian), "free and reduced" lunch (poverty), and "English language learners" (native-speakers of Hmong, Spanish, and other languages) and, to a lesser extent, the category of homeless. For example, one Lake City central office administrator said in response to a question about the demographic changes he had seen in the Lake City school district: "Well, we've certainly seen an increase in the number of English language learners in our district. So we're perhaps at about 15 percent overall." District leaders compared the demographic statistics of their district with statistics from earlier points in time. This was particularly the case in Lake City. As one Lake City respondent explained:

You know, clearly when you look at data, you know, the biggest one, the biggest change is around poverty. You know, the district was, I'm gonna roughly say, in the 15%, 20% of kids qualifying for free lunch and right now I think we're 45%.

A few times when I arrived for an interview, respondents had prepared by printing out the district demographic statistics. In River City, for example, when I asked one central office administrator what changes she had seen in the River City school district, she began by telling me about the statistics for homeless students, then proceeded to review statistics for "free and reduced price lunch," "English language learners," and then "minorities" explaining:

Our changes in minority population have been- we used to be very, pretty fairly low... Looks like, '02, '03-'04, the district was 32% minority. Now where's my... Um... [Looking around her office]... I'm trying to think where I would have an ethnicity report right now. It's certainly—the areas that have grown are Hispanic, African-American. The areas that have decreased a little bit are Asian. We don't have as many Hmong families coming in. American Indian stays about, at about the same, right about between 5 and 6% of the district...

This district leader drew explicitly on the district's student demographic data to understand the changes going on in her district. Goode and Schneider (1994) found a similar tendency among people in human relations organizations in Philadelphia to use the "four major categories of difference that were politically emergent and legitimized by government after the civil-rights era: white, African American, Hispanic and Asian" (p. 68) to describe the diverse group of new immigrants arriving to that city. In this study, I

found that district leaders in both cities drew on multiple government-established categories in addition to the ethnic-racial categories noted by Goode and Schneider to understand the demographic changes in their districts. In particular, respondents in this study tended to use the school system category of “English language learner,” interchangeably with “immigrant,” for example, saying that there were many immigrants and then referencing ELL students. However, ELL status is not synonymous with immigrant status as some immigrant students may be native-English speakers while many children identified as English language learners will be born in the United States today will first speak a language other than English. Thus, it appeared that the official categorizations used in school systems shaped district leaders’ understandings of demographic change as changes in various English language learner groups students or ethnic-racial groups rather than solely as the arrival of specific immigrant groups.

However, even as district leaders seemed to point to a variety of ways of understanding the demographic change in their districts, the same individuals often simply just used the broader categories of “kids of color” or “ELL” to represent the demographic changes in their cities. This was illustrated in the quote above, as the district administrator first noted changes in the overall minority population. Others described a change from being predominantly white to non-white. The focus on new student populations in terms of these broader categories of race, language learner status, and poverty appeared to have the effect of making some groups less visible. For example, even while River City leaders’ attention was drawn, to some degree, to Native American populations, the growth of a Russian immigrant population in River City was rarely mentioned. The use of the broader categories of race-ethnicity and language learner status in both River and Lake cities had the potential to erase attention to differences between the groups presumably subsumed under those headings.

Respondents also frequently noted that the different trends they identified were intertwined. But they did not necessarily see all changes as being equally salient. Twenty-one of 28 district leaders I interviewed characterized demographic change in more than one way. However, there was some variation between the two districts in terms of the changes they emphasized. District leaders in Lake City tended to emphasize the arrivals of immigrants or ELLs (8 of 12, 66.7%) as well as an increase in people of color (7 of 12, 58.3%) while district leaders in River City described the increase in people of color (13 of 14, 92.9%) and poverty (10 of 14, 71%).¹¹ A few respondents also mentioned whites or middle-class families, or both, leaving their districts. However, leaders in both districts emphasized the increase in poverty as one of the most important changes in the district. Four people specifically declared the importance or prominence of increases in poverty over other demographic changes. As the River City superintendent said:

The other, I think, really devastating trend in River City, as well as in my former district, is the socio-economic status... the majority of our students meet the Federal Hot Lunch Income Guidelines to either have a free or reduced lunch. That

¹¹ These percentages are mainly suggestive of differences between the two districts since the numbers of respondents is small. However, this difference may be partially explained by the fact that in Lake City large numbers of Latino immigrant families and some Hmong families were among the most recent groups to arrive and larger numbers of black families had been in residence longer, whereas in River City larger numbers of black families arrived after Latino immigrants began settling there.

is, in my own kind of trying to reconcile as a human being, difficult for me to reconcile, that our children and families are in that position...

This was the only change emphasized as more important than the others. In short, district leaders understood the changes in their student population as including an increase in immigrants or English language learners, but also more broadly as an increase in ethnic-racial minorities and poverty in their districts. I now turn to examine district leaders' problem definitions. These different, but intertwined, understandings of demographic change intersected with how district leaders understood the problems they faced with regards to their new students populations.

The Problems of Demographic Change

Overall, district leaders offered a large number and variety of concerns related to demographic change in their cities and these were largely related to broader demographic changes rather than specific shifts in immigrant populations. These ranged from concerns about learning, meeting students' basic needs, and student behavior to concerns about resources, lack of connections to new families, and the exit of families from district schools. However, in their interviews, school district leaders identified two overarching problems or challenges with regard to the demographic change occurring in their cities: (1) the poor educational outcomes for students of color and students living in poverty, also known as "the achievement gap" and (2) the political opposition of predominantly white middle-class families to district responses linked to demographic change. There was some variation between the two districts in this regard. Respondents in River City tended to emphasize problems of educational outcomes and instruction more while respondents in Lake City pointed to issues of access to classes and political opposition as problems, as often as problems of educational outcomes and instruction. Notably, while several district leaders in both districts mentioned challenges related to instruction for English language learners such as finding qualified teachers, district leaders' problem definition suggests that despite research highlighting the challenges in new immigrant destinations of meeting immigrant students' needs as English language learners (Beck & Alleksaht-Snider, 2002; Hamann, 2003; Zehler et al., 2008), district leaders in this study did not define their challenges in these terms. Attention to their problem definitions reveals that district leaders perceived their own school systems as problematic. They also saw community responses as a challenge affecting their work. The most common types of problem that district leaders discussed are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6. District Administrators’ Primary Problem Definitions

Types of Problem Definitions	River City Administrators (n=14)	Lake City Administrators (n=12)
Educational outcomes “[We] don’t know how to address the achievement needs of minority students. And have in the past performed very well, and now we have all these different kids and, you know, life is different, it’s a struggle.”	50% (n=7)	41.7% (n=5)
Instruction “We need to really have our teachers be knowledgeable of different ethnicities and working with kids who are non-middle class, Caucasian kids. And I think that has been one of the biggest challenges.”	42.9% (n=6)	41.7% (n=5)
Political pressure “[W]e had elected a board member um, who himself was not Hispanic, but was very, very supportive of, uh, the new Hispanic population... So he and our Hispanic board member, pushed very, very hard to take a broader look outside the curriculum area of our school district and its relationship to uh, to our Hispanic population.”	21.4% (n=3)	41.7% (n=5)
Access to courses “So, there was a whole host of challenges going on as well with that population [English language learners]. One was moving away from a pullout model, where we would separate our English language learners into ESL [English as a Second Language] classes, and also the fact that much of what they were getting didn’t relate to the content in the regular ed. classroom.”	21.4% (n=3)	41.7% (n=5)
Resources “we have fifty percent of our kids are kids of color and our staff, I’m gonna say is—I mean I can get you the exact percentage. I think it’s somewhere around ten, ten, twelve, is what I’m recalling. So, and there are many, many challenges on that front.”	14.9% (n=2)	33.3% (n=2)

Note. District leaders often offered multiple problem definitions. This table reflects the percentage of respondents, of those who defined problems related to demographic change, who mentioned a given problem category at least once. Some respondents defined multiple problems for a given type of problem. The quotes here are examples of problem definitions coded in each category.

In what follows, I describe and discuss the four most common problem types: educational outcomes, instruction, access, and political pressure. District leaders also mentioned problems with resources (including recruiting bilingual teachers, finding materials in Spanish, and the costs of educating new students who required more resources), but these were less central to district leaders’ overall view of the challenges of demographic change and are not discussed in this chapter.

Problems of educational outcomes. One set of concerns that district leaders commonly described in relation to demographic changes were the unsatisfactory educational outcomes of the students of color and students living in poverty in their districts. They frequently referred to this phenomenon as “the achievement gap.” This problem was shared across both districts and across central office administrators, as well as school board members. District leaders described overall concerns with an

achievement gap, the academic skills and achievement levels of their new groups of students, as well as rates of graduation. For example, one River City executive level administrator described the district as having “this changing demographic from um, primarily, uh, highly majority white, student population, high achieving, to a district that now has, uh, much diversity and lower achievement, and a significant achievement gap from racial groups compared to, uh, white.” Similarly, an executive level administrator in Lake City said: “it’s not that achievement gaps are new. But the fact of the matter is they haven’t been eliminated, and for this community to remain strong and for this nation to remain strong, it’s probably, if you have to ask me, our number one social justice issue.” District leaders in both cities also described problems with new students’ academic skills and achievement levels or test results.

These problem definitions highlight district administrators’ concerns with low levels of academic achievement among their new populations or the “gaps” between the levels of academic achievement of their disparate student populations. The districts varied with regard to how they characterized the problems of educational outcomes. Five of the six River City respondents described educational outcomes in relation to students’ designated race or ethnicity. For example, one central office administrator in River City commented: “If you look at our success and failure rate with populations you are going to find that the lowest success, success rates belong to the African American and the Native American community followed by the Hispanic and Asian community.” In contrast, in Lake City, district administrators who identified educational outcomes problems related to demographic change did not specify any groups, but talked about “the achievement gap” generally or identified a very encompassing problem of educational outcomes. For example, one respondent talked about “all achievement gaps” and one person listed problems for achievement related to race, poverty and Spanish-speaking English language learners.

In focusing on the problem of academic achievement as a racial phenomenon, as many did, leaders emphasized as problematic the educational outcomes for students who were doing the very worst: African American students. The earlier quote, where the respondent described “the lowest success, success rates belong to the African American and the Native American community,” illustrates how this way of understanding the problems of demographic change tended to focus district leaders attention towards African Americans. This positioned Hispanics and Asians as less problematic. This pattern was also evident in district leaders’ problem definitions related to disparities in identification for special education and rates of expulsion across both districts.

Overall, though, district leaders most commonly expressed their concern related to demographic changes as a problem of academic achievement. They describe the educational outcomes for “kids of color,” students living in poverty, and English Language Learners as a primary and serious concern. Notably given the findings emphasizing the deficit perspective among educators (Hamann et al., 2002; Lowenhaupt, 2010; Wortham et al., 2009), administrators in neither district spoke in these terms. While district administrators may have attributed low educational outcomes to students or their families, this was not clearly evident in my interviews. Instead, district administrators clearly identified their own school systems as problematic and that is the set of problems to which I now turn.

Problems of instruction and access. District leaders realized that their responses to their changing demographics, particularly the academic achievement of their new groups, were not always sufficient and that they located blame for students' educational outcomes in their own school systems. In particular, two of the primary problem definitions that school district leaders used: problems with instruction and problems with access to challenging curriculum, tied responsibility for educational outcomes to the school system.

Central office administrators in each district described problems with the schools' instructional response to new groups. These problem definitions included not knowing how to respond to new groups and not being aligned with the cultures and languages of their new groups of students. One Lake City district administrator explained:

language issues are certainly um, some of the areas that um, have an impact on our curriculum and decisions and directions that we are trying to navigate. Um, certainly cultural uh, backgrounds and values and beliefs are a whole 'nother area of um, trying to make sure that our courses and instruction and our relationships with teachers, student, family, um, are keeping with our, who we have. You know—our, our changing [Lake City School District].

Often, central office administrators, particularly those responsible for curriculum, instruction, or professional development efforts, identified teachers as problems. District administrators described teachers as unprepared and inexperienced in teaching new populations, teachers' harmful beliefs about their new students, and teachers not adapting their teaching practice to meet groups' particular needs and cultures. Describing some of the ongoing efforts of central office staff in addressing the achievement gap, a frustrated executive level administrator in River City explained:

we are trying to figure that out because we have these issues around culturally responsive practices, we've got issues around differentiation, we have um, we've got um, we've got all of this stuff around what the teacher is doing to engage the students so that they want to learn. So, and the tough part of that is that it gets down to belief systems and that's, you know, you can make someone go to training and have them learn how they are different from other people, but if they don't take it to the next step and say, well, how am I going to make this more relevant, for those students in my classroom that are different from me. And again that happens in 95% of the cases because we have primarily white, middle-class people, doing the work, um, you know, they have to figure out how to do it, and you know, we have been beating them over the head about the fact they have an achievement gap and frankly some of the responses have been: "So what? I taught. They didn't get it, now it's time to move on."

Notably, in emphasizing the training and exhortations from the central office, this individual located responsibility for educational outcomes in individual teachers. This is not to say teachers' beliefs and practices were not a problem; in fact one administrator pointed to a survey that he interpreted as evidence that teachers' beliefs were problematic.¹² However, although River City respondents also indicated that their

¹² The River City School District participated in a survey of teachers, administrators, and school board members' beliefs about student learning. The survey was part of a multi-state, multi-district effort. In a report on results from the 2007 survey in the River City School District, when asked "What has the biggest impact on student learning?" 60% of teachers responded "The student's parents," 59% responded "The

professional development offerings had not always been the right approaches, the focus on teachers also deflected blame from district leaders or a larger critique of schooling. Similar concerns about instruction were expressed in Lake City. Perhaps unsurprisingly, administrators in both districts mentioned instruction as a problem more often than school board members, who are often not deeply involved in instructional issues. Only two school board members in River City (28.5%) and one former school board member in Lake City (16.7%) defined problems related to instruction.

As with the problems of instruction, both districts' administrators also defined access to challenging course work or inclusion in mainstream classes as a problem, but Lake City district leaders emphasized this aspect more. Disproportionality—the over- or under-identification of a group of students relative to their representation in the general student population—was one indicator that district administrators used to signal this access problem. In both districts, leaders defined problems with the disproportionate identification of students of color and students living in poverty in special education, under-representation of students of color in talented and gifted programs and higher-level classes, and English language learners being excluded from the general curriculum. For example, one special education director connected disproportionate identification with students getting “disenfranchised with school.” These problems of access were often implicitly, if not explicitly, tied to educational outcomes for students living in poverty, students of color, and English language learners. This was because district leaders interpreted programs and structures that kept students from more core content and challenging academics as preventing them from reaching higher levels of achievement.

This set of problem definitions also placed blame for educational outcomes on school district practices. For example, an executive level administrator in Lake City identified a problem with ensuring students access to challenging course content in high school by saying:

We are doing a good job in elementary and middle school and it is hard to change high school. We have AP and remedial. We need it to be all AP. Research shows kids learn better in heterogeneous groups. Inclusion is better. We have pockets but are wanting it to be systemic. (from handwritten interview notes)

This respondent saw grouping students into Advanced Placement (AP) courses and remedial courses as excluding some students from opportunities to do higher-level coursework, like AP. Emphasizing the problem of a lack of access to course content for English language learners, a former Lake City executive level administrator said:

So, there was a whole host of challenges going on as well with that population [English language learners]. One was moving away from a pullout model, where we would separate our English language learners into ESL classes, and also the fact that much of what they were getting didn't relate to the content in the regular ed. classroom.

This administrator indicated that he saw a problem with the school system: the “pullout model” that the district had in place. Taking English language learners out of their regular

student him/herself,” and 51% responded “The students’ teachers.” Only 5% responded “Student’s racial or ethnic background.” In contrast, administrators (including principals) most commonly responded to this question by identifying teachers (77%) and students (42%) as having the biggest impact. Only 28% identified student’s parents as having the biggest impact and 0% identified student’s racial or ethnic background as having an impact (Lighthouse Beliefs Survey for River City School District, 2007).

classrooms in order to instruct them in separate English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms prevented students from accessing the content in their regular classrooms. In Lake City, as in both of these examples, district leaders connected access issues to problems in the processes or structures of the school system.

In both districts, a few administrators also argued that issues of disproportionality were caused by teachers' biases and their lack of knowledge about responding to the needs of the new students arriving in their classrooms. One Lake City administrator, for example, explained:

what brought us to a disproportionate place was our lack of experience, lack of professional development, etcetera, around looking at cultural factors, looking at a number of things. Just absolutely no experience on the part of most of our teachers. Most of our teachers are white. Most of our teachers have been teaching in the district for quite a number of years, and so I think as the demographics started to shift and teachers found themselves face to face with kids that they literally had no appreciation for, for lack—I mean that's brutal, but it, unfortunately, was often true. The response seemed to be: "I need somebody to take care of this kid."

Thus, while not necessarily the main way that district administrators understood the problems of access and inclusion, district administrators sometimes laid blame on teachers for these problems, as well.

Problem definitions related to instruction and access to classes were among the most common ways that school district administrators described the challenges of demographic change in both districts. In using these sets of problem definitions, district leaders held the school system partially responsible for the educational outcomes of their growing populations of English language learners, students of color and students living in poverty. Lake City respondents tended to emphasize the problems of access, and therefore the structure of the school system, a bit more than River City respondents. River City respondents emphasized instruction over access, although this was a key concern in both districts. So, leaders in both districts pointed to the school system as a problem. However, the emphasis on teachers' pedagogical practice, beliefs, and lack of knowledge about how to serve students of different cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds also identified particular stumbling blocks connected to teachers in classrooms rather than with central office initiatives or the system of schooling more broadly. These findings suggest that to a significant degree, district leaders understood a need for change within their own systems rather than simply expecting that new groups would need to adapt.

Problems of political pressure. School district leaders described another set of problems that emanated from a different source: local community members. In both cities, district administrators identified political pressure from various constituencies to make or change policies related to demographic change. However, district leaders emphasized the pressures from predominantly middle-class and white parents as less legitimate and more troublesome than pressures from other groups.

A few central office administrators in each district described pressure from Latino, black, and Hmong community groups to make or change policies largely related to the education of children from these ethnic-racial groups or to improve school district-family connections. District leaders described these groups as pressuring them, but

acknowledged a sense of legitimacy to these groups' claims. For example, in Lake City one school district administrator explained:

I would say mid-'90s, mid- to late-'90s, from community groups [names local black and Latino community organizations], were very, very negative, and very accusatory. It was kind of like, "You're just not doing right by our kids." And I mean I think it was a reasonable response, but it was very "shame on you." We've evolved to a place now where we're partnering very, very strongly with our community groups...

The qualification that "this was a reasonable response" suggests that this leader saw political pressure from these groups as challenging but legitimate, at least after the fact. Likewise, another central office administrator in Lake City said about political pressure from "community partners:" "I think that's good because it's kind of checks and balances of, yeah, this population is growing and it's putting pressure on us to be responsive." Notably, no school board members mentioned pressures from minority community groups.¹³ District administrators' view of the legitimacy of minority groups' pressures contrasts with their views on the opposition of white community members to some of their policies.

District leaders described predominantly white and middle-class parents' opposition to some district policies as particularly problematic. These parents were able to successfully oppose district policies and school district administrators linked parents' reasons for doing so to the presence of students of color and students living in poverty. However, this differed in the two districts. In River City, district administrators' pointed to parents' class biases and racism. River City parents opposed district proposals that would have mixed students from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. One executive level administrator explained of the failure of some district proposals to deal with under-enrollment at a few schools:

some of the reasons why they didn't work was, was because of bias and maybe it's racism, I guess that is what it is, relative to—I'll give you dual-campus [one of the enrollment proposals]—Of what I would call the highly-educated, well-to-do white parents not wanting their children to attend Takaki High [the more socioeconomically- and racially- diverse school]. And, there was an underlying current that I felt, in fact I heard, from parents that I am not going to send my kid to that school. So, that obviously was an initiative that we never focused on that we were going to do.

Like this respondent, most River City administrators implicitly if not explicitly attributed this parental opposition to intolerance, racism or "thinly disguised socioeconomic condescension," as another River City administrator termed it, sentiments that they found problematic and rejected.

In Lake City, district administrators explained middle class opposition to district policies as a reaction to feeling they were losing out in the districts' focus on responding to the needs of new student groups. Several Lake City district administrators described more affluent, or middle-class, parents' discontent with funding programs for poor

¹³ River City had had no minority school board members during the time of this study. In Lake City, they had 2-3 minority school board members over the course of the study. The Latino board member I interviewed for this study described working with Latino community groups and did not describe these interactions as involving pressure.

students, when they felt their own children were realizing fewer benefits from the school system. District administrators sometimes linked this concern to some parents' opposition to heterogeneous grouping and de-tracking efforts. For example, one executive level administrator said:

There is a huge backlash on the part of our more affluent parents, and particularly the parents of self-proclaimed talented and gifted kids, that resources are being diverted from their students to take care of this new population... the parent backlash on that is absolutely huge—a constant cry for a return to ability grouping, to segregation, essentially—we're hanging on...it's tough, a very difficult discussion.

Thus, Lake City district administrators perceived affluent or middle-class white parents' demands as creating a tension or hindering their efforts to serve the needs of new groups of students to their districts. District administrators indicated that this opposition impeded their efforts to make the schools more equitable. A former executive-level administrator recalled the move to heterogeneous classes as being “slowed substantially” by the opposition of middle-class parents. In Lake City, a few district administrators said that they viewed these parents as having a right to advocate for their children or acknowledged that they had some legitimate concerns, but there was also wariness and uncertainty about parents' true motives. In River City, one district administrator and one school board member talked about this tension between serving new groups and the demands of some parents, but River City leaders for the most part did not make this connection or did not do so explicitly. In both school districts, school board members also defined pressures from white, middle-class parents as problems and a greater percentage of school board members than central office administrators, 57.1% in River City and 50% in Lake City, did so. Indeed, school board members along with superintendents were the most likely to have contact with these parents. In both districts, school district leaders understood the political opposition of middle-class parents as a problem, as these parents' discontent interfered with district policymaking efforts.

Furthermore, school board members in both districts and one former school district administrator in Lake City perceived middle-class, white parents' opposition to district policies as particularly problematic because these parents' opposition had financial implications. These more privileged parents could transfer their children to neighboring school districts costing the school district state funding¹⁴ or a loss of property taxes. As one former executive-level administrator said:

there's this underlying fear of um, that all of our middle-class parents will leave, go to suburbs, which is very accessible in Lake City....So that, that fear underlies everything. 'Cause one, one of the conflicts you have policy-wise in a district like Lake City that's changing is, how do you balance that? 'Cause the thing is, if that occurs, if you make the decision to always come down on the side of social justice, ok, and you lose, and you lose all this tax base, I don't have any money to effect the social justice issues that I want to effect. So you're doing this constant balancing act. And, and I think boards particularly... once that begins to be an

¹⁴ The state's “open enrollment law,” passed in 1997, allows any student to transfer from the school district in which they reside to any other school district, provided that the receiving district is willing to accept the student. This law is described in greater detail in Chapter 4.

issue in their mind, that's a major, that's a major factor. Uh, and it's a real factor. It's not a perceived thing. It's real in the sense that if your tax base drops off—so you'll always have this underlying fear as you balance policy. Uh, you know, am I cutting off my nose to spite my face? Or am I better off compromising on this issue uh, and retaining the ability to affect the lives of these kids? I mean that, that's kind of the fundamental issue.

Again, reflecting the view in Lake City that middle-class parents compromised district administrators' social justice or equity-oriented policymaking efforts, this speaker pointed to how these parents' ability to transfer districts gave their concerns greater political weight. As indicated in this quote, the financial implications of parental opposition were particularly salient for school board members, but less prominent in the responses of district administrators. However, the implications of this financial factor and the role of community opposition to district policies were very much evident in school district policymaking, as we will see in Chapter 4.

Notably, in River City, where there was established anti-immigrant and English-Only sentiment in the broader community, district leaders described a few incidents where some community members voiced opposition to language programs for English language learners, and some scattered calls to deny schooling to "illegal immigrants." However, district administrators did not identify this unorganized opposition as being a limitation to serving these students. Illustrating some of district administrators' ambivalence about whether this opposition was truly a problem, one district administrator explained:

Umm, there is a positive and a negative response to our bilingual schools. There are people that want to expand it and people that want to shut it down. You can imagine that there is 20% on either end of the spectrum... there are always people that want to shut down, who want us to stop putting signs up in Spanish.

In both districts, central office administrators said that they proceeded with what they believed was right for their students. For example, one executive level administrator in River City responded to an interview question about how community pressure for English Only had influenced district policy by describing an editorial against the county's English Only law and the expansion of a two-way immersion bilingual program in the district. He explained: "The way I would characterize it is we just kept doing what we thought was right for kids... there was a continued focus on either ignoring it or just standing up to it." On the other hand, three school board members in River City did describe the opposition of a few community members to educational resources going to educating "illegal immigrants" as a problem they faced. However, they described using federal laws to justify their commitment to serving these students. River City school board members noted that federal laws required their response. As one board member explained:

Um, I think one of the things as a district we struggle with is trying to understand, um—And how do we tell people that say things like, "Why do we have to educate the people that can't speak English?" Or something like that. When they don't—you know, these are federal laws, and it's the right thing to do. So I don't think that that [opposition from community members] really influences our decision; it might influence the process on how we deliver or communicate the information.

Board members described federal legislation as providing legitimacy for programming for these new populations despite community opposition. So, while anti-immigrant and

English-Only sentiment were real issues in River City, district administrators there did not see these as major problems and they did not describe the opposition as blocking them from carrying out the reforms they thought were best. Bilingual education policymaking, where significant, organized community opposition was actually minimal, is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Thus, while district leaders, in general, found that community pressure from various groups was problematic, they emphasized the opposition of middle-class parents as most troublesome. These community members' concerns seemed to have the least legitimacy to district leaders, and they were particularly troublesome because these parents were able to impede or block district administrators' policymaking efforts. Looking across the primary problem definitions that school district leaders used to talk about demographic change reveals a significant tension in their work. These leaders saw the unsatisfactory educational outcomes of the students living in poverty and the students of color in their districts as a major district challenge. They attributed the low educational outcomes for these students, in part, to problems of instruction and problems of access to educational opportunities in their districts. These constructions make school district change a logical and justifiable response to the arrival of new groups of students in their schools. Yet, community member opposition to district policies seemed to have the potential to complicate this commitment to district level change.

Conclusion

Closely examining school district leaders' understandings of demographic change and the challenges that accompanied this reveals that district administrators did not view the changes in their student populations as simply reflecting an arrival of immigrant students. In these two districts the changes that school district leaders described placed the arrival of Hmong and Latino immigrants within broader frames of change in ethnic-racial composition and increase in poverty that were occurring in their districts. Furthermore, I find that the problems that seemed most salient to school district policymakers extended beyond the language or culture issues typically associated with immigrant children's educations to include: (1) the educational outcomes, instruction, and access to courses for students living in poverty, students of color, and English language learners, as well as (2) the political opposition of white, middle-class parents to some district policies linked to students living in poverty and children of color.

These findings also suggest that district administrators were amenable to making changes to their school districts in order to respond to the needs of new immigrant destinations. In illuminating the primary problems that district administrators identified related to demographic change, this chapter contributes two insights to the research on new immigrant destinations. First, this analysis reveals that district leaders perceived and experienced the problems of demographic change in ways not previously appreciated by scholars investigating new immigrant destinations. The literature on new immigrant destinations has tended to emphasize how educators see new students as problems (Hamann et al., 2002; Lowenhaupt, 2010; Wortham et al., 2009). In my study, district administrators did not talk in those terms. But they did identify school district responses to be inadequate. The findings in this chapter contribute to that line of research by providing greater insight into district administrators' views on the challenges of their work in new immigrant destinations.

Second, these findings reveal that district administrators identified middle-class parents as a problem. This is important because research in urban education politics has argued that school district bureaucracies reflect or mirror the biases of the dominant community (Tyack, 1974). In contrast, these findings suggest that district leaders do not entirely reflect the dominant actors in their communities or accept community members' responses as unproblematic. District administrators did not always accept the perspectives of middle-class, white parents and vice versa, as evidenced by these parents' opposition to some school district policies. District administrators may see the need for change where community actors do not, and be agreeable to responding to the needs of new groups where community actors are not. This complicates the urban education literature's characterization of district administrators as consistently rebuffing pressures for change that benefit the district's increasingly ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students.

Finally, this chapter is not meant to overstate the critical stance that these policymakers were taking. School district administrators saw the need for change in their school systems, but consistently pointed to teachers as a major source of blame. This suggests that although district leaders hold some perspectives that make them amenable to trying to improve schooling for new groups, they also shy from critiquing the school system as a whole, including their own roles. These findings contribute to urban regime analysis and work in civic capacity that has noted the district administrators are necessary for coalitions to reform education but that they see fewer problems with the system than outsiders do and are more likely to reinforce the status quo (Stone et al., 2001), adding greater nuance to that observation. This chapter suggests there are particular kinds of problems that district administrators are more likely to identify in their school district organizations and seek to work with others to address, including increasing academic achievement, changing teachers beliefs and practices, addressing issues of access to challenging coursework and the political opposition from middle-class parents to their policies.

This examination of district leaders' understandings of demographic change and their problem definitions suggests that they had an overall orientation towards responding to the needs of new groups, and some challenges in that regard, particularly from some community actors. As one superintendent said:

...this is the changing of America and sometimes I kind of will say to groups:
You know, did you understand the data about the browning of America?... And did we think it was going to happen everywhere but here?... It's now our reality, so the question really is:... How well do we live the reality?

The next two chapters examine the actual politics and policymaking in each district. Chapter 4 traces policymaking over issues that engendered opposition from local community actors, while chapter 5 follows the development of policy that was not particularly controversial with local community members in either district.

Chapter 4

Local Limitations and Structural Elaboration

In each city, district administrators pursued policies intended to expand educational opportunities and improve educational outcomes in their districts, particularly for students of color and students living in poverty, many of whom were from immigrant families. Among the most notable of these various initiatives, central office administrators proposed mixing district students along the intertwined lines of race, socioeconomic circumstances, and academic achievement in their schools and classrooms. In each district, central office administrators believed that structural aspects of their school systems (segregation of student populations and separation of courses into honors and general designations) impeded the academic achievement of students living in poverty and students of color. They felt mixing students was an important response to these concerns.

Previous research suggests the nature of the challenges and controversy likely to be involved with the kinds of changes district administrators in both cities were proposing. Policies, such as those proposed by district administrators in Lake and River cities, that would integrate schools and detrack¹⁵ classes have raised significant opposition from white and elite parents in the past. White and middle-class parents protest these changes, in part, by threatening to exit their school districts or doing so, if policies are put in place (Kohn, 1998; Wells & Oakes, 1998; Wells & Serna, 1996). Particularly in the detracking literature, scholars report district administrators who capitulate to the pressures of wealthy and elite parents and undermine detracking efforts at school sites.

Furthermore, two studies of policymaking in new immigrant destinations describe opposition from white and/or wealthy residents when district administrators created policies to respond to new immigrant populations. Issues of “who gets what” can be lightning rods in new immigrant destinations (Hamann, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2008). For example, Hamann (2003), in his study of response to the arrival of Latino immigrants in one southern city, found the bilingual education strand of the response, framed as “for Hispanics,” raised the opposition of working class whites who felt these new residents were getting something they did not get. Community actors’ objections to these programs played a role in undermining district leaders’ already tentative support (Hamann, 2002). Likewise, Jones-Correa (2008) reported that advantaged parents in two wealthy Washington, DC suburbs with new immigrant populations opposed policies that potentially reallocated resources away from their children and towards new groups.

Theory on urban politics and social policy suggests that there are significant obstacles to local governments carrying out policies that are perceived to be redistributing resources from the wealthy to the poor. According to Peterson (1981), local government may establish some redistributive policies—policies that transfer resources from the more well off to the less well off—but wealthy residents and companies will eventually leave

¹⁵ Oakes (1985) defines tracking as: “a process whereby students are divided into categories so that they can be assigned to groups in different kinds of classes. . . . However it’s done, tracking, in essence, is sorting” (p. 3). To “detrack,” then, is to “move toward less stratified systems of grouping students for instruction” (Wells & Oakes, 1998, p. 155).

the city if they feel there is too much redistribution, causing a loss to local revenues that makes local governments, like school districts, reticent to enact these kinds of policies. Indeed, parents with the means to do so often move across school district lines to secure what they perceive to be better opportunities for their children in the suburbs (Henig et al., 1999; Katznelson & Weir, 1985; Walters, 2001; Wong, 1992). Peterson argues that district administrators are unlikely to make redistributive policies under these conditions because they fear the loss of taxes generated by wealthy residents.

The scenario that Peterson outlined is lent a further twist in this study by a New Midwest state “open enrollment” law, which took effect during the 1997-1998 school year, that allows New Midwest students in any school district to transfer to any other school district in the state regardless of their place of residence. According to a report by the state auditor’s office: “Open enrollment is designed to encourage competition among districts as a means of fostering improvement in public schools, and to provide families with increased flexibility in their educational choices” (Berzuki, Varana, Gustafson, Lathrup, & Sommerfeld, 2002, p. 3). This law facilitates families’ ability to send their children to school in a different district without moving, further contributing to the exit option that Peterson (1981) argues is an integral part of district leaders’ calculations about policymaking. While the law provides some transportation vouchers for low-income students to participate in the program, in the 2004-2005 school year fewer than 6% of the students using the program were receiving these funds (Cleaver & Eagleburger, 2007), suggesting that the program is primarily being utilized by more economically-advantaged families. Under this law, districts that lose students also lose state aid and school districts that receive transfer students receive additional state aid (Berzuki, et al, 2002). In the 2008-2009 school year River City, the city that was less wealthy and less accepting of the arrival of immigrants, had a net loss of approximately 450 students costing the district approximately \$2.4 million. Lake City, the wealthier and more immigrant-accepting city, had a net loss of approximately 280 students with a net loss of approximately 1.5 million dollars (New Midwest Department of Public Instruction, 2009).

Taken together, this scholarship and the open enrollment law in New Midwest suggest the difficult task that River City and Lake City school district leaders confronted in their efforts to address academic achievement and expand educational opportunities for the growing populations of children of color and children living in poverty in their districts. If redistributive policies are truly not possible, or district administrators will face conflict from parents if they pursue those policies, what, if anything, are leaders to do?

Two concepts, *structural elaboration* and *opportunity expansion* are useful for understanding what district administrators might do in the face of opposition or *power over*—the ability of one set of actors to prevail over others who are resistant (C. N. Stone, 1989; 2006)—of influential community members. First, Coburn et al. (2009), in their study of district decision-making, introduce the concept of structural elaboration. Structural elaboration, as Coburn and colleagues describe it, is a form of political compromise where district administrators “built [their] differences into the structure of the program or policy, often creating greater complexity” (p. 1136). This is a way of proceeding in policymaking that allows multiple parties to see their preferences reflected in policy even when conflict exists and remains unresolved. Structural elaboration is a

helpful concept because it points to how, in the absence of power over, district administrators may still get their ideas into policy.

Second, C. N. Stone's (1993) concept of opportunity expansion is useful here for distinguishing between redistributive policies, such as the ones that Peterson's work addresses, and policies that make opportunities more available for low-income groups without being redistributive. According to Stone, redistributive policies are very unlikely, but government arrangements might still respond to the needs of low-income populations. He writes:

I use the term opportunity expansion rather than redistribution to suggest that the programs need not be zero-sum, as the word redistribution suggests. The lower class can be treated as something more than claimants for greater service; efforts can be directed toward expanding opportunities through human investment policies and widened access to employment and ownership (pp. 21-22).

Opportunity expansion suggests that where efforts to redistribute are not possible, policies that expand opportunities or resources may be. Providing some support for this view, Jones-Correa (2008) found that district administrators' efforts to expand resources (such as increasing the number of slots at a school or the number of children identified as gifted and talented) were more politically viable than those that involved limited resources in a zero-sum scenario.

This chapter examines school district leaders' efforts to expand opportunities and educate their growing population of students of color and students living in poverty over time. I begin with the districts' proposals in the middle of the decade to educate their new groups of students in the same schools and classrooms as some white and wealthier students in their districts and follow the trajectory of these efforts over approximately five years. Through this examination, I extend work by Peterson (1981) on the limits of school district leaders' efforts to enact redistributive policies by illuminating how district administrators negotiate policy in the face of these pressures. I argue that central office administrators continued to move forward policy proposals through a process of structural elaboration—adding programs to the existing structure of schooling; however, the degree to which district administrators' efforts served to expand opportunities for students of color and students living in poverty depended upon the degree to which district leaders were engaged in ongoing work and a sustained commitment towards this goal. This analysis suggests that while efforts perceived to redistribute resources are limited, policies to expand educational opportunities are nonetheless possible. I also contribute to urban regime analysis by demonstrating how school district administrators expand opportunities while making piecemeal reforms.

Middle-class Parents and “Power Over” Policy

School district leaders' proposals to send predominantly white and wealthy students to school with students of a darker skin tone and a less advantaged background were limited by opposition from some predominantly white and socioeconomically advantaged parents. Though the policies and parental concerns were somewhat different across the two districts, parents tended to interpret these policy changes as redistributive and saw district leaders' proposals as undermining their own children's schooling experiences. In the context of fiscal decline, increasing district reliance on state aid tied to student enrollment and students transferring out of their districts under the state open

enrollment law, these parents were able to use the threat of removing their children from the school districts to advance their own concerns and limit district leaders' efforts towards establishing policies that mixed students.

Redistribution. In both cities, school district administrators' proposals that would mix students living in poverty and students of color with their white and more advantaged counterparts drew fierce opposition from some predominantly white, middle-class families potentially affected by the proposals. In both cases parents understood the district changes as redistributive ones that took away opportunities and decreased their own children's schooling experiences. However, the specific parental objections differed across and within the districts.

In River City, district leaders offered two proposals that would have resulted in a higher level of integration at some district high schools. In the early 2000s, River City central office administrators identified a problem of overcrowding on the city's north side and created a taskforce to study the problem and consider building an additional high school in the city. Finding the need for an additional high school, the taskforce proposed shifting attendance boundaries for all the north side high schools in an attempt to achieve "socioeconomic balance," when deciding boundaries for the new high school (Student Demographic Task Force, 2005). In the 2005-2006 school year, the existing north side high schools had differing student compositions. Marshall High School had significantly fewer students of color (approximately 22%) and students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch (approximately 28%) and fewer English language learners (approximately 8%) than Banks High School (approximately 40% students of color, 50% free and reduced price lunch, and 10% English language learners) according to the state online student data system. The taskforce proposed a plan to balance the socioeconomic make-up of these high schools and the proposed new high school, although a referendum to fund the proposed new high school was defeated and the changes were never carried out. Four years later, in 2009, district leaders again advocated mixing students. District administrators proposed studying the idea of combining the two under-enrolled south side high schools: Horton and Takaki high schools. Horton High School was the wealthiest (approximately 27% economically disadvantaged in 2008-2009) and the whitest (approximately 80% white in 2008-2009) high school in the district at the time and Takaki High School was much less wealthy and less white (approximately 60% qualifying for free and reduced price lunch and 60% white) according to data from the state online student data system. Under this two-campus plan, the combined 9th and 10th grades would be on one campus and the combined 11th and 12th grades would be at another.

White, affluent parents whose children were potentially impacted by these changes perceived both of these policies, changing boundaries and the two-campus proposal, as redistributive ones. From their point of view, district proposals that would put their children into schools with students of color and students living in poverty meant that they would attend a less desirable high school. Of course, parents had many other concerns about issues like the distance children would have to travel, bussing, participation in extra-curricular activities, students' connections with their schools and neighborhoods, and in some cases academic achievement. Yet in discussing parental response to both redrawing boundaries and the two-campus proposal, school board members, district leaders, and other members of the taskforce noted that a significant

number of these parents objected to sending their children to school with “those kids;” they associated the more racially- and socioeconomically-diverse schools as worse schooling experiences for their own children. One principal, involved in the taskforce to change boundaries, described in an interview several years later what he heard at the public forums on the issue:

...some of those people did everything but burn crosses on our front lawn. Now, that’s an exaggeration... but it was very, very evident from the way they spoke, and how they spoke that they wanted no part of having their kids come to Banks High School. “I bought this property here because I was told my kids would go to Marshall. It’s okay if they go to the new school, but I don’t want them going to Banks...” It was disturbing, just—and I sat through those meetings, and you know to hear people use code words for what they really were feeling, well, “neighborhood,” “community,” those are the code words for “I don’t want my kids to have to rub elbows with poor kids or Black kids or Hispanic kids or Asian kids.” You know, I make no bones about saying that. I’ll say it in front of them today. That’s what it was all about.

The same concerns were raised four years later when the two-campus proposal was proposed. Parents at Horton High School, the whiter and wealthier of the two schools, did not want to send their children to school with students from Takaki High School. Respondent after respondent from the school board and from the central district office described parents saying they did not want to send their children to school with “those children.” From these district leaders’ perspective, it was race and class bias at work. As one executive level administrator said:

Well, yeah, racism it’s alive and well. It reared its ugly head with this dual campus thing that we decided not to pursue... a parent group, a pretty affluent group, mobilized again that. And although they would tell you, the leaders of it, would certainly tell you they didn’t have those feelings, there was documentation and quite a bit of it, that “I wouldn’t send my kids to that school or let my kid be in that neighborhood.” It was as much thinly disguised socio-economic condescension as it was anything to do with race.

In River City, the preferred school was judged as being the one with fewer students living in poverty and fewer students of color.

Likewise, in Lake City, some predominantly white and middle-class parents perceived district efforts to address the achievement gap, and detracking efforts in particular, as policies that redistributed educational opportunities away from their own children to those of “low achieving” poor and minority children.¹⁶ In 2005 the Lake City School District began a series of high school reform efforts. At Whitman High School, the staff put forward policies to replace 9th and 10th grade honors classes with new heterogeneously grouped English and social studies classes with honors options embedded in them (Pommer, 2005). A year later, in November of 2006, the principal at DuBois High School proposed eliminating the honors classes at the 9th and 10th grade

¹⁶ The numbers of parents actively holding these concerns or actively involved in opposing these policies is uncertain. At one school board meeting I attended where advocates of TAG programming turned out to speak, there were no more than approximately 40 people. While supporters of this perspective certainly numbered far more than this, there is no indication that this group represented a majority of white, middle class parents in either district.

levels at that school (Hall, 2006). These proposals were made in the context of broader, ongoing district efforts (and spending) to address the low levels of achievement for the district's poor and minority students and cuts to and relative inattention to many other district programs including the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program.

From the perspective of these Lake City parents, district efforts to integrate students of different abilities, and to address the achievement gap more broadly were redistributive policies that took away educational opportunities from their own children. This concern was symbolized and localized in opposition to the elimination of some honors classes at Whitman High School and the neglect of the district's TAG program. Examples of this perspective were collected in 2009 and 2010, but seem to reflect sentiments that were being expressed earlier in the decade, as well. A school board member explained in an interview that she heard from community members: "People will say: 'Well how can you start this program for these kids when you're cutting my kid's upper-level class?'" One website created by TAG advocates also signaled this feeling of losing out on a page titled: "About our Advocacy." The authors write:

We are a group of Lake City parents calling on Lake City public schools to provide challenging learning opportunities for ALL students, including those with high ability and potential... Lake City schools have insisted on splitting up high achievers and dealing them out among regular classes in order to create "balance." Middle schools refuse to provide advanced levels of science, social science, foreign languages, and language arts, and some high schools have done away with advanced sections of core academic subjects. Some point to budget shortfalls and achievement gaps as the District's primary focus and say that these crises outweigh the needs of academically gifted students. These problems, however, have not been solved by neglecting the needs of high-ability children. (Lake City Gifted, n.d.)

As this statement makes clear, these parents see themselves and their children, the "high-ability children" as the losers or victims of the district policies to address the needs of the students of color who are marked as the low achievers by the reference to the achievement gap. Implicitly then, the high achievers are white because the low achievers are the students of color. Race is an important, though implicit piece of the concern because the parents identify their children (the high achievers, who are white) as being neglected in the redistribution of opportunities. While this group saw themselves as losing out in district grouping policies, they also pointed to other ways in which they felt opportunities were being redistributed away from them.

"TAG parents" also believed that their children should be receiving attention from teachers and administrators, and that more resources should be devoted to "their" program. TAG advocates also described a redistribution of concern by district teachers and administrators from the needs of their children to the needs of low-achieving children. For example, at the January 11, 2010 school board meeting, one TAG advocate, whose voice was laden with emotion during her public testimony, spoke on behalf of 15 other parents and explained that many parents are:

frustrated because their children's needs have not been met, in the past. I know of four parents and families who were told by their teachers point blank that LCSD cannot meet their child's needs. I have even heard staff tell parents to go to [local

private schools]. “All” means “all” and the district must address these needs, too. (field notes, January 11, 2010)

With that last sentence, this speaker implied that the district was addressing other students’ needs, in contrast to the children she represented. This group of parents also described a redistribution of district resources. Indeed, the district had reduced spending and staffing of TAG programs in addition to other programs in response to an ongoing deficit that required cutting about \$67 million in 15 years. Other districts around the state were doing the same thing in response to the deficits they were experiencing.¹⁷ However, TAG parents were explicit that they understood this reduction in expenditures in TAG programming not just as a general response to budget cuts but also as the result of district policy that favored other groups. In an analysis of the history of TAG programming in Lake City, advocates of TAG programming wrote:

.... In the renewed spirit of empiricism and “tension” reduction that currently prevails in the District, it would be useful to compare those figures to the expenditures for other types of learners with specialized educational needs (Lake City Gifted, 2009).

While these advocates were not explicit about what other “types of learners” they thought were receiving greater expenditures—they might have been referencing special education or Title I expenditures for poor students, for example—the analysis nonetheless indicates that TAG advocates saw these changes in contrast to what others were getting when they compared the share of the total budget over time and wrote: “it would be useful to compare those figures to the expenditures for other types of learners with specialized educational needs.” In seeing the decline in resources for TAG programs, TAG advocates were not alone. In my interviews, a union leader, taxpayer advocate, and a school board member all also noted the decline in the number of TAG course offerings in Lake City over the years. As one union leader said in an interview: “the district has cut back on the number of TAG classes. In some schools they don’t even exist and it’s because of inability to have sufficient revenue. We had a great TAG program, really superb. But, not superb anymore.”

Thus, in both districts, some middle-class white parents’ concerns about their own children’s educational opportunities were closely tied to their understandings that district policies were redistributing educational opportunities away from their own children. Race, as well as class, was integral to shaping their understandings of what was of value and was being taken from them in River City while it implicitly shaped the understanding of who was benefiting and who was losing in Lake City.

The successful threat of exit. Among their efforts to get the changes stopped or reversed, it was the threats of flight, coupled with school district leaders’ concerns about district finances, which were ultimately most successful in disrupting the policies to which these parents objected. In each district, middle-class parents confronted school board members and central office administrators at various levels and voiced displeasure about changes, demanded repeal, warned that they or others would exit the district if

¹⁷ In 2004, the state school administrators and school board associations reported that over half of the superintendents they surveyed in the state were reducing or eliminating TAG programs in response to the need to cut budgets (Pommer, 2004).

policy changes were not abandoned, and organized groups, often around their neighborhoods or schools, to protest changes.

Middle-class parents opposing the two proposals related to integration in River City and the ongoing detracking efforts in Lake City district threatened exit. This action is consistent with Wells and Serna's (1986) findings that elite families threaten white flight to try to derail detracking efforts. The threat of exit was a political tool parents in both districts used to get what they wanted. They threatened that if district leaders did not capitulate to their demands they, or parents like them, would use their means to send their children to private schools, transfer them to neighboring school districts or homeschool their children. These messages were sometimes couched as concerns that the parents themselves had, but the overall effect was the same: a threat that if district leaders did not address their concerns, families would transfer out of the district. For example, in River City in 2009, just before the administration was scheduled to make a recommendation on the two-campus idea to the school board, authors of two letters to the local River City newspaper ended their letters by stressing that families would exit the district if the two-campus proposal went forward, costing the district significant money. One writer concluded: "If this proposal is implemented, our district will experience an exodus of students to neighboring districts. It will take fewer than 100 students to leave our district to offset cost savings projected by the district administration" (Laszewski, 2009). A week later, another author wrote:

...I challenge the district and school board to look carefully at this change. Is it based on what is best for students? Will it improve the experience of school connections, decrease transitions and increase academic achievement? Will it help with issues such as overcrowding on the north side? Or will it send families to school choice, out of the district, and reduce the district's revenue, sending the budget into a continued downward spiral? (Parker, 2009)

As the excerpt from this last letter suggests, opponents of the two-campus plan used many arguments to support their case, but the threat of exit was strongly conveyed through the intense imagery of "an exodus of students" and a "continued downward spiral." In Lake City, similar threats of exit were raised over many years in relation to the detracking efforts in that district. For example, in one of my observations of public comments to the school board, described earlier, the parent advocating for changes to the TAG program, and reading a letter on behalf of 15 signatories also claimed: "Children with wealthy parents have more opportunities to go to public, private or home school. If LCSD does not do something and soon they will do this" (field notes, January 11, 2009).

These threats of flight were very effective by the end of the decade because both school districts had been undergoing repeated and severe budget cuts and more students were transferring to other districts. Earlier in the decade threats of flight had also been used but had been somewhat less successful. For example, initially, in the case of redrawing boundaries in River City, district leaders did alter some boundaries in response to parental protest but still proposed boundaries that tried to achieve greater socioeconomic balance. In Lake City, the early detracking efforts were also met with threats of exit but the detracking efforts proceeded. However, in both districts as financial concerns grew sharper, so did concerns about students exiting the districts. Financial worries and the threat of exit were intricately intertwined as falling enrollments meant even less state aid for each district.

In River City, the defeat of a school referendum and a community taskforce report on student enrollment brought a new focus on under-enrollment as a budget consideration. Central office administrators and school site staff responsible for studying the two-campus option recommended against the proposal because it would not save money and would potentially add costs from the exit of families that opposed the plan. Central office administrators wrote in the study:

The study team recommends that the Board of Education not pursue the dual campus option as a solution to resolve the enrollment issue facing high schools on the south side. It is projected that significant savings by combining the campuses will not be realized to the extent that would make this a viable option.

Additionally, public reaction, primarily from parents of current and future south side high school students, has not been supportive of the proposed restructuring.

The School District cannot afford to lose more students to open enrollment where a significant number of families have indicated they would pursue if dual campus were implemented (River City School District, 2009a, p. 25).

Though school board members told me in interviews that they thought the proposal had some merit, all five school board members who commented on the reasons for this decision agreed that the proposed program did not work out for financial reasons; several indicated that the threat of exit contributed to their understandings of the cost of the proposal. One school board member explained in an interview:

[T]hey did a feasibility study, and when they were doing the feasibility study they took into consideration the fact that we would have, you know, more than 100, and actually we knew 100 was the break even point, you know. If we had 100 people leave, it wasn't going to do us any good as far as financial savings. So, and, you know it ended up coming out they, they advised us not to go ahead with it, and, and we didn't because we would have lost too many people... we ended up not being able to do what was best for our students.

This argument echoes that made by the letter writer to the newspaper who argued: "It will take fewer than 100 students to leave our district to offset cost savings projected by the district administration." Another school board member echoed this same framing as well:

So—but—at the end...[we] decided not to do it because it wouldn't save money like we thought it would. The costs were too high and that a number of parents said that they would pull their kids out of school and open enroll them in the suburban schools and—I mean under [state] finance laws, for every student that we would lose, the state aid would follow that student to the suburban school. So we would lose roughly \$6,400 for every student. So if we lost 100 students, we'd lose \$640,000. So it ended up being not economically feasible. And with the opposition we decided not to do it.

This board member also noted that general parental opposition was a consideration, so it was solely the threat of exit and the loss of state aid that moved school board members to oppose the two-campus proposal. However, as these quotes suggest, the threat of exit was a deciding factor. Table 7 summarizes the policy developments related to integration in River City and their outcomes.

Table 7. Integration Policy Developments and Opposition in River City

Policy Development	Description	Outcome
<p>Proposed Boundary Redrawing on North Side (2005)</p>	<p>Proposal to redraw boundaries between Marshall High School, Banks High School, and a proposed new high school on the north side of River City with the express goal of establishing greater “socioeconomic mix” and improving academic achievement across north side schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parental protest against proposed boundary changes; threaten exit • District leaders altered some boundaries in response to parental objections but still proposed changes to achieve greater socioeconomic balance • Referendum for the new high school failed in 2007 and proposed boundary changes were never enacted
<p>Two-Campus Proposal on South Side (2009)</p>	<p>Proposal to combine the two under-enrolled south side high schools: Horton and Takaki high schools. 9th and 10th graders would attend one campus and 11th and 12th graders would attend the other campus. District leaders expressed goals included: cost savings, increasing academic achievement, offering more AP courses, and achieving socioeconomic integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parental protest to plan; parents organize against proposal; threaten exit • District administrators conduct a study that determines the idea will not save money • School board accepts the district recommendation not to pursue the two-campus idea

As in River City, Lake City leaders’ concerns about families exiting the district were influential in their decisions about detracking and support for TAG programming, although the manner in which this occurred was different than in the River City case. In Lake City, complaints about insufficient programming for students identified as “talented and gifted” stretched back at least as far as 1993. Furthermore, protest against the elimination of some honors classes at Whitman High School in 2005 did not result in an immediate reversal of that decision. However, over time, the growing anger over budget cuts and the lack of responsiveness to their concerns among affluent parents, particularly those who identified themselves as “TAG parents,” contributed to a fear among district leaders about wealthier families leaving the district. In 2007 the school board began a search for a new superintendent to replace their retiring leader. They hired consultants to lead a search and these consultants surveyed board members, administrators, community, staff, parents and students and found one overriding concern among these groups: the exit of middle-class families as a result of budget cuts and changing demographics. The consultants wrote:

The over-arching challenge cited by all respondents centered on the LCSD’s future ability to maintain its excellent academic programs and student performance, given the District’s insufficient financial resources, significant budget cuts and ever-growing low-income and ELL student populations. These concerns are interrelated and if not addressed could eventually become the self-fulfilling cause of what respondents feared the most: the exodus of a considerable

number of high-performing upper/middle class students to private or suburban schools as a “bright flight” mentality overrides parental desire to provide children with a “real world environment of socio-economic, ethnic and racial diversity. (Edwards, Rickabough, & Levy, 2007)

Thus, the threat of exit was tied to concern about “the brightest” students, as indicated in the term “bright flight” rather than “middle class flight” or “white flight.” As in River City, the concern about exit was heightened by the district’s financial woes, described here as being exacerbated by the growing numbers of students living in poverty and English language learners. The threat of exit was linked to a perceived parental concern about the district’s declining resources and academic program rather than as an escape from “those children.” Indeed, the concern about “bright flight” led to renewed attention to the protests of TAG advocates. In interviews, school board members worried about the growing anger that many parents, particularly those who opposed detracking and who were concerned with increasing class sizes, were expressing at the end of the former superintendent’s tenure. One school board member explained in an interview with me in 2009:

[A]s a kind of leader in the district or a policymaker, we have to balance the needs of the children who, um, kind of—we’re it for them. We are their future, because they, their families don’t have the resources. And we also have to balance, um, their needs, as well as the funding that is tied to their achievement with the needs of the demographic—that middle-class, you know, upper-middle class, mostly white demographic who are very supportive, in the past very supportive of our schools... those families are the ones who can say, “Well we’re fed up; we’re going to a private school.” And, you know, and we want our schools to be for everyone, you know, because we want to—we wanna maintain our high quality schools and be able to offer, you know, advanced classes, um, college prep, you know, as well as classes for kids who are probably not going to be going to college, but doing more technical work... There’s a lot of tension, and then add on to *that* that we have the economy as it is right now... the state government is giving us less money with this current budget, and it just—This year’s been particularly tough. So, we have that situation, where we have to prioritize, um, programs and spending with less. More needs and less money... So, it’s—there’s a lot of explaining that has to go along with this because people will say: “Well how can you start this program for these kids when you’re cutting my kid’s upper-level class?” or “I have 30 kids in my AP Calculus class,” and most of the kids there are white. And then we’re starting with a new program for the kids, um, starting up a 4-K [four-year-old kindergarten] program... This community wants answers.

In essence, this school board member largely accepted the idea that the school district, given scarce resources, was choosing to support programs for kids who are not white and not in the AP or upper level classes, but also saw it necessary to address the needs of wealthy white parents who could send their children to private schools. In many interviews, central office administrators and school board members told me that the former superintendent, who was focused on the achievement gap, was not perceived to be responsive to the concerns of wealthy, white parents who wanted more upper level courses or changes to the TAG program, or other community members with other

concerns; however, the new superintendent was much more open to the community. Indeed, the school board seemingly selected this candidate for his community responsiveness. The superintendent search consultants concluded that school board members and others whose opinions were reflected in their research saw the need for a new superintendent who was more community-oriented and collaborative (Edwards et al., 2007). In 2008, with the arrival of a new superintendent who was committed to engaging the various communities in the city, TAG advocates gained a new hearing in the district and work began to address their concerns. Table 8 summarizes the policy developments related to high school detracking and their outcomes.

Table 8. Detracking Policy Developments and Opposition in Lake City

Policy Development	Description	Lead Actors
Whitman High School decision to eliminate some 9th and 10th grade honors classes (2005)	Whitman High School staff decided to eliminate 9 th and 10 th grade honors courses in English and social studies and replace these with heterogeneous courses with honors work as an option. Part of a high school reform effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents objected; group organize around advocacy for “talented” students and opposition to these changes; some threatened flight • School, district administrators supported the change • New superintendent orders honors courses reinstated in 2010
DuBois High School proposal to eliminate 9th and 10th grade honors classes (2006)	DuBois High School principal announced a proposal to eliminate 9 th and 10 th grade honors courses in English and social studies and replace these with heterogeneous courses with honors work as an option. Part of a high school reform effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents objected and testified against the change at the school board meeting. Opponents included Whitman High parents. • School and district administrators decide not to pursue this change.

Note. This table only reflects the high school detracking policy developments highlighted in this chapter. These policy developments and the conflicts which accompanied the were one strand of district efforts to address opening up access for students to coursework and only one element of concern among TAG advocates.

In short, severe budget cuts and a rapidly declining fiscal situation in each district made a significant loss of enrollment an enormous concern for district leaders. It was in this context that middle-class parents’ threat of exit was powerful in blocking change and altering school district leaders’ policymaking efforts. This trend is consistent with Peterson’s (1981) work on the difficulty of redistribution through local government given the financial imperative to attract and retain wealthier households. This examination reveals an overall similar dynamic around redistribution between two quite different cities, one conservative and less affluent and the other liberal and more affluent, even though middle-class parents’ specific objections and lightning rod policies differed. One might expect that district administrators’ policymaking efforts would encounter greater acceptance in the more liberal and affluent city. In some regards, Lake City administrators did see greater success in that they achieved detracking at least for a little

while in some classes. However, in the end, the pressure from at least some unhappy parents led to a similar result in each city—significant limits on district administrators’ efforts to mix students across lines of race and class. I have shown how middle-class families’ threat of exit and districts’ declining fiscal circumstances limited school district policymaking; next I analyze how district leaders continued to advance policies within these constraints, a subject about which there is little existing research. I highlight two strategies: engagement and structural elaboration.

School District Leaders: Working with the Threat of Exit

Facing the limitations placed on policymaking by the threat of exit, central office administrators regrouped and put forth new policy alternatives. District leaders drew on two strategies for moving forward their proposals: engagement with community actors and structural elaboration. The degree to which these strategies resulted in policies that continued with an agenda in support of opportunity expansion for students of color and students living in poverty depended upon district administrators’ ongoing policy agendas. This focus varied across the two districts. While establishing some level of opportunity expansion in both school districts, the policies that were eventually put into place were more fragmented and likely to affect far fewer students than the structural integration that had set off such backlash from middle-class parents in the first place.

Central office administrators, as those with the responsibility and resources for preparing policy proposals, were essential to moving forward new alternatives. This echoes John Kingdon’s (1984) point, in his study of federal level policy processes, that career bureaucrats play important roles in specifying a set of alternatives for government action. In River City, middle-class parents were primarily motivated to stop their district from carrying out the proposed merger of two high schools. Parents who opposed these reforms only wanted to keep the change from happening. In other words, power over (C. N. Stone, 2006) was sufficient for their purposes as River City parents were able to keep district leaders from making the changes they opposed by protesting those changes and threatening flight. Having accomplished their goals, middle-class protesters largely left central office administrators to continue to deal with over-enrollment and under-enrollment issues on their own, albeit with a clear message about the pitfalls of changing their children’s educational experiences. Likewise, while River City school board members were interested in exploring options that would attract students to the under-enrolled south side of the city from the over-enrolled north side of the city, it was the central office administration that developed and studied a set of policy alternatives. In contrast, in Lake City TAG advocates had a number of things that they wanted to see put into place in their district and had repeatedly tried to get the district to take up their requests. They had a greater need to work with district leaders. Having gained the attention of district leaders and a pledge to address their concerns, they were still largely dependent on the central office administration to transform their demands into district policy and to successfully implement policy. In both cases, the responsibility for developing new proposals was in the hands of those in the central district office. This provided an opportunity for central office administrators to shape policy, within limits.

At the end of the decade, the policies being put into place in the wake of middle-class parental protest in each district nonetheless offered students some expanded opportunities. However, within the limits set by the threat of middle class exit, I found

that Lake City leaders had achieved more robust efforts at opportunity expansion than in River City. Below I detail the changes in each district. Then in the next section, I describe the strategies district leaders used to make these policy shifts.

In the middle of the decade when Lake City started its detracking effort and River City first tried to alter attendance lines to balance the socioeconomic diversity across north side high schools, district leaders had high hopes. In both cases district leaders believed that their efforts would address inequalities in their schools and improve the academic achievement of students of color and students living in poverty in their districts. In River City, the superintendent explained the reason for promoting socioeconomic balance in the redrawing of school boundaries by highlighting belief statements in the district's strategic plan supporting "the principles of equity and diversity within our schools...and the development of culturally proficient schools, students and staff." He argued: "Lacking a socioeconomic mix of students makes closing achievement gaps more problematic and, in the view of some, impossible in schools with disproportionate numbers of low income students" (River City Superintendent, 2005). Four years later, when district administrators proposed the two-campus plan, cost-savings was offered as an important reason for exploring the idea and district administrators also argued that the change would expand opportunities in sports and Advanced Placement courses for students at the two high schools. The school board president explained the proposal in a letter to the public as: "an attempt to both raise student achievement and make better use of our facilities, especially with the need to cut millions of dollars each year from our budget" (River City School District, 2009b). In a comment representative of many school board members and central office administrators interviewed for this study, one district administrator explained in an interview: "And some of the—especially like the AP courses and those type of courses, some of our enrollments weren't high enough to be able to offer them... So we felt that by combining the campuses we could give the students better opportunities." In public comments and in my interviews several others indicated that they hoped the effort would integrate students across socioeconomic lines, but this reason was cited less often than the others. In 2009, there was less explicit emphasis on integrating students in the two-campus plan, but increasing educational opportunities for students, particularly those at the less-wealthy and more racially diverse high school, was a consideration among district leaders.

In Lake City, district administrators and high school principals described the efforts to detrack and eliminate barriers to higher-level academic opportunities as efforts to increase educational opportunities and academic achievement for students of color and students living in poverty. This framing was consistent over time. In 2005, the principal at Whitman High School said that the school needed to educate "the most excellent writers" and students "who have a hard time understanding the English language. We have to educate everyone. We have to create a curriculum to do that, and I think we're doing that" (as quoted in Pommer, 2005). A year later, the Lake City superintendent made explicit that the high school reform efforts were an effort to address the achievement of student of color and students living in poverty when he argued that these efforts addressed the fact that "Many children of color and poverty are not meeting standards" (as quoted in Ziff, 2006). In a 2009 interview, an executive level administrator in the central office said of the high school reform efforts they were engaged in then:

We have... been very mindful over time of the lack of diversity in our advanced placement classes, in our upper math classes, just a number of sort of indicators. So efforts have been made within the last ten years, I would say, approximately, to start removing tracking, to remove prerequisites, have open access to classes, have support for entering AP classes, etc., and that work has—is happening in all four of the high schools.

These administrators described high school reforms as efforts to better educate English language learners, students living in poverty and students of color.

At the end of the decade, these aims were not entirely filled but also not entirely dashed. District administrators achieved some opportunity expansion in each district after their redistributive policymaking efforts were less successful. In River City, in 2009 the school board approved two specialized programs: an International Baccalaureate program to be located within Takaki High School and available to students from any high school and an alternative charter school available to any students interested in its alternative focus or in danger of dropping out and to be located on a new site. Both programs were in addition to existing traditional high school programs and participation in these opportunities was voluntary for those who were interested. In this sense they offered expanded opportunities for anyone in the district (or students transferring from other districts) to participate in these programs. The new programs would not necessarily integrate students from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in the way that district leaders had hoped that changed boundaries on the north side of the city or the two-campus option on the south side of the city would do. These programs were also likely to affect fewer students since the alternative school was proposed to be no larger than 200 students and the International Baccalaureate program was started with only 12 International Baccalaureate-trained teachers. This was in comparison to the approximately 2,300 students that would have been affected by the two-campus proposal.

In Lake City, in 2010, district leaders eventually created a high school reform plan that, among other things, called for honors classes at every level in every core subject, adding accelerated courses to the high school curriculum, and extending the heterogeneous English courses model to all core subjects at all four comprehensive high schools in the city. These changes undermined high school faculty and school district administrators' previous efforts to eliminate tracking structures that they worried would segregate students and keep students of color and students living in poverty from challenging course content; essentially, they created a traditional high school structure across the district with greater ability grouping. However, they also added programs to that structure that they believed would expand opportunities and access for poor and minority students or students who were not achieving at high levels at all four high schools. In addition to the heterogeneous classes, which had options for honors work, the new high school plan tried to increase access to accelerated courses by removing or relaxing requirements for entrance to these courses. Furthermore, the plan emphasized two programs already in place in the district high schools to support more challenging courses. In a related development, district administrators were also moving forward with efforts to create a system that would better identify students from under-represented groups for the TAG program. Under-represented groups were defined in the TAG plan as “students of color, low socio-economic status, culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with disabilities” (Lake City Superintendent, 2010). While these

policy changes did add structures to some high schools that would potentially limit access to challenging content and segregate students, they added a significant number of other programs meant to expand opportunities and the numbers of students this new plan affected the entire high school population rather than the approximately 1,250 freshman and sophomores that were affected by the protested heterogeneous honors classes in place at two of the high schools.

Engaging with community actors. One way in which district leaders in Lake City continued to move forward policymaking in the aftermath of middle-class white parents' protest was through a strategy of engagement. This strategy was an effort to expand the limits under which they worked as a result of middle class threats of exit by engaging these parents as well as other community actors in district policymaking forums. District leaders in River City did not take up this strategy. In Lake City, the superintendent, tried to engage middle-class parent protesters in a conversation that would also move along district leaders' equity concerns by reframing what several district administrators called a "zero-sum mentality" to a focus on meeting the needs of all students while also addressing some of their concerns. The superintendent explained:

based on what I had heard in my first few months here, [was what I] call a zero-sum culture... and I think I understand the genesis of it has to do with a lot of the budget cuts that were made in the, in the school district over a fifteen year period of time, \$65 million dollars—of which in the last five years prior to my coming with thirty-five of that sixty [five]. You know, people really felt disaffected. You know, certain programs weren't here anymore. You know, the fifth grade strings program wasn't here anymore. Some of the commitment to talented and gifted kids wasn't here anymore. But the result of it was a worry that I had around: "Can we get to more dialogue around all kids?"

District leaders attempted to shift the conversation in two ways: through a community-developed strategic plan and through the development of a plan for the TAG program that was developed with the help of a community advisory group. The groups involved in both of these plans included a range of actors from the school district, local community organizations, and parents. Although, the Strategic Plan group was made up of a more racially- and ethnically-diverse membership than the predominantly white parents who made up the majority of the membership of the TAG plan advisory group.

A key aspect of the engagement strategy was that it involved compromise between those involved. In the process of developing these plans and engaging the "TAG parents," as well as other relevant stakeholders, new meanings, compromises, and policies for the district emerged. In the strategic plan, the superintendent emphasized that one key element: "improving achievement for all kids while we eliminate achievement gaps for some kids," addressed the zero-sum concerns. He explained:

"If you're helping this group of kids, you're not helping my kids as much as you're helping these group (sic) of kids." That's the kind of message I heard here. The good news in the strategic planning process was it got put on the table. It got, it got acknowledged in the discussion. I think that was very healthy. The question is: What happens with it now? [It's] one positive step to... identify a focus on more unification, more bringing together people around conversations about all children.

This strategic plan reflected some of the new meanings and commitments in the district in relation to this issue, but the TAG plan worked out more specifics. The process of developing the TAG plan led to some compromises and generated new policy initiatives; central office administrators did not feel entirely comfortable with all of these new directions. For example, the TAG plan included language about “cluster grouping”—an arrangement where students identified as gifted are grouped in the same heterogeneous classroom¹⁸—and “flexible grouping”—grouping patterns that may change, depending on the course content (Lake City Superintendent, 2010). Ability grouping was a key concern, perhaps the key concern, of parents advocating for changes to the TAG program. However, district administrators had concerns that ability grouping would become rigid and lead to tracks and segregation. On the other hand, district administrators were enthusiastic about commitments to make course offerings more equitable across district high schools and to revise the TAG identification processes so as to capture more “underrepresented groups,” through the addition of multilingual assessments and other measures. This was not a priority of the “TAG parents” who had been generally advocating that more students be identified as TAG, but had not specifically aimed to address the issue of multicultural assessment. As one executive level administrator noted, the taskforce brought together: “numbers of voices, as opposed to just one or two. That kind of expanded the view.” In other words, while the TAG advocates who were focused on ability grouping got some commitment to grouping in the TAG plan, the process also brought the voices of other parents, teachers, principals and community actors to the table and put forward priorities such as multicultural identification that original “TAG parents” had not particularly been advocating. Thus, this work also resulted in proposals that expanded opportunities.

Importantly, through district administrators’ efforts to expand the limits, new policy proposals and district commitments that had not previously existed were born. The statement about raising the achievement of all kids was one example from the Strategic Plan. In the TAG plan, the commitment to ability grouping and multicultural identification processes are just two examples. The TAG plan provided for some opportunity expansion, but also officially put ability grouping, in the form of “flexible grouping” and “cluster grouping” back on the table. These were compromises.

Ultimately, the commitment to ability grouping in the TAG plan was a “fragile interpretation” according to one district administrator I interviewed. Parental discontent resurfaced as implementation of what they saw as the key piece (ability grouping) failed to occur at the pace and in the manner they had hoped. At a January 2010 school board meeting district administrators reported on their progress on elements of the TAG Plan that they felt were important and had been working on, including: inventorying course

¹⁸ The December 2008 version of this report further clarified the concept of cluster grouping by adding the following description: “A typical cluster grouping class also contains students whose achievement is average and below average, but not high-achieving students or those whose performance is far below average... Classroom compositions are carefully structured with two main goals: (1) to ensure a balance of abilities throughout the grade level *without returning to the practice of tracking* and (2) reduce the learning range found in every classroom” (italics in original, Lake City Superintendent, 2010, p. 37). This addition further highlights the compromised nature of this cluster grouping concept, as it indicates a desire to avoid tracking and the barriers to access to higher level academic content that district leaders believed that implied as well as the focus on grouping by ability that was the priority for many TAG advocates.

offerings and creating consistency in these across the high schools, addressing what prerequisites there would be for advanced courses and advancing advanced options within existing courses (Lake City Board of Education, 2010). At the next school board meeting, parents advocating for ability grouping spoke during public comments at the school board meeting asking why the TAG plan was not being followed. Some school board members asked the same thing (field notes, January 11, 2010). So, while the strategy of engagement led to some compromise and agreement on TAG policy between district administrators and community actors, the agreement was fragile and some of the same lines of conflict reemerged.

Structural elaboration. Structural elaboration was another strategy that district leaders used in the face of opposition from middle-class parents and the threat of exit. District leaders layered new programs that expanded some educational opportunities onto more traditional school structures. This structural elaboration (Coburn et al., 2009) reflected district administrators' efforts to accommodate the concerns of protesting parents as well as their own preferences into the structure of high school education. This compromise was made in lieu of being able to achieve agreement about a more encompassing district initiative. Structural elaboration was practiced in both districts.

Structural elaboration came about as central office administrators, in the wake of middle class political pressures, persisted in putting forth their own proposals as part of revised policy directions. Central office administrators moved forward policies they had already been working on in some capacity within the school system, often as part of their high school reform efforts. Thus, the kinds of programs that were taken up and added to the traditional school structures depended upon the kinds of proposals that district administrators were already developing in each district. In River City, in the midst of opposition to the two-campus proposal, district administrators continued to move forward other proposals they were developing to create "attractors" to under-enrolled south side schools, including a proposal to establish an International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Takaki High School and a proposal to establish an alternative charter high school for students who might drop-out of school. Both proposals were being considered even before the school board requested proposals for attractor schools. For example, district administrators had written proposals for a grant to support the development of an alternative charter school in 2007 and 2008. They framed the same plan, aimed at addressing the increase in dropouts and decrease in the graduation rate, as a way to deal with enrollment concerns. One of the central office administrators advocating the alternative school explained the proposed school by saying: "With the River City public schools, we still have the significant issues with dropouts, graduation rates, (open enrolling) out and some of those movements" (as quoted in McBride, 2009b). In both cases, central office administrators proceeded with these proposals even as the two-campus proposal was flailing and then defeated. With the defeat of the two-campus proposal, the traditional high school structure was maintained in River City. The IB program and alternative high school were elaborations to that traditional structure. Table 9 summarizes these policy developments.

Table 9. Structural Elaboration of Policy in River City

Policy Development	Description	Outcome
International Baccalaureate (IB) program adopted at Takaki High School (2009)	Decision to create an IB program at Takaki High School as an additional educational opportunity at Takaki High School and an attractor program for students from River City or its suburbs, who might otherwise chose to attend other school districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted by the school board.
Alternative Charter High School adopted (2009)	Decision to create an “alternative” high school in River City as a way to drop-outs, graduation rates, and open enrollment from the school district by attracting students with a unique learning environment not available at other schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted by the school board.

Note. This table only reflects the policy developments that contributed to structural elaboration in this district. District administrators proposed one other policy that was not adopted in River City.

In Lake City, faculty at the high schools and district administrators had been working on high school reform efforts as part of a federal grant that began in 2008 before the TAG plan or the strategic plan had been launched. As part of this high school curriculum reform plan and broader efforts to detrack the schools, district leaders also removed prerequisites for student entry into advanced courses and supported participation of under-represented groups through academic support programs. Both of these reforms were efforts that were already a part of district administrators’ ongoing policymaking agenda. One district administrator explained in an interview ten months prior to the rollout of the high school curriculum reform plan:

So efforts have been made within the last ten years, I would say, approximately, to start removing tracking, to remove prerequisites, have open access to classes, have support for entering A.P. classes, etc., and that work has—is happening in all four of the high schools, actually.

Many of these changes, elements of reform efforts at different high schools, eventually were incorporated into an overall plan for high school curricular reform. Based on an interview with the superintendent, the local newspaper reported the origin of the curriculum changes:

the district’s proposal is the result of two years of work and was sparked by national core curriculum standards that [the state] has adopted and that local districts will have to comply with in coming years. Other factors prompting the plan were a desire “to address the achievement gap in more accelerated ways,” to discourage students from leaving the district through open enrollment by offering more academic rigor, and to address parent concerns about opportunities for “talented and gifted” students. (Worland, 2010)

The reinstatement of 9th and 10th grade honors classes that had been eliminated at Whitman High School as well as 10th grade honors classes at another high school were folded into this plan. So, while parent demands for ability grouping for their children at

the high school level were ultimately granted, re-establishing a more traditional school structure, the district continued to develop and put in place policies they had been working on as part of their school reform goals to: “Increase Academic Success for all students,” strengthen relationships, and “Improve Post-Secondary Outcomes for all students” (Lake City School District, n.d.). District leaders elaborated the traditional high school structure through a series of additional programs across the four high schools, including open access to classes and supports for students to take challenging courses who might not otherwise do so. These Lake City policy developments as well as the policy developments resulting from engagement of stakeholders, described earlier, are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Engagement and Structural Elaboration of Policy in Lake City

Policy Development	Description	Outcome
Strategic Plan developed (2009)	The creation, with significant community involvement, of a new strategic plan to guide district policymaking. In part, conceived of as a way to create a conversation around “all kids” rather than a “zero-sum” perspective where each group advocated for its own issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to by 62 representatives of city community groups and passed by the Lake City Board of Education
TAG Plan developed (2009)	The creation of a plan to guide district development of the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. The plan called for ability grouping, developing multicultural assessments for identifying students among a number of other changes. The plan was developed with the input of an advisory team of parents, community, and school district staff. This group included several of the most vocal and critical TAG advocate parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to by TAG advisory group • Accepted by the Lake City Board of Education as a working document • District administrators moved forward with some aspects of the plan, TAG advocates felt they were moving too slowly and failing to institute ability grouping called for in the plan and advocated for more rigorous implementation
High School Curricular Reform Plan (2010)	District administrators unveiled a draft plan for reforming high school curriculum to address academic standards and make course offerings more consistent across district high schools. This included new proposals for removing prerequisites for advanced courses, strengthening of an existing tutoring program for underrepresented students, as well as reinstating honors classes in all high schools, while retaining the heterogeneously grouped course option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft plan was circulated and created protest from some teachers and students at Whitman High School • TAG parents applauded the proposed return of honors classes • The superintendent reiterated the necessity of honors classes based on the TAG plan • Plan moves forward. School Board eventually adopted in 2011

Through the structural elaboration noted here district administrators were able to expand opportunities by adding programs when efforts that appeared to redistribute resources incited backlash from parents. But the degree to which the policies they put in place in the wake of parental protest expanded opportunities depended upon the previous and ongoing agenda of opportunity expansion they had in place. This link was created because the policies district leaders continued to put forward in the process of structural elaboration were built upon previous initiatives they had been developing both before and during the intensified threat of exit and failure of plans to develop structural integration.

In River City, district leaders drew on existing proposals that were not primarily aimed at expanding the opportunities for students of color and students living in poverty. Central office administrators' proposals were developed to address over-enrollment on the north side of the city and/or under-enrollment on the south side of the city, while containing costs as much as possible. For example, district administrators' reports to the school board across a number of proposed "attractor" options, prioritized and analyzed considerations of cost and enrollment over expanding opportunities or even academic achievement. Opportunity expansion was a secondary consideration. With the two-campus proposal, district leaders had hoped that they could cut costs while also integrating the schools and expanding advanced level course offerings, particularly for students at Takaki, the high school with greater numbers of low-income students and students of color. As that proposal encountered significant opposition, district leaders continued to move forward their other ideas for programs that would ease enrollment without great costs. In my interviews, district administrators and school board members largely described proposals as efforts to address enrollment concerns and potentially save money. As one River City executive level administrator explained about the two-campus proposal: "We were looking at part of the revitalizing of the district [that was losing enrollment] and saving money." Another administrator explained how the IB proposal would help address enrollment concerns:

Some people perceive we've had white flight. And that's borne out by the data, and now the economy is so miserable, and as people have become more affluent, you know, a lot of the housing in the city is not new. People move... and our south side schools is (sic) experiencing decline... [Interviewer: So, what's the thought on how to address this [south side] issue...?] Well, one way is to make the schools more attractive and at Takaki High School we are going to be adopting the International Baccalaureate Program... We're hoping to change perceptions of our schools—like some people would say they are afraid to send their kid to Takaki High School... Some people have misperceptions that are not accurate and we need to figure out a way to change some of the perceptions.

Thus, while adding an International Baccalaureate program to Takaki High School added some educational opportunities for students at that school, as well as at other River City high schools, district administrators also saw it as a way to address concerns about enrollment in the district. While a few school administrators and school board members talked about charter or specialty school options as ways to expand opportunities for students at Takaki High School, for the most part central office administrators did not make this argument. Though central office administrators expressed enthusiasm for integrating schools and expanding educational opportunities, district administrators largely understood their particular charge in this matter as dealing with enrollment in a

cost-containment context. The structural elaboration that emerged from this focus was oriented towards those goals. District leaders supported the potential expansion of students' educational opportunities through these policy changes and programs added to the traditional high school structures did expand opportunities to some degree, but opportunity expansion was not a focus in any of the proposals they developed.

In contrast to the situation in River City, in Lake City district administrators had been engaged in a variety of efforts they believed would expand educational opportunities in their high schools such as expanding tutoring and support programs, removing prerequisites from higher level courses. They drew on these proposals as they regrouped in response to ongoing parental objections to detracking. When it came time for policy change, they brought forward these proposals along with the reinstatement of ability grouping across all grades and all high schools in Lake City. Here the strategy of structural elaboration served to advance opportunity expansion to a much greater degree than in River City because district leaders had a previous and ongoing commitment to policy proposals that promoted increased educational opportunities. These proposals were readily accessible as policy directions shifted.

In sum, by maintaining, or in the case of Lake City's Whitman High School reinstating, traditional classes and schools, district administrators quelled protest against structural changes that promoted integration. Within the limits of their negotiation with those protesters, they offered other programs. These programs were added on to the traditional structure of high schools, in a process of structural elaboration, rather than the structural changes district administrators had previously proposed. These were not fundamental changes to their school systems by piecemeal ones. Nonetheless, in the face of political pressure, district administrators were able to put some new programs in place and these programs resulted in some expanded opportunities that district leaders believed would benefit students, particularly students of color, students living in poverty, and English language learners. This situation was particularly the case in Lake City where district administrators' efforts were more focused on addressing equity in access to curriculum than in River City where district administrators mainly understood their charge to be to deal with enrollments and costs.

Conclusions

In many ways, new immigrant destinations seem to provide a unique context for school district policymaking, yet this chapter finds that in the case of policies that mix students across socio-economic and ethnic-racial difference, the politics of school district policymaking are quite similar to Peterson's (1981) previous findings about the obstacles to redistribution in urban school districts. While scholars of new immigrant destinations have noted opposition to school district policies from community actors (Hamann, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2008) as well as white or middle-class families' exit from local school systems in new immigrant destinations (Hamann, 2003; Kandel & Parrado, 2005; Wainer, 2006), thus far scholars have treated this latter development as background or context to district policymaking. In this chapter, I offered an in-depth portrait of how exit and the threat of exit by predominantly white and middle-class parents links to and affects policymaking for immigrant students by shaping district administrators' policies to mix students or redistribute resources.

Community opposition provided a formidable obstacle to some of school district administrators' efforts to respond to new student populations; nonetheless opposition was not a complete barrier to district policymaking. This chapter extends Peterson's (1981) work on the limitations to redistributing resources by illuminating district administrators' active policymaking response in the face of that opposition, an important aspect of urban district policymaking that has not been sufficiently addressed. I show the ways that district leaders used two strategies to advance their policymaking: they created forums for policymaking to engage community actors and they added programs to the existing structure of schooling through structural elaboration. In particular, it was structural elaboration they ultimately resorted to in both districts and it was through structural elaboration that district administrators appeased community actors but also achieved some elements of their policy agenda.

These findings contribute to urban regime analysis and the civic capacity literature. Urban regime analysis and civic capacity work has tried to understand how major reforms and opportunity expansion can be achieved given the prevalence of scattered and piecemeal policymaking and the difficulty of redistributive policies in so urban many school districts. The findings in this chapter illuminate how district administrators engage in a process of structural elaboration that creates more fragmented or piecemeal policy efforts. Furthermore this chapter shows that this policymaking is part of a compromise response to political and economic limits to policymaking. Yet, this chapter also reveals how district administrators' strategy of structural elaboration allowed them to expand educational opportunities for new students. The expansion of educational opportunities depended upon the degree to which district administrators had an agenda oriented towards equity. While civic capacity work has focused on the role of cooperation among community actors and school district leaders in achieving these goals, these findings suggest the importance of district administrators' policy agendas even in the face of opposition from powerful community actors.

Few school district policies generated as much local opposition as the redistributive policies about who-goes-to-school with whom, described in this chapter. What are the policymaking processes in new immigrant destinations when there is not this level of community opposition? Chapter 5 examines this question through the case of bilingual education policy.

Chapter 5

Community Possibilities and Assembling Policy

One of the primary ways in which district leaders believed their districts had responded to demographic change was through their language programs for Spanish-speaking English language learners. Unlike many new immigrant destinations, River and Lake cities were located in a “bilingual friendly state.” Passed by the state legislature in 1976, state law requires a “bilingual program” if a school reaches certain thresholds of English language learner students and that Spanish-speaking students must be taught by a certified bilingual teacher.¹⁹ According to the state law, a program must provide: “Instruction in reading, writing, and speaking the English language” and use “the native language of the limited-English proficient pupil, instruction in subjects necessary to permit the pupil to progress effectively through the educational system” (New Midwest Stats. ch. 115 § 95(3)). The bill promoted transitional bilingual education, which emphasizes the use of students’ native language to teach English, and thus fell short of developing Spanish and English proficiency as organizers had advocated. As one organizer said: “We couldn’t support bilingual in practice, but transitional.” Nonetheless, the state law did help overcome some controversial aspects of bilingual education programs: the redistribution of resources (Crawford, 2000) and the job politics around hiring bilingual teachers (Donato, 1997).²⁰ In 2001, with the establishment of a program in Lake City, both districts had transitional bilingual programs—programs that used students’ native language to help them learn English with the goal that students transition to all-English instruction (Genesee, 1999)—and were considered to be in compliance with state law. Yet, in both cities, school district administrators eventually shifted school district policy from transitional bilingual programs to additive (or developmental) bilingual education programs—programs aimed at developing students’ bilingualism and

¹⁹ The state bilingual law was enacted in 1976 when only a few communities in the state had any sizeable population of Spanish speaking families and so affected very few districts. However, in one major city there was a sizable Puerto Rican population organized to achieve a better education for Spanish-speaking students. Six hundred people attended a school board meeting to demand the school district provide bilingual education. As a result, the school board established a bilingual program and supported the creation of a state bilingual law, according to one organizer who also drafted the original bill. The state Bilingual Education Act was passed by a narrow margin and the governor signed it into law (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1982, p. 11-12). According to state statute, English language learners whose native language is something other than Spanish may be provided with an ESL teacher if there is not a certified bilingual teacher in the child’s language.

²⁰ Many years later, the requirement that districts provide a bilingual program and hire teachers resulted in a local redistribution of resources in River and Lake cities as the size of these districts’ English language learner populations grew. The establishment of the transitional bilingual program in Lake City in 2001 illustrates this. After being found out-of-compliance with the state law in 2001, the Lake City School Board allocated \$1.1 million to the ELL department from the general budget and the department hired 20 teachers and aides the following school year (Price, 2001). In both districts, when they later moved towards additive bilingual programs, they already had bilingually certified teachers on staff. In requiring districts to put money towards ELLs, to hire bilingually certified teachers and to have those teachers on staff, the law established some building blocks for district administrators when they wanted to expand existing bilingual programs to additive bilingual programs.

instructing students in core subjects in both Spanish and English over many years (Genesee, 1999). In other words, by the end of the decade, school district leaders embraced bilingual education and language policy shifted quite significantly in both school districts, exceeding requirements of the state bilingual education law.

Existing studies of the development of bilingual education policies suggest that these policies often generate community opposition based largely on conflict over national identity (Crawford, 2000; Schmidt, 2000) or if they are perceived to be redistributive in nature. For example, Donato (1997) argues that white, monolingual English teachers perceived bilingual education as a threat to their jobs. Research on the Latino immigration to new destinations suggests that bilingual education programs have faced resistance from local communities based in nativism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and English-Only beliefs (Beck & Alleksaht-Snyder, 2002; Brunn, 2002; Hamann, 2003), as well as concerns about redistribution of resources (Hamann, 2003).

However, bilingual education was not controversial in River and Lake cities over the period of this study. This might be expected in Lake City, where district officials reported little “English Only” sentiment in their community. But, it was also the case in River City, where anti-immigrant and English Only sentiment was firmly established in local laws. This was reflected in the 2002 passage of a law making English the official language in the county in which River City was located (Wilgoren, 2002). Yet, River City school and community members interviewed for my study indicated that they had noticed no district policy changes as a result of this local mandate.²¹ While River City school district administrators reported opposition to bilingual education in their cities, they described isolated protests, not organized community opposition to these programs and district leaders noted the opposition had not prevented them from putting in place bilingual education policies.

If not hampered by community opposition to bilingual education or required by state law to enact additive bilingual education policies, why and how did school district administrators come to pursue these particular policies in their districts? Recent scholarship on school district central offices points to the active role administrators take in developing instructional policies, often beyond the requirements of state law (Chrispeels, 1997; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Spillane, 1996). District administrators move forward policies through interpretation and persuasion with their colleagues as they engage in problem and solution framing (Coburn, et al., 2009). This literature has tended to characterize district administrators as concerned about improving teaching and learning for students, even if district administrators have different ideas about what this might mean (e.g. McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Spillane, 1998). Complicating this view of school district administrators’ role in instructional policymaking, scholars studying the development of bilingual education policy in new immigrant destinations find that bilingual education policy has been moved forward by actors from outside of the district central office and that school district administrators’ response to bilingual education policies has been shaped by their self-interest. In new immigrant destinations, teachers and principals working with ELL students, community members, or actors external to the district office have pushed forward bilingual education

²¹This is consistent with Moran’s (1987) argument that English Only laws are primarily efforts to maintain status and are examples of symbolic politics rather than legislation meant to be enforced.

policies (Brunn, 2002; Hamann, 2003; Martinez, 2002). Particularly when these policies come from the community, these proposals challenge district administrators' self-interests in maintaining their decision-making authority and these leaders oppose or neglect those programs (Brunn, 2002; Hamann, 2002). Thus, while this literature on school district policymaking suggests good reason for looking at district leaders' active efforts to advance instructional policies, the literature on bilingual education policies in new immigrant destinations suggest that district policymaking around bilingual education policy may also be shaped by actors external to the district office and the degree to which bilingual education policy threatens their self-interests.

In this chapter, I examine the development and evolution of bilingual education policy in River and Lake cities. I argue that in *assembling policy*—the work of bringing together the necessary stakeholders and policy directions for policy to be enacted—district administrators played a critical role in achieving districtwide change to establish additive bilingual education policy. In assembling actors and policy directions, district administrators brought forward some actors and policy directions and not others, often doing so in ways that elevated their own concerns related to conceptions of the broader challenges related to demographic change in their districts and their own self-interests in minimizing conflict by including and responding to vocal constituents. In doing so they shaped the particular policymaking direction that language policy took in their districts. In addition, I argue that prior organizing by community actors at the local levels enabled this policy change. In the context of little significant community opposition to bilingual language policy, the politics and processes described here contributed to districtwide policy changes in response to native-Spanish speaking students in new immigrant destinations.

Conditions of Possibility

To understand district leaders' policymaking later in the decade, it is important to begin with an understanding of the language policy reforms that preceded the districtwide adoption of additive bilingual policies in both cities. Prior politics created the *conditions of possibility*—or the foundations and opportunities—for the later moves to additive bilingual programs in each school district. In both districts, community actors organized to establish experimental two-way bilingual programs before district administrators were engaged in making these changes. Indeed, early efforts to establish additive bilingual programs in each district reveal that school district administrators' support of these experiments, which varied across the two districts, was influenced, in part, by their sense that these programs threatened or supported organizational interests.

In each school district some local teachers, parents, and other supporters organized a two-way bilingual program in the first half of the 2000s. Under the two-way model, also called dual-immersion, native-English and native-Spanish speaking students are taught both languages and learn academic content in both languages while sharing the same classroom (Genesee, 1999). Offering educational opportunities to both native-Spanish and native-English speaking students, these programs were examples of opportunity expansion, albeit on a small scale. These two-way bilingual programs eventually established a positive record for models of additive bilingualism and created a local demand for an elementary “foreign language” program in Lake City, but to create these programs, organizers had to either gain school district support or overcome

resistance of district administrators. River City, the more conservative city with greater anti-immigrant sentiment, established a two-way bilingual program within a district elementary school in 2001 and Lake City, the more liberal city with less overt anti-immigrant sentiment, established a two-way bilingual charter school in 2004.

In both districts, the two-way bilingual proposals were a response to a need to better educate a growing population of Spanish-speaking students in each district. In River City, the principal and teachers at Silver Stream Elementary School proposed a two-way program at their school. According to several school district informants, the school staff began investigating the benefits of a two-way bilingual program in 1998, as a result of the graduate studies of one of their teachers and the poor educational outcomes they were seeing with their Spanish-speaking students. Of the impetus for the two-way bilingual program, one of the original teacher organizers said:

So, it was a lot of things. The pulling out [of ELLs from the mainstream classroom] was not the best. And the [monolingual-English] parents wanting it for their kids and asking. And the English teachers noticed their children doing better when they were not missing anything in the classroom... Kids were isolated, we worried about self-esteem, not developing friendship and the scores were not progressing in the way we wanted. It took a lot of following along as a bilingual teacher; we were stifled in our creativity.

This teacher indicated a number of reasons original supporters of the bilingual program were interested in a two-way program, but emphasized that they were concerned that their Spanish-speaking students were not having a positive learning experience. The school staff, with the blessings of the district administration, formed part of a “Foreign Language Committee” to study the two-way bilingual concept (Internal memo, July 1, 1998). After reading research, visiting two-way programs in other cities and attending conferences, the school staff crafted a proposal for a two-way program.

The curriculum director and superintendent were supportive of the proposal and the school board approved their request in 2001. While external or community pressures to establish bilingual education programs can challenge local school staff and administrators’ sense of control or “decision-making prerogative” (Hamann, 2002, p.68; see also Brunn, 2002, Hamann, 2002), in River City, the school district administration was supportive of the program, which they framed as part of their “foreign language program” in a memo presented to the school board (River City Assistant Superintendent, 2000). According to one organizer of the two-way program in River City, the then-superintendent liked the idea of the two-way program because he felt it would deal with concerns about losing students to a neighboring suburban district that was beginning to offer “foreign” language instruction. This respondent explained:

At that time with the superintendent, a lot English parents were moving out of the district, I remember that—going to [neighboring suburban district]. [That district] was offering Spanish and other languages. He thought that it was a good way to attract people. So we presented to the Board and the Board said: “Let’s do it.”

This superintendent appeared to view the two-way bilingual program as an advantage for the district in its competition for students with its suburban neighbor.

In contrast, in Lake City, teachers and parents organized to establish a two-way bilingual charter school in their district, but their efforts were met with resistance from district administrators. Supporters of a two-way bilingual program in Lake City began

organizing in the summer of 2011 after the state audit of the school district's ESL-bilingual program revealed publicly the "the program and the district as a whole are not adequately meeting the needs of limited-English proficient (LEP) students and their families" and that there were "poor academic performance rates and unacceptably high dropout rates of LEP and formerly LEP students" (Boals, 2001, p.1). According to one of the organizers, who was also a district teacher, supporters wanted a two-way charter school because: "The answer needed to come from the community, because we didn't feel there was much of an urgency within the school district to come up with an innovative solution" (as quoted in Erickson, 2004). In their formal presentation and public comments to the school board in 2004, supporters championed the cultural inclusion, inter-cultural understanding, and opportunities to develop bilingualism in a two-way program, and called it a model good for all children.

However, the proposed two-way charter school appeared to present more of a threat to the Lake City administration. Lake City administrators responded more like the administrators cited in the literature on new immigrant destinations who worked to maintain control over district decisions (Brunn, 2002; Hamann, 2002). In fact, the charter school organizers presented it as a challenge to district authority through their pursuit of a separate governance arrangement from the school district and their critique that there was not "much of an urgency within the school district to come up with an innovative solution." In an interview, a school board member at the time characterized the school board and administrative opposition to the proposal at the time as about losing control over district schools, explaining: "The reluctance or the hypocrisy of: 'We're progressive, we want change, but we only want change that we can control or change that we create, not that somebody from without—outside of the system changes.'" For their part, district administrators at the time explained their opposition to the two-way charter school as based in opposition to charters school of any sort and a sense that they undermined districtwide equity by creating a school that was different from the others in the district. A district administrator who worked with the ELL program explained in an interview:

[T]he school district really wasn't in favor of a charter school. We could do dual immersion, but [the superintendent] didn't want it as a charter... In dual immersion in that it offered... Spanish instruction for English speakers, which, in the research, is the best model that you can have. But I was like: "I am worried about the kids who currently don't have books, and the library is all in English" ... And I couldn't even get my brain wrapped around going to the next level for one particular group of students when like the equity across the district in all the systems we had so much work to just getting—leveling the playing field...

For his part, the superintendent at the time did not object to the concept of bilingualism. He opposed charter schools, raised concerns about program feasibility, and objected to the costs and equity implications of creating a school with benefits that other schools did not have. In my interview five years later, he explained his equity concerns as:

...philosophically and morally if I'm, if I'm really providing this bilingual education, because this is what these kids need, well these kids need it too. And, and Lake City's... underlying philosophy is inclusion. And everybody being able to go to their neighborhood school with their neighborhood friends.

This equity philosophy, evident in both of these accounts from district administrators reinforced a view that the schools should be uniform and implicitly that they should be

district schools—controlled by the school district and not independently governed. However, whether defending against the loss of control over a school in the district or upholding the equity principles on which the superintendent believed the district was based, or some combination of both, the superintendent’s main objection appeared to be that the school undermined the interests of the school district organization. He did not support the plan.

Opposition from district administrators and concerns among school board members in Lake City reveals the importance of Latino political representation and the existence of an organized, Latino community in establishing the two-way bilingual program there. Unlike many new immigrant destinations, Lake City had an organized set of Latino-serving community organizations; leaders of these organizations worked with charter school organizers and one Latino school board member to convince school board members to support the proposal. The one Latino member of the school board recalled in an interview his efforts to lobby school board colleagues, saying:

[Y]es, we do have a great educational institution, but we’re not doing well with our kids of color and our poor kids... Let’s see—let’s make a go of this. Let’s see if this helps to narrow the gap, the educational achievement gap. Let’s see if this narrows the social gap.

One white school board member at the time recalled in an interview: “[The Latino school board member at the time] was very supportive, of course, I think once [he] and [a few others] endorsed it, I was... I could count to four because four votes is what you need out of seven, I think people got behind it.” Ultimately, through compromise on issues of where to locate the school that would address costs and equity concerns of other board members, the school board voted unanimously in favor of establishing the charter school in 2004.

In both cities, central office administrators appeared to understand these two-way program proposals, at least in part, through the lens of their organizational interests and this influenced their support of the programs. To the degree that the two-way program was perceived to be attractive to white, native-English speaking parents in River City, it was embraced. To the degree that district administrators interpreted a charter school with separate governance as undermining their goals, equity-oriented or otherwise, these efforts were met with resistance. This was in spite of the fact that two-way programs were seen by some teachers and Latino families as essential to providing a better education for Spanish-speaking students.

These efforts created the conditions of possibility for leaders’ language policymaking in each district at the end of the decade. The two-way bilingual programs in each district eventually garnered support and interest from district administrators for language policies that involved additive bilingualism. By the middle of the decade both school districts had experimental two-way bilingual programs established. These programs taught native-English speaking students and native-Spanish speaking students together in the same classrooms. Both had developed good reputations based on their test scores and popularity—both had attracted the interest of native-English speaking families, according to district administrators. In River City, district administrators were engaged in looking at their student achievement data as part of larger district initiative to address their achievement gaps. River City district administrators pointed to the test scores of the two-way program there, noting they were higher than the scores of students

in the district’s transitional bilingual program. The River City ELL director explained in an interview that they started to look at their standardized test score data and saw: “Our two-way kids were closing the gap, and our transitional kids, the gap was getting wider... it was obvious that the data, something had to done. We had to do some type of change.” Table 11 summarizes the language policy changes and lead actors in those policy changes in River City from 2000-2009.

Table 11. River City Language Policymaking for Spanish-Speaking ELLs

Policy Decision	Description	Lead Actors
Silver Stream two-way bilingual program (2001)	Decision to establish a two-way bilingual program within a single district elementary school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Curriculum • School board members • Silver Stream principal and staff • Superintendent
Additive bilingual (one-way and two-way programs) (2008)	Decision to change the districtwide model of language instruction from a transitional bilingual program for Spanish-speaking ELLs to an additive model, either a one-way or two-way bilingual program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Research • Director of ELL programs • Principals and staff; ESL and bilingual teachers • School board members

Note. Decisions are arrayed in chronological order from earliest to most recent. Actors are listed in alphabetical order by title with the group initiating the enacted policy indicated by bold typeface.

In Lake City, district leaders noticed the waiting lists at the two-way charter school and heard from parents whose children were not admitted to the charter school about their desires for a “foreign” language program for their elementary school students. Several central office administrators involved in the district’s subsequent plan to expand two-way bilingual programs to district schools mentioned these waiting lists as a reason for considering creating additional two-way programs. This was in the context, described in the previous chapter, where Lake City district leaders were concerned about middle-class parents, some of whom felt like their children were not being well served in the district, transferring out of district schools. As one administrator in the ELL department said about the district move to a two-way bilingual model:

[The superintendent] really felt like there was—we, probably for a couple of reasons the fact that [the two-way charter school] had this crazy waiting list, and you had to be on the north side of town, and there were a lot of parents that wanted foreign language instruction for their English speaking kids that he had said, “We’re gonna make the commitment to roll out dual-immersion on a larger scale across the district...”

In the context of broad concerns about academic achievement in their school districts and the transfer of students to neighboring suburban districts or private schools, these were signs that district leaders paid attention to. Tables 12 summarizes the language policy changes and lead actors in those policy changes in the Lake City School Districts from 2000-2009.

Table 12. Lake City Language Policymaking for Spanish-Speaking ELLs

Policy Decision	Description	Lead Actors
Transitional bilingual (2001)	Decision to change from an English as a Second Language model of instruction for Spanish-speaking ELLs to a transitional bilingual model where students were taught Spanish literacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of ELL programs • State coordinator for Bilingual/ESL programs • School board members • Superintendent
Two-way bilingual charter school (2004)	Decision to establish an elementary two-way bilingual charter school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way bilingual charter school founders • School board members • Superintendent
Two-way bilingual (2009)	Decision to shift the school district’s transitional bilingual programs to two-way bilingual programs at the elementary school level and expand two-way programming to district middle schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Superintendents • Director of ELL Programs • Latino community leaders • Principal, teachers, and parents at Placid Pond Elementary • School board members • Superintendent • Title I Coordinator • Two-way charter school leaders

Note. Decisions are arrayed in chronological order from earliest to most recent. Actors are listed in alphabetical order by title with the group initiating the enacted policy indicated by bold typeface.

In short, in both districts, earlier organizing by local two-way program organizers created the conditions of possibility for district administrators’ later work to expand additive bilingual programs. These earlier efforts achieved the examples of program success that district leaders would draw on as they moved their districtwide transitional bilingual programs to additive models of bilingualism. These findings point to the importance of earlier politics in shaping the policymaking work of school district administrators.

Assembling Policy

During the time covered by my study, administrators built on these early experiments to establish districtwide policies that promoted bilingual education. They did so through their efforts to do what I call *assembling policy*. Assembling policy—or the work of bringing together the necessary actors and policy directions for policy to be enacted—came about largely through district administrators’ framing and interaction with others. In assembling policy, central office administrators influenced who participated in policy processes and what policy problems and policy alternatives were in play. As district administrators assembled coalitions of actors and assembled policy directions, some of their key decisions reflected their own interests in minimizing conflict and responding to vocal constituents as well as their concerns about broader school district issues. I examine how district administrators’ assembly of actors and policy directions led to districtwide policies that embraced developing students’ bilingualism and teaching students in both Spanish and English.

Assembling actors. First, central office administrators assembled key stakeholders in policy discussion. School district policymaking has tended to include the voices of those who have greater political and economic power, including teachers unions, urban elites, and middle-class parents (Boyd, 1976; Henig, et al., 1999; Noguera, 2003; C. N. Stone, 1998; Tyack, 1974; Wells & Serna, 1996) while people of color and families living in poverty (Lipman, 1998; Noguera, 2003, 2004; C. N. Stone, 1998a; Wells & Serna, 1996) and immigrants (Hamann, 2003; Dorner, 2010) have had fewer resources and opportunities to influence educational policy. Towards the end of the decade, as the academic achievement of English language learners continued to lag, school district leaders in both districts assembled a range of stakeholders for discussion of policy ideas. In so doing, they opened up policymaking to some actors and some problem or solution frames and not others. District administrators' decisions about whom to assemble in policymaking were motivated, in part, by their interests in minimizing conflict and responding to vocal constituents.

District leaders reached out to groups and created opportunities for those outside of the district office to be involved in policy discussion. Central office administrators had some measure of choice about whom to involve in the conversations they organized as they opened up participation in policymaking, involving others beyond their own offices. This happened in more formal and less formal ways and administrators did not assemble the same groups of actors across the two districts. In River City in 2007, central office administrators wanted to address the poor educational outcomes of Spanish-speaking ELLs. They convened an official taskforce to recommend changes to the district's elementary Spanish bilingual program. Central office administrators selected taskforce participants and they privileged professional educators' participation, including only central office administrators and school site staff on the Elementary Spanish Bilingual Task Force. Taskforce members included: the ELL director, four elementary school principals, six bilingual teachers, one classroom teacher, one ESL teacher, one ESL/Bilingual program support teacher, one literacy coach, and the director of the district's evaluation office (Elementary Bilingual Task Force Report, 2008). Although at least one of the taskforce members was an immigrant and a few were Latina, new immigrant families and Latino community leaders were not a part of the River City conversation.

In River City, the decisions about who to include were, in part, political calculation about whom they needed to convince and who could create opposition. The district administrator in charge of forming the taskforce was concerned about minimizing conflict with school site staff and generating agreement from principals and teachers about bilingual policy. The English Only ordinance in the county in which River City was located had been enacted only five years earlier, and given this "conservative" political climate, one district administrator explained the decision to convene a bilingual taskforce as a response to wondering: "'What can we do?' 'What, what type of programming is going to work in our community?' because River City, quite honestly, is conservative." This influenced decisions about whom to include on the bilingual taskforce:

we strategically picked teachers, who, um, we knew would, um, it's like you know, keep your enemies closer. But, but we felt that we had to have a very diverse um, grouping working on this task force. So, um, for example the, the

classroom teacher... representative was from a school where, um, the principal was not very supportive of bilingual education. In fact the whole staff was not very supportive.

This district administrator chose to include the voices of conservative River City staff members, who opposed the bilingual education policies she favored, because she felt she needed agreement for the approach the district would adopt at the school sites, thus she brought forward those voices. Among the professionals district leaders assembled, she also included strong proponents of additive bilingual programs, including several Latina staff members and six members of the bilingual program staff.

In contrast, in Lake City in 2009 as district leaders were considering the concern of Latino community leaders over the achievement of Latino students in the district, interactions with a variety of district staff and community members were ongoing but of a more back-and-forth nature; however, the concern with minimizing conflict and responding to vocal constituents was also present as district administrators, largely at the executive level rather than those in the ELL office, assembled actors for policymaking. In assembly actors for policymaking, district administrators solicited input or received it from different groups, including: Latino community leaders, two-way charter school leaders, principals at schools with large numbers of Spanish-speaking English language learners, and teachers and parents at the first proposed school site for the program. Later, they returned to some of these stakeholders to get feedback on policy ideas. In this way, as in River City, they solicited participation from particular groups and limited participation from other groups.

In Lake City, district administrators tended to involve actors whom they also described as politically active or demanding something from the district. School district administrators' engagement of these constituent groups was, in part, an effort to address various conflicts and concerns that were rising up in the school district. As one district administrator said of the Latino community leaders who were active in demanding changes to the ELL program: "Latino Service Council, Latino Families Center... Our division has a lot of contact with these groups and [the superintendent does, too]. And they communicated and were outspoken that something needs to change." Likewise, a different district administrator said: "Lake City has a lot of white, affluent families who want foreign language instruction for their students. And guess what? That's where the money and power currently reside." This administrator described a push from "a lot of parents that wanted foreign language instruction for their English-speaking kids." A member of the district administration explained how parents from one elementary school, Prairie Pond, eventually were involved in policymaking as they got "very active" about concerns about the direction their school was heading and began to demand changes at their school. Through this type of back and forth, Lake City district administrators involved a number of different actors from the community in district policymaking. While scholarship on urban education politics has emphasized the exclusion of minority voices from school district policymaking, Lake City administrators engaged Latino community leaders, mostly middle-class professionals, according to two sources, who were politically active in Latino community organizations. This involvement was, at least in part, due to the pressure and demands that these leaders were putting on district administrators. While it may not seem noteworthy to involve Latino community leaders in a decision about the language instruction of native-Spanish speaking youth, it is

notable. Latino community leaders were not involved in these language policy decisions in River City.

While River City and Lake City district administrators did have some measure of choice in whom they assembled for policymaking, their decisions about whom to include were in part spurred by a desire to minimize potential conflicts from school site staff in River City or address political pressures from vocal constituents in Lake City. In both districts, administrators tried to assemble actors they anticipated would have a stake in the issue and who would be influential if they rejected policy decisions. Thus, their choices were motivated, in part, by anticipatory moves to develop language policy without too much internal or external political upheaval. This tended to reinforce the involvement of those who were already influential. On the whole, decisions about inclusion in policymaking were shaped by the administrators' sense of who was important and influential, and while this included Latino community leaders and teachers, it did not include immigrant families themselves.

Central office administrators' work assembling actors for agreement on policy directions influenced who was involved in shaping language instruction policy. This assembly of actors is important because different actors tend to bring different ideas about solutions with them. In this way, they shaped which voices had weight in the policymaking process. As D. Stone (2002) argues, the ability to influence problem definition, policy agendas, and policy alternatives is predicated on access to the conversations and processes through which those are determined. In this study, it also mattered for how democratic and inclusive their processes were, potentially for how much agreement they would get from those who would be expected to implement, and for the particular language models adopted. As attention to problem framing in the next section shows, in influencing who was involved in policymaking and in bringing in actors from outside the central office, central office administrators also played a role in which policy problems and solutions were voiced in policymaking and which were not.

Assembling agreement on a policy direction. Among disparate stakeholders, central office administrators worked to assemble agreement on a policy direction that would bring more additive models of bilingualism to their school districts. Through the assembly of problem frames and solution frames, these district leaders helped generate agreement on a need for a change in the status quo and agreement on a particular policy direction. District administrators assembled problem and solution frames in different ways in the two districts: bringing out others' frames in River City and braiding together frames in Lake City. In doing so, district leaders put forward their own understandings of the problems and solutions they were dealing with and elevated their own concerns. In River City the concerns expressed in language policymaking were about low student achievement of ELLs. In Lake City the concern fore-fronted in language policymaking was about the exit of students from the school district. But district administrators also drew on the problem and solution frames of others, pulling on the ideas of some actors and not others in the process. Thus, district administrators' work to assemble policy directions influenced the shape language policy eventually took in each district.

In River City, school district administrators were successful in generating agreement on the need for an additive bilingual program by using student achievement data to frame the dominant model of transitional bilingual education in the district as a problem and using research and student achievement data to frame an additive bilingual

program as the appropriate solution. As the district ELL director convened a taskforce on improving the elementary Spanish bilingual program, she presented data and research in which these frames were implicit. The director asked taskforce members to examine district ELLs' standardized test data. The data showed ELLs achieving at higher levels in the district's two-way bilingual program than in the transitional bilingual model used in most of the rest of the district or a similar model they called "in class" that was used in some schools. This established a problem frame that Spanish-speaking English language learners were not achieving as well as they could be. As one taskforce member recalled of taskforce discussions: "Transitional, we knew it had to go away and the other one, the 'in class' [model], we knew it wasn't the best based on research and based on our data." Then the director of ELL programs provided academic research on different models of bilingual education. In putting forward this research, the district ELL director elevated the frame that additive bilingualism would promote ELLs' academic achievement over frames about needing to know English as a priority. The ELL director explained the development of the conversation among taskforce members, some of whom were saying:

"You know this is English, that's what we should be judging on, we should have just, English should be our goal," and then after reading some articles and just having a discussion, it was, some of the members had never, you know, didn't know about additive and subtractive [bilingual models]... So it was just I think through a lot of discussion that it was like, "Well, what the research is showing us is that adding this is actually better and developing that Spanish and not dropping the Spanish, and that's what's best in the long run."

By presenting this research, the ELL director put forward a frame about bilingual instruction helping students to learn academic content and this eventually resonated with the classroom teacher resistant to bilingual education; she came to consider bilingual education as a way to help students learn math rather than just to learn English. The ELL director recalled her saying: "Well, yea, I do feel bad in the afternoon... I can't communicate with these students and I know they're missing things." Through this problem and solution framing, the ELL director, and others who subsequently took up those frames, succeeded in generating agreement from this participant, and the group as a whole, that the district should adopt an additive bilingual language policy.

While the ELL director was influential in assembling agreement on additive bilingual policy, she did not control the decision. Elementary school principals on the taskforce framed one-way bilingual programs as better than two-way programs because they would be logistically easier to implement given the number of ELL students relative to native-English speaking students in their schools. One taskforce member recalled a principal arguing: "[W]e do not have enough English students for a two-way program." Other principals raised concerns that the two-way program would mean transferring monolingual school site staff, which they did not want to do. Support gathered for the one-way program, but questions also arose about the potential for segregation under a one-way model. A principal on the taskforce recalled people asking: "[H]ow do you bring English speaking peers into another program so that it's more effective?" And others were saying: "We've worked so hard to build a diverse community that celebrates its diversity, and has that mutual respect, and then now we're going to take kids and we're going to track them based on the language in their home." Taskforce members agreed that a one-way model should be integrated for some classes. The final recommendation to

the school board, which all taskforce members agreed to, drew heavily on the ELL director's frames, as well as some frames offered by other taskforce members. Strongly reflecting the problem frames that the ELL director put forward, the task force report stated:

The gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs increase as we look across the grades. The gaps for ELLs are almost four times as large in 10th grade as they are in 4th grade. The elementary Spanish bilingual task force is recommending changes to the current elementary bilingual program based on research and [state] data of River City Spanish-speaking ELLs in the TBE [Transitional Bilingual Education] and two-way bilingual programs" (Elementary Spanish Bilingual Task Force, 2008).

Likewise, the recommendation drew on the ELL director's framings of additive programs as developing academic achievement over time. The report recommended:

the eventual elimination of the TBE program and for the District to expand the two-way bilingual program to the extent possible. If there are not enough English-speakers to fill the classrooms, an integrated one-way classroom would be the preferred model... The two-way and integrated one-way programs provide Spanish-speaking ELLs with native language support through 5th grade. This support will eventually lead to higher test scores in English and the eventual closing of the achievement gap.

Thus, the ELL director's solution frames, put forward through the presentation of research, as well as others' concerns about integration and the feasibility of the two-way model, all shaped the final policy. The school board voted unanimously in favor of the change.

By elevating problem and solutions frames about ELLs' long-term academic achievement, as measured by standardized test, the ELL director drew attention to problem frames and solution frames that mirrored administrators' concerns about raising students' test scores on the state standardized tests. While district administrators, and particularly the ELL director, expressed strong concern for the education and well being of the district's English language learners, the focus on increasing academic achievement and specifically increasing ELLs' test scores was also part of a desire to address low levels of academic achievement in the district. As part of this concern, River City district administrators were engaged in examining their student achievement data. The ELL director explained in an interview:

Our district looks at data... And so when I'd be at district level meetings and we'd be, and it wasn't just ELLs, you know, we'd look at kids in poverty, we'd look at males versus females... and it was just, it was in your face that the ELLs, we were not closing the gap.

It was from these data activities that the bilingual taskforce developed. Furthermore, two district leaders indicated that ELLs and Hispanic students, many of whom were native-Spanish speakers, were among the subgroups for whom some district schools were failing to reach goals under No Child Left Behind. Thus, in their framing and success in moving forward additive bilingual programs in River City, district administrators elevated a concern with ELLs' academic achievement over other district actors' concerns about teaching students English quickly. In so doing, they also moved forward a broader concern of their own addressing the low levels of student achievement in the district.

In Lake City, district administrators also framed additive bilingual programs in ways that generated agreement for these programs and in ways that addressed their own concerns; however, both the concerns and the ways that they assembled agreement on bilingual policy differed from River City. Lake City district administrators braided together the solution frames of multiple actors to gain agreement on a two-way bilingual program. This is what frame analysts also call *frame extension* (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow, Rochfort, Worden & Benford, 1986) or the alignment of one set of interests with those of a potential group of adherents' issues, values and interests. According to a member of the ELL department, Latino community leaders, concerned about the achievement of Latino students in the district, framed a need for a supportive, non-isolating bilingual program—a program that would help students develop Spanish as well as English. One Latino community leader said that members of his group told district administrators: “We need a better program... It’s not working... there’s still a lot of our kids failing. What are you going to do about it?” He recalled his group advocating for “the best practice to help students succeed academically in the school district.” This resonated with the superintendent who began committing to an additive bilingual program.

According to central office administrators involved in language education, parents of elementary school students that could not gain admittance to the two-way bilingual charter school were also advocating for an elementary-level “world language” option for their children. As one central office staff member explained: “Families that aren’t in the dual-immersion programming at our elementary schools, they’re wondering what are their world language options going to be for their students as well.” Thus, these families offered a frame that there should be more world language programs in the elementary schools. Neither of these were frames that central office administrators were previously promoting; however, the superintendent and district administrators brought these solution frames together suggesting that the district develop two-way bilingual programs. Thus, district leaders brought forward the concerns of native-English speaking families in addressing concerns about the education of native-Spanish speakers. The idea of a K-12 two-way program was born. At this time the school district began planning for a district-run middle school two-way program to meet the needs of students graduating from the two-way bilingual elementary charter school and began talking to principals at schools with larger numbers of bilingual classrooms about the possibility of starting two-way programs. This was the assembling of stakeholders that was noted earlier. As the two-way idea developed, district administrators reconnected with Latino community leaders to get their feedback on the idea and turned to discuss the idea with school site staff. One Latino community leader explained his group’s support:

DLI [dual-language immersion] came to the forefront. So it was a matter of saying, “OK, a bilingual late exit program could work, had been demonstrated to work academically. But why stop there?”

The two-way bilingual programs neatly addressed the concerns from Latino community leaders about Latino student achievement and the pressure that the school district administrators were feeling to address native-English speaking families who wanted additional programs for their children. These programs provided the possibility of expanding educational opportunities for both groups. Meanwhile, at one elementary school where parents had lots of concerns about overcrowding and general dissatisfaction

about the program, Prairie Pond Elementary School, some families began calling for an innovative program. As one district administrator said: “So the community at Prairie Pond gets very active: ‘Something needs to happen here’ or they’re going to start moving out of the school district.” This was a separate problem that district administrators were dealing with at the time. Parents raised various suggestions for a specialty school, including a science focus and a two-way bilingual program. District leaders moved forward the possibility of a two-way bilingual program and raised the idea with Prairie Pond staff. Thus, these district leaders moved forward a concern with the education of native-Spanish speakers in addressing the enrollment concerns of some families at Prairie Pond who wanted an innovative program at their school. To the school board, central office administrators framed a K-12 two-way bilingual program as providing a middle school option for children in the elementary charter school to continue their studies in a district school as well as an attractor program for addressing concerns about enrollment out of Prairie Pond Elementary School. As one executive level administrator explained to the school board in 2009 the idea for the K-12 dual-language program came about:

with the onset of middle school [for the two-way elementary charter school children] coming on our heels in the next year or two, and how we are going to address the continuing of both languages for those children. At the same time we were having conversations with Prairie Pond families... At that last meeting we were at, parents were talking about the fear that was in that community about losing families to other areas... So the suggestion was, at that time, to look at alternative programs as an attractor.

In this back and forth manner, Lake City district leaders braided together others’ solution frames, assembling a set of solution frames that addressed the ideas of several different groups and gathered support from different constituencies for a two-way bilingual program. Several months later, having gained school board support for the Prairie Pond program and tentative agreement on a district middle school program for the two-way charter school students, the administration presented a two-way bilingual expansion plan to establish two-way bilingual programs in all the attendance areas of the school district. The board unanimously approved that plan for K-8.

In assembling agreement on a two-way bilingual program, Lake City district administrators also elevated a number of problem and solution frames that mirrored their concerns about attracting and retaining middle-class families to their district. As a few Lake City administrators noted, the loss of students to neighboring school districts, as well as the state aid that would entail, could undermine school district finances; they saw retaining these families as central to maintaining the school district. As one district administrator said:

Some may view it [two-way bilingual programs] as an attractor for white families to stay in public schools, which I think is some element—there’s a huge element of truth in that. It’s not just about creating bilingual, bicultural kids. It’s keeping Lake City from being a white flight community.

Indeed, school district administrators, particularly the executive level administrators, put forward frames about the two-way program as a response to parental demands for greater diversity in programming and as an attractor to Placid Pond and to the school district, in general. While district administrators did bring in the frames of Latino student advocates about the need for a better program for ELLs, they infrequently framed the two-way

program as beneficial in that regard. The instance, noted above, when the assistant superintendent first formally presented the idea of a district expansion of two-way bilingual programs to the school board in 2009 illustrates this. The administrator did not mention addressing the academic achievement or needs of English language learners at all in presenting the reasons for the program. Thus, in their framing, district leaders brought the concerns of native-English speaking parents and their concerns about maintaining the school district into the consideration of a language program for native-Spanish speakers. While district leaders worked to expand the two-way bilingual program across the district, and thus to expand opportunities for students across the school district, they did so in ways that brought forward the concerns of more privileged actors in the district as well as their own concerns. In this way they shaped what bilingual programs would look like.

In sum, by assembling frames, district administrators in both cities helped generate agreement on policy directions that brought a greater focus on developing students' bilingualism in their districts. River City and Lake City central office administrators played a key role in moving forward bilingual programs that research suggests provide better educational experiences and outcomes for English language learners. In the case of the two-way program in Lake City, their efforts expanded opportunities for native-English speaking students, as well. While district leaders worked to expand the bilingual programs across the district, they did so in ways that brought forward the concerns of various actors in their districts, including themselves. In assembling agreement on a problem and policy direction, central office administrators brought forward solutions and programs that were not previously being attended to, this provided the opportunity for Latino community leaders to put forward the problems and concerns they had as well as native-English speaking parents or school site staff to be heard. District administrators elevated frames that reflected their concerns, whether these were concerns about the academic achievement of ELLs as in River City or about attracting and retaining students to the district as in Lake City. This not to say that district administrators were not truly concerned about the educations of Spanish-speaking ELLs, but in the frames that they elevated and the policy directions they put forward, their efforts coincided neatly with their own broader concerns, as well. In these ways district administrators shaped what bilingual programs would look like and whose proposals and concerns were being considered and were successful in establishing official, districtwide policies of additive bilingualism in their districts.

Conclusions

Existing studies of education in new immigrant destinations reveal the opposition to and limitations on bilingual language policies based on the nativism and English Only sentiments from community actors and school staff and the threat that externally developed programs seemed to present to district authority. This chapter challenges the image of conflict around and resistance to bilingual education policy. In River and Lake cities, bilingual education policy was a case of policymaking where there was little community opposition to the policy. Prior political activism from local community actors and school district administrators' interests and policymaking efforts contributed to moving school district language policy towards greater bilingualism. I provide evidence that community actors organizing created the conditions of possibility for further

expansion of additive bilingual programs in both cities. Furthermore, while there was evidence of district administrators' self-interest in maintaining their "decision making prerogatives" (Hamann, 2002, p.68), overall, bilingual education policy tended to complement rather than compete with district administrators' interests and broader concerns about their school districts. This was the case in both districts even though River City was located in a community marked by anti-immigrant sentiment and English Only laws. This chapter suggests that local political organizing and school district policymaking can lead to policy change that addresses the needs of new immigrant populations and expanding opportunities for a broader group of district students, as well.

In highlighting the politics that made policy change possible, this chapter also contributes to our understanding of school district instructional policymaking. Existing research on school district instructional decision-making has focused on district leaders' cognition and resources, but has had less to say about the role district administrators' *interests* might play in their decision making. This chapter suggests that district leaders' interests in minimizing conflict by including or responding to vocal constituencies are also an important factor in instructional decision-making and in promoting policy change. Furthermore, some scholars have pointed to the internal politics or dynamics of district decision-making (e.g. Coburn et al., 2009), but the literature has paid little attention to the broader social and political dynamics of school district policymaking and how these might enable policy change (Marsh, 2002). This chapter illuminates the role that prior politics played in creating the conditions of possibility for district administrators' assembly of policy, as well as illuminating the role that broader educational politics, such as concerns about parents exiting the district, played in district administrators' decisions about which actors to include in policymaking and the policy directions they supported.

Finally, close attention to the policymaking process reveals the work that district administrators did to assemble policy in their districts. As suggested by urban regime analysis and civic capacity work, building coalitions and agreement on policy problems or agendas was important to policymaking in each school district. District administrators brought together actors from different viewpoints in formal policymaking forums or developed lines of communication through back-and-forth conversations with stakeholders. District administrators also framed problems and policy directions by bringing forward others' frames and bridging frames from different actors in ways that brought in the voices and policy preferences of other actors and also generated agreement on additive bilingual programs. These findings extend work on civic capacity and urban regime analysis by illuminating in greater detail how coalitions came together and the role of framing in generating agreement on policy directions. Furthermore, these findings highlight the key role that school district administrators played in bringing together actors and policy meanings.

This chapter suggests the possibilities for policy change in new immigrant destinations. It highlights the roles that both local community actors, through political pressure on school districts, and school district policymakers, through efforts to assemble policy, have to play in establishing districtwide policies, like bilingual education, that are responsive to demographic change.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

Today one school district reform-wind blows in the direction of dismantling school districts or replacing district administrators with new leadership, often from outside education. These reforms are often undertaken under the argument that school district bureaucracies are resistant to change. School district responsibilities are being contracted out to entities like charter schools that are believed to foster innovation. Individuals from outside education are being chosen to lead large school districts. Experiments in mayoral control of the schools are being tried in large cities like New York, Boston and Chicago. These reforms reflect a skepticism of traditional school district leaders' willingness and ability to reform that is evident not only among the elites of major cities who are supporting or promoting these reforms but also among more diverse and grassroots community groups (Shipps, 2006; Clarke, et al., 2006).

A different breeze of the current school district reform-wind provides a more optimistic assessment about the role that district administrators might play in urban school reform. Reformers from within education have been trumpeting the potential of school district leaders to spur district-wide improvement by establishing various policies such as instructional support for teachers and principals or use of data for decision-making (Elmore & Burney, 1997). Research suggests that this work has had some success in changing school systems (e.g. Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2003) and reflects quite a bit of belief in the promise of school district administrators to provide systemic, equitable and sustained reform (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Rorrer, Skrla & Scheurich, 2008).

Whether such optimism or such skepticism is warranted, these reform movements suggest that there is good reason to investigate district administrators' policymaking efforts. In urban districts where policymaking has the potential to improve the lives of children most disadvantaged in American school systems, school district administrators' policymaking is especially important. This dissertation examines how district administrators in two school districts with changing demographics made sense of, and negotiated the possibilities and limitations of the policy landscape to address the needs of the children in their districts. As such, it provides much needed insight into the role that school district administrators play in school reform.

This study provides evidence that district leaders are oriented towards making changes to their districts to be responsive to and expand opportunities for the students in their districts, but that their efforts are limited by the threat of middle class exit from the district, supported by earlier political organizing of other community actors, and shaped by their own interests and concerns about their school systems. Viewing the demographic changes in their cities within a broader frame of increases in the numbers students of color, students living in poverty and English language learners, school district administrators identified problems with how their districts were addressing the academic achievement of these groups and with the opposition of middle-class parents to district policies linked to this growing racial- and socioeconomic- diversity. But, middle-class parents' threat of exiting the districts confined administrators' efforts to address the needs they identified related to new students. One way in which district leaders worked within

these limitations by adding on programs to the existing structure of schooling rather than restructuring the way schooling is organized to meet the needs of new entrants. Not all of district administrators' policymaking in response to new students met with opposition. Building on the prior organizing of some community members, district administrators were able to generate agreement from various stakeholders on bilingual education policy. In doing so district administrators also elevated their own concerns and their own interests in policymaking. These findings were consistent across the cases despite differing political orientations and levels of acceptance of the arrival of immigrants in the two cities.

New Ways of Seeing New Immigrant Destinations

One seminal article in the nascent research literature on immigration to new destinations in the United States asks: "Immigrants' geographic dispersion raises the question, how well does the academic literature and current research capture the experiences of immigrants outside their traditional areas of concentration?" (Marrow, 2005). The question itself implies the not unreasonable assumption in the literature that "immigrant-ness" somehow matters to understanding what is happening in these locations. My study suggests a slightly different question may need to be asked: "How well does the academic literature and current research frame what is happening in these locations?"

My findings challenge the notion that policymaking in these two "new immigrant destinations" was straightforwardly about immigrant-ness at all. First, school district administrators' views of the demographic changes in their districts and the challenges of those changes were not predominantly about immigrants. School district administrators perceived the arrival of immigrants within broader frames of change in ethnic-racial composition and increase in poverty. Likewise, the problems that seemed most salient to school district policymakers were also constructed within those frames. For example, the problem of educational outcomes was primarily understood as a problem of low achievement for students living in poverty or students of color. This problem frame included concern over the achievement of students in immigrant families but it is not fully captured by that concern. This suggests that research focusing on educators' or other local actors' views of immigration or immigrants may miss a larger picture of how these actors are making sense of the changes going on around them and some of the issues that rise up around immigration as they are understood and experienced by policymakers on-the-ground. In doing so, scholars may miss some of the complexity of involved in the arrival of immigrants to new destinations.

Second, in language policymaking, typically an issue associated with immigrants and responses to immigration, there was not a simple connection between issues of immigration and district policymaking. Unlike accounts of resistance to bilingual education policy as based in anti-immigrant and nativist sentiment in new immigrant destinations literature (Hamann, 2002, 2003; Beck & Alleksaht-Snyder, 2002), bilingual education policymaking did not appear to be greatly affected by the broader politics of immigration in my case study cities. This contributes to the new immigrant destinations literature by offering evidence that language policy is not always a contentious issue even when there is local anti-immigrant or English-Only sentiment. Furthermore, in this study, bilingual education policy appeared to complement district administrators' broader

concerns about attracting families to their districts and be a motivation for language policymaking not related to immigration. That factors besides sentiment about immigrants or immigrants' need for language instruction influence language policy is not a new finding; historical studies of the federal bilingual education policymaking, for example, point to the role that concerns about international relations played in that development (Blanton, 2004; Skrentny, 2002). But, the point bears emphasizing here because it further suggests the intersection of dynamics that involve immigrants with those of broader issues and dynamics of demographic change in school districts in new immigrant destinations.

Third, I provide evidence that policies that would mix students across socio-economic and ethnic-racial lines were extremely contentious district responses to demographic change in the two new immigrant destinations in this study. However, school district administrators and other involved actors tended to associate these policies with issues of race-ethnicity, class and the exit of families from the school districts rather than immigration *per se*. This work points to the ways in which district policies, even though that were not explicitly about immigrants, were intertwined with immigrant arrival. One implication is that future research on new immigrant destinations should examine a wide array of policies to understand the politics and policymaking in locations with new immigrant populations, rather than looking only at responses framed by researchers or their subjects as related to immigration.

In many ways, new immigrant destinations seem to provide a unique context for school district policymaking, but one implication of the findings in this study is that a focus on "immigrants" may not be the only valuable lens for understanding "new immigrant destinations" and the educational policymaking taking place. Indeed, the arrival of immigrants in this study overlapped with the growth of African American populations and an enormous economic rollercoaster in the late 1990s through the late 2000s. Furthermore, there are some indications that social, economic and political factors, particularly the decline in economic opportunities in some major cities, familial networks, and the relatively favorable quality-of-life/cost-of-living in these two cities, may have contributed to the broad demographic changes in them (Ivey, 2010), and in other locations where immigrants have been settling in greater numbers (Marrow, 2005; Singer, 2004). Future research must attend to how the arrival of immigrant families intersects with and is linked to other groups' internal migration and larger economic trends affecting new immigrant destinations and then examine how these intertwined factors impact these contexts and the dynamics within them.

Political Pressures and Strategies of Compromise in District Policymaking

Research addressing school district policymaking has tended to provide two contrasting views of school district administrators. Urban politics scholars emphasize the political and economic factors shaping policymaking, particularly contentious policy issues, and they accord a more limited role to school district administrators (Boyd, 1976; Peterson, 1981; C. N. Stone, 1998a). District administrators are portrayed as largely reflecting the desires of dominant community actors or as less consequential than a whole host of community actors and largely motivated to conserve their own jobs or deflect change. In contrast, recent research on school district policymaking has emphasized district administrators' agency in policymaking, implicitly characterizing district

administrators as largely concerned about doing what is right for kids (Chrispeels, 1997; Kirp & Driver, 1995; Spillane, 1998). In this perspective, there is little attention to the role of local communities in supporting or impeding policymaking (Marsh, 2002) or administrators' self interests in these policymaking processes. This study contributes to our understanding of school district policymaking by highlighting school district administrators' active policymaking work, by pointing to the role of school district administrators' interests in shaping policymaking, and by demonstrating the interaction between local community political pressure and school district administrators in policymaking.

First, this study further contributes to research on school district policymaking by highlighting district administrators' active role in policymaking. Rather than capitulation to local actors' wishes or acting conservatively to limit change, this study provides evidence that district administrators respond to community pressures with creative strategies for compromise and identifies two of these strategies: structural elaboration and assembling policy. Through these strategies district administrators appease community actors, attempt to meet the needs of diverse students in their districts, and also address their own interests and policymaking concerns. Importantly, through structural elaboration, district administrators were able to expand opportunities for students of color and students living in poverty in the face of middle class opposition to redistributive policy. Thus, these findings also extend work in urban education politics that highlights the limits on district policymaking (Peterson, 1981) by illuminating how district leaders respond in the face of these limits.

Furthermore, the analysis across this dissertation underscores the idea that district administrators are not mere reflections of the communities in which they work. While one line of thinking in the urban education politics literature holds that school district administrators, as members of the dominant community, often make policies that reflect or mirror the biases of the dominant community (Tyack, 1974), I provide evidence that district leaders did not entirely reflect the dominant actors in their communities. The two districts were selected for study based on their differences in community acceptance of the arrival of immigrants, yet there were similar policymaking processes and outcomes in each district. River City administrators, working in a community with low levels of acceptance of the arrival of immigrants, pursued policies to integrate students in their schools and to expand bilingual instruction in their districts, just as district administrators in the more immigrant-accepting Lake City did. River City administrators' actions did not appear to reflect the dominant sentiment about immigrants or about racial-ethnic minorities in their communities. Furthermore, community opposition in both districts provided a formidable obstacle to some of school district administrators' efforts to respond to new student populations and district administrators identified this opposition as one of the primary problems they faced, indicating that neither side agreed with the other on this issue. These findings complicate the characterization of district administrators as reflecting the dominant community biases and as consistently rebuffing pressures for change that benefit the district's increasingly ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students. This work contributes to urban education politics literature by highlighting school district administrators' agency in promoting policy change.

Second, this study also suggests that district administrators' self-interests play a role in their policymaking, something that the school district policymaking literature has not emphasized. I provide evidence that district leaders' interests in minimizing conflict and responding to vocal constituencies are important factors in their policymaking. For example, district administrators' support of two-way bilingual programs in both districts appeared to be conditioned upon the degree to which they perceived it to support or undermine organizational interests. This fact implies that that district administrators may not always be disinterestedly pursuing improved student learning or advocating for students as sometimes-implied in research on district administrators' reform efforts (e.g. Hightower, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003).²² While district administrators may be focused on student learning and responsive to student needs, district administrators own interests and concerns play a role in their policymaking. This is an important consideration in explaining school district policymaking and this dissertation implies a need for further attention to how district interests may contribute to, as well as impede, reform efforts.

Finally, this study provides evidence of the interaction between community actors' political pressure and school district administrators' policymaking. When policymaking involves controversial issues, community influence places limits on school district administrators' policymaking; however, community pressure can also create conditions of possibility for school district policymaking. In these districts, for example, middle-class parents' opposition limited school district administrators' policymaking efforts to mix students across socioeconomic and racial lines. For bilingual education policymaking, community organizing created possibilities for administrators' assembly of policy. Thus, this study also highlights different paths through which community actors' political pressure influenced district administrators: blocking some policy avenues, shaping district administrators' decisions about which actors to include in policymaking and shaping which policy directions they supported. Yet, school district administrators' strategies of structural elaboration and assembly of policy, were compromises between community pressures and district administrators' own policymaking concerns. That compromise was a dominant policymaking strategy indicates that local politics penetrates into school district administrators' work as much as that district policymaking may take on a life of its own. Thus, these findings extend research on school district policymaking by demonstrating how local politics influences school administrators' policymaking efforts. While prior studies have pointed to the internal political struggles in school district decision-making (Coburn et al., 2009), this study highlights the role that political pressure from local community actors plays in school district policymaking. Local politics is a part of school district administrators' work and it can impede and support professionals' policymaking efforts. By highlighting the tension and compromise between school district decision-makers and various community actors, the study bridges the emerging school district policymaking literature, which has largely ignored the role of local education politics and community actors in influencing policymaking, with the urban education politics literature, which rarely looks

²² In both districts, although there were parent engagement activities, there was little evidence of district administrators actively involving families living in poverty or immigrant families in policymaking. This lack of engagement also suggests the limits of school district administrators' role in promoting reforms that address the needs of children from these families.

inside school districts and thus overlooks school district staff as policymakers. In doing so, this study illuminates school district decision-makers' interpretations of educational problems and policy solutions, their strategic actions, as well as their negotiations and compromises with community actors as central factors in school district policymaking. Furthermore, by looking at both community dynamics and school district administrators' work, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interactions that lead to district policy change or lack thereof, an especially important question in urban districts where policymaking affects students most disadvantaged in American school systems.

Urban Regime Analysis and Policymaking Processes

While urban regime analysis provides useful tools for understanding urban education politics and school district policymaking, it does not look inside the black box of school district policymaking processes. By using interpretative policy analysis, this study contributes to the urban regime analysis and civic capacity work by offering greater insight and nuance into the processes by which important outcomes noted in this literature come about.

First, urban regime analysis and civic capacity work stresses the importance of forming coalitions and generate agreement upon problems or policy direction in order to achieve sustained urban school reform (Stone, et al., 2001). I provide evidence that district administrators' framing helps to generate agreement on problem definitions and build support for policy directions among disparate actors. Framing involves putting one's best argument forward, but also drawing together, or assembling, others' frames. District administrators assemble agreement on a policy direction by bringing forward others' frames and bridging frames from different actors to generate agreement from actors on policy directions. These actions elaborate the idea in urban regime analysis that building coalitions for reform takes political skills and resources, by identifying framing skill and knowledge of others' frames as important factors influencing the process of assembling agreement on policy directions. Furthermore, part of assembling agreement among disparate actors involves creating opportunities for formal policymaking taskforces or developing lines of communication through back-and-forth conversations with stakeholders. These opportunities come about through both a reaching out and a reaching in as district administrators both seek out dissenting opinions and incorporate the voices of those pressuring them in their assembly of actors from different viewpoints. This dynamic was evident in the establishment of bilingual education policy, but also in the Lake City efforts to overcome a zero-sum mentality and engage community members in strategic planning and similar efforts.

Second, urban regime analysis points to the lack of major education reform in urban school districts and instead districts undertake myriad, un-sustained, and scattered policies and initiatives. Urban regime analysis has not always been clear about why more piecemeal policy has come about. Some explanations offered in passing have included: the fragmentation of school district bureaucracies, the faddishness of educational reforms, and the combination of episodic demands from single-issue constituents and the autonomy of school district bureaucracies (Stone et al., 2001). In contrast to those partial explanations, this study demonstrates that myriad and scattered policies come about as part of a political dynamic whereby district administrators persist in their efforts to achieve some of their policy agenda in the face of community opposition. District

administrators do not end their policymaking efforts in defeat but continue to put forth their own proposals through a process of structural elaboration that adds programs to the existing structure of schooling. These dynamics lead to fragmented reform efforts. Here I demonstrated the process by which piecemeal policy comes about suggesting that it is a result of a political compromise strategy. These findings substantiate the supposition in urban regime analysis that single-issue constituents' demands and school district administrators who make their own policies contribute to the scattered and piecemeal nature of policy in urban school districts, but following the process of structural elaboration adds the insight that these may be intertwined developments rather than distinct ones.

Furthermore, urban regime analysis and civic capacity work has tried to understand how opportunity expansion and major education reforms can be achieved. C. N. Stone writes: "Even though politics reflects social and economic inequalities, political patterns are not predetermined...[T]he social-justice challenge is to find leverage points to lessen the impact of socioeconomic inequalities. Normatively, this underlies regime analysis" (C. N. Stone, 2008, p.271). This analysis suggests that while efforts perceived to redistribute resources are limited, policies to expand educational opportunities are nonetheless possible. By paying attention to the micro-dynamics of policymaking, this identifies how educational opportunity expansion can come about both when there is and there is no political conflict. It provides evidence that opportunity expansion resulted from structural elaboration when district administrators had an ongoing agenda of opportunity expansion. And, that opportunity expansion also came about as district administrators in Lake City tried to address the demands of both middle-class parents and Latino community leaders by creating a two-way bilingual program. This study suggests some of the conditions supporting opportunity expansion including: district administrators' commitment to opportunity expansion and their efforts to assemble policy. In addition, while civic capacity work focuses on cooperation between community actors and school district leaders in achieving these goals; my findings suggest the importance of district administrators' policy agendas in shaping policymaking even when there is conflict with community actors, or perhaps especially under these circumstances.

Civic Capacity with Politics and Policymaking in Mind

While popular education reforms suggest replacing or displacing the traditional school district leadership or of doubling down on the central office as a lever of school reform, civic capacity literature has suggested the importance of sustained commitment to improving schooling as a driver major reforms and points to another direction: coalition between community actors and school district leadership. As Henig et al., (1999) write:

[T]he concept of "civic capacity," which lies at the core of our framework, suggests that the prospect for meaningful and sustainable reform depends upon lines of conflict and cooperation among a wide array of actors, both inside and outside the educational arena. Building civic capacity—the capacity collectively to set goals and effectively to pursue them—calls for exercising political leadership and mastering political skills" (p. 9).

In many ways, the findings in this study reinforce this concept as an important and logical reform direction. In particular, in highlighting how local politics and the influence of

community actors shape school district policymaking, this study affirms the contention that politics matters to school district policymaking and that groups can come to agree upon policy goals with effort and political skills.

This study also has some implications for developing civic capacity to be responsive to conditions of inequality such as those that were illuminated by the arrival of immigrants and other children of color or children living in poverty in River and Lake cities. First, findings from this dissertation suggest the need to engage at least three sets of community actors: middle-class parents, advocates for less-advantaged students, and families living in poverty or immigrant families. In this study, as in others (Peterson, 1981; Stone et al., 2001; Wells & Serna, 1996), middle-class parents in both cities had the means to block policies they did not like and they did so. But, this study also finds that those parents could also be supportive in policies, like two-way bilingual programs that were supportive for new immigrants and expanded opportunities for their own children, as well. Any effort to address the needs of children from less-advantaged families will need to gain agreement and support from this group so that reforms are sustained without later being undermined by some middle-class parents who may feel that these programs disadvantage their own children in some way. This clearly presents a significant challenge because this group can be large and unorganized, but these findings suggest it may be necessary nonetheless. On the other hand, local teachers and Latino community leaders (in the case of Lake City) who acted as advocates for native-Spanish speaking students were important for organizing and moving forward policies to address the needs of Spanish speaking English language learners in each district, particularly at times when school district administrators were not addressing these needs. These community leaders were an important voice in initiating changes in both school districts and for continuing to influence district policymaking over time.

This study also suggests that immigrant or poor parents may be unlikely to be engaged in district policymaking; district administrators infrequently interacted with these parents or involved them in decision-making. This finding is not a new (see for example, Hamann, 2003; Dorner, 2006). But, nonetheless suggests the importance of establishing a mechanism for reaching out to these groups and ensuring their participation that does not just rely upon district administrators' efforts to engage with them.

This dissertation suggests the promise of school district administrators' involvement in building civic capacity. The way that school district leaders define the problems of demographic change in these two districts suggests that they are open to and see the need for policy change. Their policymaking efforts also suggest they have the impulse to try to improve the education they provide to students living in poverty, students of color, and English language learners in their districts. Thus, district leaders may serve as a leverage point for equity-oriented changes. They moved forward policy responses for new groups. We saw evidence of district administrators' having some opportunity expansion agenda in Lake City, and to a lesser degree in River City, as well as their concern with students' access to challenging coursework in district administrators' problem definitions. Actions such as these may be the foundation for a broader opportunity expansion, also suggests that they had a concern for expanding opportunities for students of color and students living in poverty. While some civic capacity work draws attention to the importance of political skill of business leaders in helping build civic coalitions (Stone, et al., 2006, p. 99), this study highlights the role of

school district administrators in bringing together actors and generating agreement on policy directions that urban regime analysis and civic capacity proponents identify as being so important. They are also in a position to generate agreement on policy directions and evidence here indicates that some district policymakers had the ability or skills to do so. Thus, district leaders may serve as potential focus for reform and policy changes that address the needs of immigrant, minority and low-SES students in new destinations.

However, this dissertation also suggests some reasons to guard against over-optimism about the role that district leaders' involvement in civic capacity to address the needs of less privileged groups. There is some evidence that district administrators' good intentions are intertwined with and possibly mitigated by their own concerns and self-interests. These concerns and self-interests may or may not work towards creating better and more equitable school systems. While I have found that district administrators are likely to see problems in their school systems, many of the problems they identified were located primarily at the teacher-level rather than at the administrative or institutional levels, suggesting that district administrators may be less willing to make more fundamental changes to their school systems that may be necessary given the growing needs of students in their districts. Furthermore, as the accounts of policymaking in these chapters suggest, district administrators concerns and ongoing policy agendas may place other concerns ahead of responding to needs of new groups. In River City, district administrators' concerns about budget cuts and enrollment crowded-out concerns about opportunity expansion as district administrators put forward proposals to address under-enrollment on the city's south side. This dynamic means that any reform effort will require considering how district leaders' own interests might hinder more equitable and democratic outcomes and how their commitments might help to support more broad-based changes.

School district administrators in new immigrant destinations need to respond to inequality. In many ways their challenges and the work they must do are not so different from the challenges of district administrators in any school district with inequality. All district administrators have limitations that they work within and possibilities for supporting their work. Like the district administrators in River and Lake cities, district administrators have self-interests in policymaking and perspectives on the challenges in their districts, as well. Without seeing how these factors shape school district administrators thoughts and actions, we can't address these limitations or build upon these possibilities. One avenue towards change may be making policymaking more democratic and more inclusive, as suggested by the notion of civic capacity, but whatever the route to reform, consideration must be made for the limitations and possibilities of the complex role that school district administrators play in policymaking.

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