UCLA
UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title
FROM SEGREGATION TO CONGREGATION: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGED URBAN SCHOOL REFORM

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8td070vn

Author
Jenkins, DeMarcus Antonio

Publication Date
2018

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

From Segregation to Congregation:

A Case Study of Community Engaged Urban School Reform

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

DeMarcus Antonio Jenkins

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Segregation to Congregation:
A Case Study of Community Engaged Urban School Reform

by

DeMarcus Antonio Jenkins
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2018
Professor Pedro Antonio Noguera, Chair

Historically, traditional public schools have been microcosms of the broader neighborhoods in which they are embedded. These schools reflect the race, class and cultural backgrounds of the local community where they are situated. However, over the past three decades, traditional public schools have been implicated in the rise of educational privatization and market-based approaches to education reform and urban restructuring. In order to respond to threats posed by privatization, teachers and administrators, especially those serving students of color and low-income students, must understand and be able to respond to the contextual idiosyncrasies and nuances that manifest inside the school building. Neighborhood conditions do profoundly impact the teaching and learning environment of schools. Educators attempting to transform those schools should take into account those conditions and seek to connect school change strategies to those conditions.

Utilizing the scholarship on community engagement in urban contexts as an empirical and intellectual springboard, this qualitative case study seeks to first understand the social, political and cultural dynamics that have shaped the neighborhood and schooling contexts through the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. To do so, this study explores the

perceptions of educators – teachers, administrators, and staff—in one urban high school regarding the out-of-school factors that impact the teaching and learning environment and explore how they engage the community in their approach to school reform that is linked to those factors.

Drawing from critical race theory and critical urban theory, this study demonstrates how educators contend with the out-of-school factors of poverty, student and family homelessness and market forces to embark on school reform that is directly connected to these challenges and engages local community residents in the process.

The dissertation of DeMarcus Antonio Jenkins is approved.

Tyrone C. Howard

Walter R. Allen

Chezare A. Warren

Pedro Antonio Noguera, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

DEDICATION

To my father, Anthony Jenkins, who passed away moments before this document could be published, you have been and will always be an incredible source of strength.

I am who I am because of you.

Table of Contents

Dedication ……………………………………………………………………………………. ix

List of Tables & Figures ……………………………………………………………………. vi

List of Appendices ……………………………………………………………………………vii

Acknowledgements …………………………………………………………………………..viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION……………………………………………………………… 1

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS ….. 17

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY……………………………………………………...……58

CHAPTER 4: FROM SEGREGATION …………………………………………………….. 84

CHAPTER 5: TO CONGREGATION ……………………………………………………... 124

CHAPTER 6: A VISION OF COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOOL REFORM ...……..184

REFERENCES

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables
Table 2: Mountainview Neighborhood Profiles…………………………………………..69

Table 2.1: Interview Participants…………………………………………………………72-73

Table 2.2: Interview Participants, Name and Title/Role ……………………………………76-77

Figures
Figure 5.1: (Re)fashioning the School as a Spatial Neighborhood Asset Within the Community ..130

Figure 5.2: School Reclaimed: Addressing School Climate…………………………………161

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol, Administrators and Teachers……………………………. 224
Appendix B: Interview Protocol, Community Leaders …………………………………….. 227
Appendix C: Letter to School Community…………………………………………………….. 230
Appendix D: Informed Consent to Participate……………………………………………..... 231

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I struggle to find the words that can full capture the immense gratitude I have for those who have helped bring this project to completion. First and foremost, I sincerely thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Pedro A. Noguera, who not only offered incredible support, mentorship and guidance, but who constantly challenged me to critically examine my own blind spots in my research. Dr. Noguera has served as a source of inspiration since our first meeting in Brooklyn, New York during the 2008-2009 school year, several years before I would begin my doctoral journey. It was his words that inspired me to pursue a PhD and to have him lead me through the process has truly been a remarkable experience. I will forever cherish his example of dedication and passion for exposing social and educational injustices and imagining a more equitable future for all.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee for their thoughtful feedback and encouragement of the dissertation: Dr. Tyrone Howard, Dr. Walter Allen and Dr. Chezare Warren. In their own ways, each of them have contributed to my academic and personal growth, and for that I am ever grateful. In addition, their contributions to the field of education are paramount and in the years before me, I can only aspire to achieve a fraction of what they have accomplished. I would also like to thank several faculty members at UCLA whose coursework, conversations and courage also inspired me throughout my graduate studies: Dr. Louis Gomez, Dr. Kim Gomez, Dr. John Rogers, Dr. Danny Solórzano, Dr. Thomas Phillip, and the late Dr. Edward Soja.

Toward the later phase of my graduate program, Dr. Antar Tichavakunda (graduate of University of Southern California), Dr. Justin Coles (graduate of Michigan State University) and I formed an allegiance of collaboration, support and encouragement. Within a very short time

these supporters became so much more and our relationship morphed into something unexpected. We became brothers. Thank you both for pushing me, forgiving me and holding me down when things got rough.

I would also like to thank the friends and fraternity brothers who allowed me to sleep on their couches, air mattresses and in their spare bedrooms when I needed to escape reality and focus on writing. Daniel Cook, Kevin Thompson, Apuje Kalu, Reginald Haywood and countless others. Thank you for being a space of refuge in some of the darkest moments in this process. Your belief in me allowed this project to come to completion.

To the administration, teachers, support staff, students, families and community members who contributed your voices to this project. There is no way I could have done this without you. Thank you for sharing a part of your life with me. I hope that I retold your stories with the justice that it deserves.

Finally, and with the earnest sincerity, I would like to thank my family. Your limitless love was the sole source of strength throughout this process. To my mom, Alesia Raines, my grandmother, Gerry White and step-mom, Amy Durst, our conversations at awkward hours of the night kept me grounded and focused. To my brothers and sisters, cousins, nieces and nephews, and aunties and uncles, my goal was to do something that would make you all proud. I pray that in some small way, I have done that. To my father, Anthony Jenkins, who passed away during the final stage of this project, thank you for being everything I always needed. Thank you.

DeMarcus A. Jenkins

mrdjenkins@gmail.com

EDUCATION

December 2011 **Masters of Education, English Education** *Georgia State University*
Concentration: Curriculum and Instruction Atlanta, GA

December 2008 **Masters of Arts in Teaching, Secondary English** *American University*
Washington, DC

August 2006 **Bachelor of Arts, English and African American Studies** *University of Michigan*
Double Major Ann Arbor, MI
Minor: Education

POSTSECONDARY TEACHING

Challenges in Urban Education | Winter 2015
Examines a range of challenges with urban schooling including policies, contexts, curriculum, and achievement.

Critical Race Studies in Education | Fall 2014
Analyzes issues of race and racism in education using Critical Race Theory as a theoretical, methodological, and conceptual framework.

Critical Policy Analysis | Spring 2014
Focuses on the analysis of policy, including both traditional and critical approaches to policy analysis.

Education Policy and Politics | Winter 2014
Presents historical and contemporary policy shifts and their implications in urban schools across several eras in the U.S. educational system.

Race and Educational Inequality | Fall 2013
Explores educational inequalities by centralizing race theoretically and practically to better understand the manifestations of race in everyday life.

Urban Education Policy | Spring 2013
Analyzes the politics of elementary and secondary education policy at the local, state and federal level with an emphasis on urban schools contexts.

Special Issues in Teaching | Winter 2013
Examines a range of challenges with teaching in an urban school.

RESEARCH AND POLICY EXPERIENCE

Education Research and Policy Analyst | *Office of the State Superintendent of Education – DC Government*
Washington, DC | September 2016 – May 2018

Education Policy Advisor (Fellow) | *Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education*
Los Angeles, CA | September 2015 – May 2016

Education Research Assistant and Site Coordinator | *Center for Education Research and Policy, Harvard University*
Cambridge, MA & Los Angeles, CA | August 2013 – August 2015

Senior Education Policy Research Associate | *University of California, Los Angeles*
Los Angeles, CA | June 2012 – May 2016

K12 TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

English Instructor | *Benjamin E. Mays High School (Atlanta Public Schools)*
Atlanta, GA | August 2009 – June 2012

Assessment and Data Consultant | *New York City Department of Education*
New York City, NY | January 2009 – August 2009

Educator/ Leadership Fellow | *Achievement First Crown Heights Middle School*
Brooklyn, NY | August 2008 – May 2009

Corps Member Advisor | *Teach for America • Teacher Preparation Team*
Philadelphia, PA | June 2008 – August 2008 & June 2009 – August 2009

Summer School Curriculum Coordinator | *Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy*
Washington, DC | March 2007 – June 2008

Grade Level Coordinator and Educator | *Paul Laurence Dunbar High School (DC Public Schools)*
Washington, DC | August 2007 – June 2008

English Instructor | *Teach for America* **–** *Maya Angelou Public Charter School*
Washington, DC | August 2006 – June 2007

PUBLICATION AND EDITORIAL WORK

Manuscript Reviewer | *Teacher Education Quarterly*
Madison, WI | June 2014 – Current

Associate Director of Publications | *Center for African American Research & Policy*
Madison, WI | June 2013 – May 2015

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Jenkins, D. (In Review). A map for inequality: neoliberal nostalgia, urbanism and spatial injustice in Detroit.
- Jenkins, D. (In Review). Examining the role of institutional care in the college-going behaviors of low-income students of color.
- Jenkins, D. (In Progress). Building community partnerships as a novice black male principal.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

"Beep, beep, beep" alarms the sound of the metal detectors that students pass through daily in order to be allowed into the school. From the library, I could hear the loud, awful sound of the dysfunctional – or hypersensitive—security tool alerting the guards as each student passes through. The glass wall to the far north side of the library was all that separated me from the sounds of the metal detectors and the clamoring of the students as they tossed their possessions onto the screening belt for inspection. Inside the library, Mr. Black was preparing to begin the monthly meeting that brought together parents, community members, and school partners interested in collaborating with Rutherford.

Three years prior, Mr. Black served as the school's Athletic Coordinator. In that role, he was primarily responsible for ensuring that students who wished to participate in high school sports were academically and physically eligible. However, administrative personnel changes along with the shifting priorities of the school also brought a change to Mr. Black's responsibilities. He now served as Rutherford High School's Athletic and Activities Coordinator where he was charged with the added onus of managing the individuals and organizations who wished to serve as "partners" to the school. Mr. Black embraced his newfound duties and had implemented several structural changes to aid in the identifying, sustaining, and maintaining of relationships with parents, community members, and school partners.

This particular meeting was an important one as it was the first time this school year that partners would come together, discuss the scope of their work and share ideas on how to best meet the needs of the students at Rutherford. Along with being important, this meeting was an interesting one due to the school's increased graduation rate and 100% college acceptance rate in

the previous year, several new partners had expressed interest in bringing their programs to Rutherford.

For those interested in school, parent, and community relations in urban public schools, Rutherford presents an intriguing case. The school was located in a region of the city that was historically known to be violent, drug infested, low-income, and Black. Even within a city that was known to be "Chocolate City", this particular neighborhood had the largest concentration of Blacks when compared to any other neighborhood. In addition, the neighborhood had come to be known as a "no fly zone" – a romantic signature used mostly by students whose parents restricted their access to the neighborhood.

In the article "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race," sociologist George Lipsitz tells the story of eighty-two-year-old Allison "Tootie" Montana (2007, p. 10). As a respected elder and resident of New Orleans, Louisiana's Seventh Ward, the oldest continuous free black neighborhood in the United States, Montana was revered as Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Tribe and reigning "Chief of Chiefs" of all the Mardi Gras Indian Tribes. In the article, Lipsitz recalls the events surrounding the death of Chief Tootie Montana. As he tells it, Tootie Montana passed away while championing the right of Black people in New Orleans to occupy and traverse urban space (p. 10). Three months prior to his death, Tootie Montana and a group of Mardi Gras Indians were removed by police officers using brutal force to disperse an annual gathering at the corner of Lasalle Street and Washing Avenue. This gathering was particularly significant in New Orleans, where decades of housing discrimination, environmental racism, urban renewal, and police harassment have relegated different races to different spaces (p.10), the presence of the Mardia Gras Indians evoked a politics of place and a form of defensive localism. Lipsitz (2007) posits that because inner-city residents –like the Mardi Gras Indians—do not and cannot control the uses to which their neighborhoods are put by the rest of

the city, their only recourse is to turn segregation into congregation by fashioning ferocious attachments to place as a means of producing useful mechanisms of solidarity.

The notion of solidarity and place attachment is one that can be seen in the symbiotic relationship between the Black community and Black school. In New Orleans and other US cities, the culmination of de facto and de jure segregation has relegated Black residents to particular neighborhood spaces and has contributed to the production of predominately Black public schools. Municipal and state disinvestment (Lipman 1998, 2011, 2016) and the disappearance of industries from urban centers (Sugrue 1996; Wilson, 2012) transformed Black neighborhoods into "concentrated areas of poverty" with schools that suffer from inadequate funding (Kozol, 2012) and school district and governmental policies (Anyon, 1997). Educators and community residents in segregated urban areas are assembling (or congregating) to educate neighborhood children.

From segregation to congregation tells the story of Rutherford – a predominately Black school—embedded in a predominately Black neighborhood, Rose. Despite the gross inequalities and out-of-school factors that overwhelm educators rendering it extremely difficult to meet the diverse needs of students, teachers and administrators exercised agency to embark a school reform process that engages the surrounding local community. The meeting with Mr. Black and community partners illustrates the genesis of community engagement for the 2016-2017 school year. By congregating with external community stakeholders, educators develop school reform that is linked to the neighborhood conditions that shape students' learning experiences.

Background

At the end of 2017, U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos published her eleven proposed priorities that reflect "the Secretary's vision for American education" (U.S. Federal Register, 2017; U.S. Washington Post, 2017). Among the priorities are increasing school choice

and promoting science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. To most, DeVos's focus on school choice comes as no surprise given that she has been a strong proponent of school choice for two decades in Michigan before being appointed by President Donald J. Trump as Education Secretary. In addition, for several years DeVos has led a non-profit school choice advocacy group in Michigan where she has pushed for fewer regulations on charter schools to encourage more "options" for parental choice.

What is absent from DeVos's list of priorities for American education is a substantive reform approach for public schools as well as a focus on meaningful engagement between schools and communities. The deliberate omission of reform strategies and engagement guidance provides a compelling case for its urgent need; leaving the public school reform movement at an interesting yet familiar juncture. Public schools are forced to compete in the educational marketplace created by an increased "choice" environment. Characterized by a focus on numbers, the educational marketplace requires that schools compete for students as measured by enrollment and status as measured by test scores. Schools that appear less "attractive" to parents are then closed, taken over or converted to charter schools. In response to this choice environment, some schools are attempting to reconstruct and reconfigure the ways in which they engage the community to support school improvement.

Historically, traditional public schools have been microcosms of the broader neighborhoods in which they are embedded. These schools reflect the race, class and cultural backgrounds of the local community where they are situated. However, over the past three decades, traditional public schools have been implicated in the rise of educational privatization and market-based approaches to education reform and urban restructuring. In order to respond to threats posed by privatization, teachers and administrators, especially those serving students of color and low-income students, must understand and be able to respond to the contextual

idiosyncrasies and nuances that manifest inside the school building (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010). Further, neighborhood conditions do profoundly impact the teaching and learning environment of schools. Educators attempting to transform those schools should take into account those conditions and seek to connect school change strategies to those conditions.

Statement of the Problem

A lack of research on the perceptions of school stakeholders regarding out-of-school factors that they deem impact students learning as well as an understanding of the community engagement efforts in the school improvement process may limit more holistic insight into how community-engaged school reform may be improved and promoted. On the other hand, however, case study examples can provide additional understanding to the ways that educators exercise agency to reform their traditional public high schools with tactics that are connected to the neighborhood realities of students and families.

Researchers and practitioners know two things: urban schools are in need of reform and reform that is connected to communities is most promising. Despite strong evidence of both, robust school reform has yet to take place in urban schools. Traditionally, reformers have approached school change by focusing on issues within the four walls of the school and disregarded the significance of community involvement (Henig et al., 2001; Henig 2013; Tyack, 1974). Tyack (1974) argued that the approach to developing the "one best system" has been unresponsive to local communities and the needs of a growing number of disadvantaged students and that in order for urban school systems to better serve their students, power must be more equitably shared between officials running them and local communities.

Federal, state, and local education policies have promoted strong connections between schools and communities for decades. At the same time, occurrences like gentrification and educational privatization have instigated demographic and spatial changes in neighborhoods that

strain the relationship between schools and communities. For decades, educational scholarship has highlighted that schools and their local neighborhoods, especially schools in urban contexts, are inextricably linked (Noguera, 1996). Researchers have examined a range of research at this intersection such as the role of principals in school and community engagement (Auerbach, 2010; Epstein, 1995, 2001; Ferguson, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1989; Marzano, 2003; Sanders, 2002; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013), parent and family involvement and engagement in school-community relations (Esptein and Sheldon, 2002), grassroots community organizing for urban school reform (Green and Gooden 2014), and urban school reform that is linked to community development (Green, 2015). Collectively, these studies have pushed the field to more carefully consider the nuances in both communities and in neighborhoods and highlight larger ecological contexts of neighborhood institutions. These studies, too, reflects the importance of community engagement in the school reform process. And still few studies have examined community engagement in high schools (Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Keith et al., 1998; Sheridan & Moorman Kim, 2015).

Outside of school realities can and do influence student's experiences and outcomes inside of school. Although schools alone may not have the resources and political capital to transform those realities, they can consider and link improvement efforts to those realities. One such arena that this can play out is community engaged school reform. In this study, I inquire how teachers, administrators, and at times community members, describe the outside of school challenges that influence how well school reforms are aligned to the needs of the community where their school is located. My goal in this study is not to essentialize urban neighborhoods or to, with a broad brush, paint all urban areas as monolithic. Instead, however, my goal is to shed

light on the complexities of context and illustrate how school officials can connect school improvement efforts to those realities

Purpose

Utilizing the scholarship on community engagement in urban contexts as an empirical and intellectual springboard, this qualitative case study seeks to first understand the social, political and cultural dynamics that have shaped the neighborhood and schooling contexts of urban school reform in Rose through the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. Here, I use the concept of community engagement to describe the ways that individuals outside of the school building collaborate with educators and become involved in school matters. The approach to community engagement used in this study involves broader notions of community and an emphasis on a broader set of actions and behaviors geared towards school improvement. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of educators – teachers, administrators, and staff—in one urban high school regarding the out-of-school factors that impact the shape and character of the school and explore how educators engage the community in their approach to school reform that is linked to those factors. To describe these dynamics, I center the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. I use the term stakeholder to refer to school-based actors – teacher, administrators, and school staff – as well as community members such as individuals from the surrounding local community including parents who were involved in the school improvement process.

Research Questions

At the most basic level, this qualitative study aims to develop an increased understanding of race, place, and reform. The primary question guided this study is: How do educators at Rutherford, a traditional neighborhood high school, approach school reform and community

engagement? Additionally, several supplemental questions are used to strategically organize the project:

1. What out-of-school challenges (factors) did educators identify as having shaped their approaches to school reform in a traditional neighborhood public school?
2. How do educators-teachers and administrators—devise strategies to address/respond to these out-of-school challenges (factors)?
3. To what degree do the out-of-school challenges influence the strategies enacted by educators?

The researcher examined the questions through two frameworks: critical race theory (CRT) and critical urban theory (CUT). Taken together these frameworks provides a lens to deconstruct the dominant narrative regarding why urban schools "fail", enables a discourse on how race and racism intersect with neighborhood inequities; gives teachers and administrators a platform to authentically "voice" their realities and offers a framework for transforming systems of oppression.

Key Terms and Definitions

In this section, I define key terms central to this study and discuss how I utilize them.

Urban

In the past few years, scholars have begun to call for clarity of conceptualizations and theorizations of the term urban as used in the urban education scholarly literature. Broadly, the term has been utilized to connote a myriad of things. Schools located within the inner-city, by default qualify as urban schools. Conversely, schools located outside of the inner-city yet serve high populations of Black, Latinx, or English Language Learners (ELLs) are, too, referred to as urban. Those who work in these schools are called urban teachers and urban leaders. To extend this further, schools of education have named specific programs using the moniker urban (i.e. urban schooling) yet examine a range of educational topics from federal and state policies to

learning sciences. At glance, across the educational literature, urban seems to refer to anything and everything related to students of color or students living in a city. Scholars have begun to argue that within the mainstream urban education literature, the "urban" is "floating face down in the mainstream, lifeless, devoid of significant meaning" (Irby, 2015).

Building from the work of Noguera (2003) who characterized urban as a social and/or cultural construction that has explicit race and class connotations, in this study, I use urban to connote how communities, neighborhoods, and schools are socially, spatially, and structurally situated within current education discourse. In this sense, I broadly use urban to identify spaces within the inner-city that cater to an overwhelming Black population from low-income backgrounds.

Community

Much like urban, the term community has been used to connote multiple meanings. Across several academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and political science, scholars use the term community in variable and inconsistent ways. Within the field of education, especially as it relates to schools and schooling, community has been used to identify multiple contexts. For example, within the educational literature, one could find references to community schools, professional learning communities, small learning communities, communities of practice, leadership communities, community partnerships, to name a few.

Noting the varying conceptualizations of school-community partnerships within educational discourse, scholars have begun to trouble the individual meanings of each term. Perkins's (2015) study examined the "doublespeak" of community within educational scholarship to expose how discourses appear to straddle conflicting concepts of community as either "friend" or "foe". Similarly, LeChasseur (2014) used Critical Race Theory to explore how members of one community partnership understand the contested meanings and implications of

"community" terminology and approaches. She found that members expressed a variety of ways to think about what "the community" means both in discourse and in practice. On the one hand, partners used community to discuss geographically and sociocultural conceptualizations of people and on the other, it was used as a euphemism for disenfranchised groups. Finally, LeChasseur found that "community" was often used to avoid talking specifically about race, class, and issues of power and privilege in relation to the partnership work. LeChasseur and other scholars across the disciplinary landscape have called for more consistency and specificity of the term "community" in scholarly research (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2001; Schutz, 2006; Tricket, 2009; Yoshikawaa, Wilson, Peterson, & Shinn, 2005)

A large subset of this research focuses on urban high schools and their surrounding neighborhood communities. Given that most urban public schools serve students in a specific spatial area, I first focus on the students, families, and stakeholders who reside in the local area surrounding the school. Most often, geographic boundaries are experienced along lines of power, privilege, and opportunity. Warren (2005) points out, "for families raising children in the inner city, however, the quality of their lives and the opportunities and constraints they face are closely linked to residential location" (p. 168). While geographic conceptualizations of community are important, standing alone, however, they fail to account for the myriad experiences within any given area.

In this study, I utilize community to reference social units with the following characteristics: (a) individuals of (socially constructed) difference (i.e., race, class, gender, levels of formal education), (b) living or working with the same spatial area, (b) working toward collective goals related to the school and students.

School Reform/School Improvement

School reform, school change, school improvement, school redesign, and school transformation are terms that refer to a school's attempt to change, presumably to better support student learning and other desired outcomes. I generally use the terms "school change," "school reform," or "school improvement" to describe the improvement efforts at Rutherford, but at times, participants use other terms.

Scope of Delimitations

At the onset, it is necessary to present the intentional choices of the researcher that serve as the delimitations of this study.

1. This study was limited to the administrators, teachers, and staff members within one urban high school during the 2016-2017 school year.
2. Community members included parents, community leaders, long-term residents, and other local personnel surrounding and involved in school reform. At times, I included interviews with community "leaders" – those serving in elected or appointed positions, however, I do not distinguish them as leaders for the purpose of this study.

Significance

Whereas existing theories and explanations of urban neighborhood and urban school relationships emphasize the role of schools as the hub of the community, this research seeks to advance these analyses and theories by highlighting the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups and their collaboration around school improvement. This dissertation is significant for at least three reasons. First, a vast body of literature argues that schools located in urban areas, generally lack the capacity to make substantial change independently. This scholarship calls for an increase in collaborations with local community members and organizations. Warren (2010) posits, "over the past twenty years community organizing has emerged as a powerful new reform

of public engagement for education reform" (p. 139). Similarly, the benefits of community involvement in school improvement and reform have been highlighted in federal policies that urge districts and schools to establish partnerships with surrounding community members. It is necessary for scholars and practitioners to reach a deeper more nuanced understanding of how schools develop, build, and sustain meaningful relationships with local community members and involve them in the school change process. Thus, this dissertation highlights approaches to urban school reform that educators linked to the local out-of-school realities of students and families while engaging community members in the process. By focusing on a single traditional neighborhood public school, this project contributes to scholarly research on community engagement in public school change specifically in low-income urban areas serving predominantly families of color.

Second, in this study, teachers, and administrators name the out-of-school factors that shape the teaching and learning environment at Rutherford. This is a departure for most scholarship examining the intersections of neighborhoods, school reform, and community engagement. Primarily, such studies are categorized within an interpretivist tradition. Instead, this project is significant because it provides an opportunity for grassroots stakeholders to identify the factors that shape their context as well as allows educators to construct reform strategies that are linked to those realities.

Finally, like several studies of urban public high schools, the focus is often on increasing student outcomes such as test scores, attendance, graduation rates. This study, too, is concerned with the outcomes and experiences of students who attend a traditional, public, neighborhood school. However, instead of focusing on grades, test scores, and other performance indicators, this study is interested in students' conditions of learning (e.g. school climate) as well as the local community's involvement in students' schooling. Research on school-community

partnerships has argued that such linkages can improve youth development and academic outcomes, however, there is still much to be understood about how school and community relations impact the schooling experiences of students located within places of possibilities (Green, 2015).

Mapping the Dissertation

In this introduction, I lay a foundation by presenting the rationale, purpose, and significance of this study. I briefly explore the scholarly literature on school reform and community engagement (more on this in Chapter 2). This groundwork is important because it gives readers a concrete entry into the study by orienting readers at a particular starting point.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature that helped me to better understand outside of school factors, school reform and community engagement. Within this review, I paid close attention to how studies take seriously the urban context and the challenges that educators face in engaging with the surrounding community. Following the literature review, I present the conceptual underpinnings of this study by connecting Critical Urban Theory and Critical Race Theory and discuss the applicability to the current study focusing on the ideas that are most helpful in understanding how the social, cultural, and political dynamics of neighborhoods affect public schools and those who choose to enroll in them.

I begin Chapter 3 by addressing my positionality and entry into the study. I then shift to detail the methodology that guided this in-depth case study research including the data collection and analysis procedures. I discuss the processes and mechanisms used for coding interview transcripts. I end this chapter by highlighting some lessons learned during the data collection process.

The first set of findings from this study are presented in Chapter 4. My analysis offers a critical examination and interpretation of the social, political and cultural dynamics that teachers

and administrators and at times community members perceive to impact the school setting and relationship with the local community. Throughout this chapter, I present detailed excerpts from participant interviews along with my analytic reflections and interpretations to guide the reader through my meaning-making process. My intention is not to paint the neighborhood from a deficit and problematic vantage point, therefore, I also based on my observations and participant interviews, I also present the unique assets present in Rose. In the final section of the chapter, I reaffirm my conclusions and offer my analysis of the impact that the neighborhood context has had on the community and the school.

Chapter 5 dives deeper into the case of Rutherford to expound on the school reform approach that educators took to improve the schooling conditions at the school. In this chapter, I use the perspectives of educators coupled with my observations to describe the community engaged school reform process taking place at Rutherford. The intent of this chapter is to provide insight into how educators exercise agency to connect school reform to the out-of-school challenges they perceive impact the school.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, of this dissertation is where I discuss new revelations about school reform, community engagement and the micro and macro implications of this study. In doing so, I provide next steps for administrators, policymakers, and those interested in reforming urban schools.

Summary

Chapter 1 presented background information on scholarly research as well as briefly discussed policies that have highlighted the needed for community engagement in schools. This chapter pinpointed gaps in research, which may have contributed to the inability of many urban schools to engage community stakeholders in the school reform process. In order to provide more insight into community engaged school reform, this chapter encouraged the examination of

the perspectives of educators on the outside of school factors that shape the schooling environment.

In presenting the problem this study seeks to address, I articulate that a lack of research on the perceptions of school stakeholders regarding out-of-school factors that they deem impact students learning as well as an understanding of the community engagement efforts in the school improvement process may prevent more holistic insight into how community-engaged school reform may be improved and promoted.

I also define a few key terms that will help the reader understand the following pages. While it is impossible to define all important terms in the opening chapter, those defined here are essential for a high-level comprehensive of the study. Where necessary, throughout this dissertation, I define other terms that will help the reader critically engage with this project.

I end this chapter by mapping out the intentions behind the pages to come. In doing so, I explain chapter by chapter what the upcoming sections seek to do and their importance. In the next chapter, I present a synthesis of the research on the linking schools to communities, community engagement as well as present the frameworks which guide this study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

In this review, I primarily explore two interrelated strands of literature that were critical in orienting and addressing the core problems this study seeks to address. The first body of literature seeks to make a case for why schools should be connected to communities. While the second body of literature discusses the interplay between community engagement and school reform. As indicated in Chapter 1, urban schools face a host of obstacles as they attempt to increase student achievement, improve student social capital, and overall develop the psychological and academic identities of students. An overwhelming body of research highlights the benefits of developing and sustaining meaningful engagement between schools and communities –including parents—for schools located in the inner-city (DeMatthews 2016; Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Green and Gooden, 2014; Posey-Maddox, 2017). Especially when those partnerships are aimed towards school reform (DeMatthews 2016; Green 2014; Posey-Maddox, 2017). This research is limited, however, because it largely fails to name robustly name the influence of race, place, and space in shaping and influencing the engagement process. As such, researchers and practitioners stand to gain a great deal of insight from empirical research

documenting how urban school educators engage community stakeholders in the school reform process in schools and communities depressed by poverty and other out-of-school factors.

Studies within this category are of extreme importance given current federal legislation that calls for increased school-community engagement as well as the constant attention from scholars, practitioners and policymakers alike on reforming schools in the most challenging contexts. Thus, the purpose of my research is to gain intellectual and practical clarity on how schools navigate and understand this charge when partnering with communities. This study builds on and extends the literature on school and community engagement revolving around urban schools in Black neighborhoods. To this end, this chapters takes a deep dive into the literature surrounding this inquiry which includes theoretical and empirical research, in-depth studies, books, and reports. Finally, the literature strands were selected for their significance in informing the research questions, conceptual framework, and the methodological approach.

At the onset of this literature review, my objective was to identify what data currently exists related to school and community engagement in the most challenging school contexts. At times, historical studies were examined to better understand specific connections between segregated schools and communities, especially in the pre-Brown era. While this investigation does not focus on a school segregated by law, gentrification, housing availability, poverty, and race have created in some areas, and exacerbated in others, unofficial segregated "pockets" in American cities. Thus, the inclusion of those studies provided information that could not be found elsewhere.

A Brief Note on Federal Education Policy and Reform

Over the past five decades, federal education policies promoted an increase in parent and community involvement in schools dating back to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

(ESEA) of 1965. This endorsement has continued through several reauthorizations including Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. For instance, NCLB is one example of federal education policy that encouraged collaboration between school, family, and community. This legislation laid the groundwork for community collaboration by attaching monetary incentives to those schools who engaged with families and community members. Specifically, the provisions set forth in Title I of NCLB were designed to support this endeavor by situating parent and family engagement as a component of the academic culture. In particular, it reinforced the concept of "shared responsibility" in support of improved academic achievement for low-income students. Robinson's (2017) study on collaborative partnerships between high-poverty and minority parents provides examples regarding how NCLB parental engagement guidance was applied to promote parental engagement focusing specifically on the utility of parent liaisons (2017).

The consistency of federal policies to promote parent and community involvement in schools illustrates a broad acceptance –at least through national policy rhetoric—that students and families are best served with support and collaboration with multiple stakeholders external to schools. This is especially important for schools serving students in low-income geographies that are densely populated with Black students and families. These policies, however, continuously frame parent and community involvement through a normalized perspective based on white, middle- and upper-class values (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013) and ignores the complexities of urban communities and the culturally-specific ways that engagement might occur by not accounting for the intricate intersections of race, space, place, and reform.

On the other hand, it is also important to note that the dominant education policy agenda – defined by rigorous top-down accountability mandates, a proliferation of school choice initiatives, and expansion of privatization—is argued to de-prioritize community engagement

(Gold et al. 2007). Education reform approaches like mayoral control and state-run school districts, school vouchers and charter schools, standardized curriculum, and testing have taken center stage in the current political climate in education. Such reforms demonstrate tensions between policy documents and policy implementation. While federal policy documents call for an increase in family and community engagement, certain reform approaches favor individualism or have different notions of "community".

In the following section, I discuss the literature on out-of-school factors and the neighborhood effects on schools in urban areas. In addition to contesting the dominate deficit perspectives of urban residents, cultures, and practices, this section also provides justification for focusing on school and community partnership within an urban context.

Connecting the Dots: Linking Schools to Communities

Urban schools are inextricably linked to and affected by the urban environment (Noguera 1996). However, efforts to improve schools serving high populations of disadvantaged students of color has tended to focus primarily on challenges within the school (Anyon 2005; Noguera and Wells, 2011). This important, yet narrow focus by politicians and legislators has produced limited improvements in our nation's most troubled schools (Howard, 2010; Noguera, 2006). Education researchers and community advocates have called for school reform initiatives that are linked to the local community (Hopson, 2014; Horsford and Vasquez Heilig, 2014; Horsford and Sampson, 2014; Green and Gooden, 2014; Schutz, 2006; Trujillo, Hernandez, Jarrell & Kissell, 2014; Warren, 2005). Below, I discuss four reasons why this is important. Of course, there are numerous other reasons that could be highlighted here. Those selected are most relevant to the current study.

First of all, one reason why linking schools to communities is important is because top-down reform strategies disconnected from community realities and developments have failed to result in substantial school improvements (Hopson, 2014; Horsford and Vasquez Heilig, 2014; Horsford and Sampson, 2014; Green and Gooden, 2014; Payne, 2008). For several years, a trend in political discourse has been the use of education reform as a talking-point for campaign advances (Horsford and Sampson, 2014). At the very best, this persistent focus on improving American education has brought much-needed attention to the challenges in the system. Despite political rhetoric emphasizing a focus on education reform, educational inequalities, and injustices that disproportionally impact children of color remains. Educational researchers, activists, and educators suggest that this is largely due to the failure to link schools and communities through policy reform initiatives. As Warren (2005) contends, school reform experts and educators alone cannot solve the problems of urban schools and inner-city communities, because these problems are the result of fundamentally unequal power relationships in our society (p.165).

To account for education reform that is detached from community realities, President Obama established the Office of Urban Affairs (OUA) in 2009 (Taylor, McGlynn, and Luster, 2013). In addition, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has launched several initiatives that aim to connect urban education to community and housing development. Some of these initiatives include Promise Neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhoods, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI). Researchers are investigating the impact of these programs. For example, Horsford and Sampson's (2014) research explores the Promise Neighborhood program as a place-based educational initiative and its potential to improve persistently low-achieving urban schools and its aim of making "neighborhoods whole again" through community capacity building in Las Vegas (p. 957). In addition, Warren (2005) sketched

out various mechanisms through which better connecting schools and communities can lead to improved outcomes for children and the local community. Specifically, Warren (2005) suggests that linking schools to the community is a way to build the political constituency to make progress in addressing structural inequality (p. 167).

A second reason urban schools should be linked to the community is because urban schools alone generally lack adequate resources to meet the diverse needs of students (Schutz, 2006). While the question of "what counts as an urban school?" has been explored by scholars seeking to establish conceptual clarity (Irby 2015, Lynn 2012; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Schaffer, White & Brown, 2016), there is general agreement that those schools enroll higher numbers of students of color from poor households. Additionally, urban schools are typically located in inner-city neighborhoods (Milner 2012). Geographic location is an important factor because funding for public schools in the US has historically been tied to local property taxes. Given that some district schools are located in regions with a lower residential tax base, the funding these schools receive is far lower than in other districts (Vaught, 2009). There have been attempts to disrupt this tradition. In Los Angeles, for example, the recent local-control funding formula (LCFF) is an approach to revolutionize how school districts receive funds (Affeldt, 2015; Humphrey et al., 2015; Koppich et al., 2015). Despite such attempts, urban schools still receive inadequate funding to meet students' specific needs.

Beyond monetary resources, urban schools are often staffed with higher numbers of inexperienced and un- or under-qualified teachers than their suburban counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff, 2002; Quartz et al, 2003; Smith & Smith, 2006). Increasingly, individuals from alternative teaching certification programs are being placed in schools that deserve the most qualified teachers instead. Teach for America (TFA) is an example of an alternative credentialing program that places freshly-minted, college graduates in schools

primarily serving low-income and students of color. For most of the organization's history, they have recruited from the nation's top, predominantly White institutions and universities (White 2016) exacerbating a racial and cultural mismatch in urban K12 schools. These individuals enter classrooms after a five-week summer institute training program. Advocates of stronger preparation – especially for teachers in schools serving low-income students and students of color—have argue that teachers needed to understand how children learn and how to make academic material accessible to a wide range of students to increase the odds of their success (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin and Heilig, 2005; Shulman, 1987).

Additionally, urban schools not only have an insufficient number of certified and qualified teachers, they tend to offer fewer honors and advanced placement (AP) courses than their counterparts (Horn, Kojaku & Carroll, 2001; Klopfenstein, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). The school's curriculum shapes students' skillset, future interests, and postsecondary opportunities. For students who hope to attend academically competitive 4-year colleges and universities, rigorous courses and their corresponding exams are an important aspect of the college preparation and admission process. It is widely claimed that students who pass an AP test are more likely to have later success in high school and college -- a belief so widely held that it has been called "one of the fundamental underpinnings of the AP program" (Morgan & Klaric, 2007, p.1). Also, students involved in rigorous high school curriculum are more likely to graduate from college on time and less likely to transfer between postsecondary institutions (Horn et al., 2001). Although the benefits of a rigorous high school curriculum are vast, issues of limited resources, access, and equity inhibit proportionate distribution of courses across urban and suburban districts.

Another resource that is generally lacking in urban schools is up-to-date and working technology (Hess & Leal, 2001; Keegan Eamon, 2004; Valadez & Duran, 2007). Technology has

become and is increasingly becoming necessary in everyday life, especially for students. From smartphones to smart boards, educators have found creative ways to incorporate the use of technology in the classroom environment to enhance learning (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Technology is also a tool to connect students to virtual classrooms, extended learning opportunities, additional remediation, and enrichment. Technology is also useful for students exploring colleges and universities and scholarships. Schools serving low-income and students of color generally have less access to quality, operable, and up-to-date technological resources than their more affluent counterparts, what scholars have termed the "digital divide" (Hess & Leal, 2001; Keegan Eamon, 2004; Valadez & Duran, 2007). Not only does this limit students' ability to enrich their learning experiences, but it also creates a gap in students' skills once they finish high school.

Connecting schools to the community is a necessary approach to ensuring that students are receiving the services, supports, and resources necessary to be competitive against their more affluent and suburban peers. The local school community is able to both supplement and complement the school's resources. Green (2016) suggests that educational leaders, for example, utilize a community-based equity audit as an instrument, strategy, process, and approach to guide them in supporting equitable school-community outcomes. Continuing, Green (2016) contends that community-based equity audits help educational leaders to reconsider low-income, urban communities of color from a "resilient and asset-based perspective" (p.5). Through the use of a community-based equity audit, practitioners and policymakers can become more familiar with the assets within communities and strategically and meaningfully connect schools to their local community, particularly in the school improvement process.

A third reason that schools should be linked to the community is that the neighborhood conditions that children live in have profound impacts on their learning inside of school.

Children cannot learn if they lack adequate housing, health care, nutrition, and safe and secure environments (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Milner 2013; Warren, 2006). In her book Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education and a New Social Movement, educational researcher, Jean Anyon argues that urban poverty is a national crisis disproportionately impacting people of color and that the improvement of urban schools cannot occur without radically altering the policies that keep poor and working-class families from improving their economic circumstances (Anyon, 2005, 2014). At the very core, her book is a call for connecting schools to their surrounding urban environments. Specifically, Anyon describes the interconnected nature of federal and state policies that maintain and exacerbate issues of poverty, especially for people of color. Anyon further explains how poverty prevents children from learning. Anyon makes a similar argument in another one of her books, Ghetto Schooling: A Political Economy of Urban Educational Reform, where she contends that improving inner-city schools is only possible when the social and economic conditions surrounding those schools are addressed (Anyon, 1997). In what follows, I discuss a few conditions that impede children's learning. In doing so, I further demonstrate why linking schools and community is more than just important but necessary.

Research demonstrates that experiencing homelessness is devastating for children. In this study, the term homeless is used in its broadest sense to include circumstances of inadequate or insufficient housing, housing instability, or currently residing in short- or long-term shelters. Research linking homelessness to student outcomes have shown that homeless students have chronically low test scores (Dworsky, 2008), severely low grades (Rubin, Erickson, San Agustin, Clearly, Allen & Cohen, 1996) and higher drop-out rates (Rouse & Fantuzzo, 2009). In addition, voluminous research scattered across multiple disciplines illuminates that students who experience homelessness struggle academically, socially, and developmentally. While the

empirical research is inconclusive in reporting homelessness as a predictor of school achievement, studies do identify homelessness as one of many risk factors, along with health care, nutrition, poverty, and race which threatens student success.

There is a substantial body of research that addresses how conditions of homelessness are associated with students' experiences in school. The scholarly literature at the intersection education and youth homelessness consistently demonstrates its relationships to a range of negative school outcomes. Such research cites academic achievement, poor school attendance, increased school mobility or transfer rates, and high rates of disability identification, school incompleteness (i.e. dropout) and violent behavior. These outcomes are particularly troubling due to the disproportionate numbers of homeless youth in urban schools as well as the overlapping effects of these conditions. African Americans are significantly over-represented among the homeless population. There is considerable empirical evidence that demonstrates multiple changes in school enrollment can lead to lower achievement, increased dropout and an array of other negative results.

In addition, the impact of homelessness on children can be viewed as just one of the many ways that poverty manifests in the lives of individuals. Teachers and administrators at Rutherford acknowledged that several students' educational experiences were shaped by the added burden of housing instability and homelessness. Consistent with research findings that demonstrate that poverty and home structures serve as added challenges for students, educators witnessed how students' lack of home structure influenced their schooling experiences.

Scholars from multiple fields including education, economics, health, and public policy examine the relationship between food nutrition and educational attainment and outcomes for children and teens. The research overwhelmingly argues that high consumption of unhealthy food impacts students learning (Anderson, Gallagher and Ritchie, 2018). In a recent study

conducted by Anderson, Gallagher and Ritchie (2018) examined the relationships between healthier lunch offerings and end-of-year academic test scores for public school students in California and found that at the schools that contract with healthy lunch companies students score on average 0.03 to 0.04 standard deviations higher (about 4 percentile points). The study also found that score increases are about 40% larger for students who qualify for reduced-price or free school lunches. The research demonstrates the positive benefits of healthy nutrition on student learning.

In addition to research focused on student nutrition served during school lunch, scholars have also investigated children's access to quality food options in neighborhoods surrounding schools. For instance, studies have examined the location of supermarkets in low-income areas that provide healthy food options (Gordon et al., 2011; Krukowski, West, Harvey-Berino, & Elaine Prewitt, 2010). These studies provide evidence that poor neighborhoods, particularly with higher concentrations of Black residents tend to have fewer supermarkets than White and more affluent neighborhoods (see Gordon et al., 2011; Krukowski, West Harvey-Berino, & Elaine Prewitt, 2010). Powell et al. (2007) conducted a national study with more than 28,000 ZIP codes and found that the availability of chain supermarkets in Black neighborhoods was approximately one-half of that in White neighborhoods. This and related studies prove that food deserts disproportionally exist in low-income neighborhoods where Black and Latinx residents primarily reside. Smith and Morton (2009) define food deserts refer to resource-poor communities with scarce availability of nutritious, healthful, fresh and affordable food.

At the same time, recent federal legislation has attempted to regulate school lunch offerings to provide more nutritious foods to students from poor communities. For example, President Obama's Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 raised the minimum nutritional standards for public school lunches served as part of the National School Lunch Program

(Anderson, Gallagher, Ritchie 2018). This law represents a federal commitment to providing all children with healthy food in schools by authorizing $4.5 billion for federal school meals and child nutrition programs for low-income children (United State Department of Agriculture, 2010). In some ways, this legislation acknowledges the inextricable links between school and community and understands that students who receive nutritious food have better academic performances.

In addition to having access to nutritious food, the locations where students and families live also influence their educational experiences. The formation of neighborhoods is not accidental or natural. Instead, they are formed through a culmination of federal and state policies that legislate segregation (Rothstein, 2018), housing affordability (Desmond, 2017), gentrification (Florida 2017; Freeman, 2011; Moskowitz, 2017; Schlichtman, Patch, Hill, 2017) and other structural and systemic inequities (Anyon, 2005; Buras; 2015; Duneier, 2017; Kozol 1991; Wilson, 1997). Scholars have examined the geography of opportunity resulting from the different types of neighborhoods (Tate, 2008). In neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor African American residents, opportunities tend to be far less than more affluent white neighborhoods.

Relatedly, scholars have also turned to examine the ways in which neighborhood conditions and opportunities impact children experience with schooling (Howard, 2014; Milner, 2015, Kozol, 2012; Warren, 2017). This body of scholarship overwhelming demonstrates that neighborhood conditions profoundly impact student learning. For instance, Milner (2013) explores poverty as an outside-of-school factor that influences the inside-of-school experiences and outcomes for students. Reviewing multiple bodies of literature that examine the social contexts of schools, Milner employs critical race theory to center questions of race to gain a more nuanced understanding of the interrelationships between race and poverty and learning for

students. Specifically, he asks “in what ways does poverty influence and intersects with teaching and learning opportunities in schools”. Milner argues that poverty is an outside-of-school factor that has profound impacts for students and that centering race in the discussion of poverty helps researchers to better understand the complex intersections of place and race and schools.

Educational and sociological literature has focused on explaining why neighborhood conditions matter by examining neighborhoods and “neighborhood effects” as important units of analysis in investigating educational inequalities and outcomes. The influential work of William Julius Wilson (1987, 1996) was pivotal in shifting a scholarly focus to examining the ways in which neighborhood contexts affect individuals. Similarly, educational researchers have argued that students’ lives outside of school shape their educational experiences (Noguera & Wells, 2001).

Green and Gooden (2014) examine the out-of-school challenges that instigated a neighborhood-driven community school implementation in the Midwest. Their qualitative case study details the political and socioeconomic out-of-school forces that local actors confronted in their school reform efforts. Green and Gooden operationalize out-of-school challenges by drawing on Berliner’s (2009) and Milner’s (2013) research, to define the term as community factors that significantly affect the health, learning opportunities, and in-school experiences and outcomes for children. Their scholarship is useful as it directly centers neighborhood factors as key variables in the school reform process. Their findings suggest that in urban contexts where out-of-school forces constrain urban schooling, school leaders should gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and assets present in the community. Additionally, educators, specifically, school leaders should work in collaboration with community-based stakeholders to raise awareness of the political and socioeconomic forces that shape their local context (Green

and Gooden, 2013). Overall, their study highlights the importance of community engagement in the school improvement process.

Additionally, neighborhood conditions have been examined to better understand how students' academic aspirations are formed. Stewart, Stewart and Simons (2007) examine the specific ways that neighborhood structural conditions impact Black students and negatively shape their college aspirations. They hypothesized that living in a disadvantaged neighborhood would lower adolescents' college aspirations. To explore this, their study was based on a larger study and used data from the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS), a multisite investigation of neighborhood and family effects on health and development. The findings of their study suggest that living in disadvantaged contexts lowers college aspirations for African American adolescents. Stewart and colleagues quantitative analysis leveraged the work of Wilson (1987) which focused on the effects of neighborhood disadvantage and racial isolation on various outcomes.

A substantial body of scholarship discusses the ways in which the urban environment has an impact on children. For instance, sociologist and criminal justice expert, Carla Shedd explores the intersections of race, place, and opportunity and illuminates how schools either reinforce or ameliorate the social inequalities that shape the perspectives of adolescents (Shedd, 2015). Her ethnography focuses on four public neighborhood high schools in Chicago. She reveals how the predominantly low-income Black students encounter obstacles that their more affluent, white counterparts do not. Her analysis reifies that the inequitable neighborhood conditions that surround poor schools provide qualitatively different experiences for students in those areas. Finally, Shedd describes how children's "perception of injustice" or the recognition that their economic and educational opportunities are restricted by their place and position in the social hierarchy. As it relates to this study, her analysis demonstrates how the neighborhood

environments that children encounter on a daily and continual basis profoundly impacts their perceptions. These perceptions are carried into classroom spaces and impact learning.

There currently exists a range of terminology to discuss the social, cultural, and political contexts surrounding schools. Social contexts, outside-of-school ecology, environmental factors, out-of-school variables, and spatial inequalities are just a few of the terms used in discussions of issues that students face outside of the school building. Notwithstanding the expansive terminology, a consistent connotation undergirding these terms is the acknowledgment that what happens outside of school does indeed shape students within school lives. Across the US, poor Black and Latinx communities are disproportionately impacted by negative neighborhood (Munin, 2012). Writing about hazardous environmental factors, Munin (2012) notes that

> families live amid air and water pollution, waste disposals sites, airports, smokestacks, lead paint, car emissions, and countless other environmental hazards… however, exposure to these toxins is not shared equally among our population. Studies show that these environmental conditions disproportionately affect people of color and the poor. (p. 29)

The conditions described above represent a rallying reminder that place matters, particularly for those families that live in poor and disinvested neighborhood.

Understanding the profound impact of outside of school challenges like poverty, Ullucci and Howard (2015) seek to help teachers and teacher educators reconceptualize notions of poverty and its effects on students. Before offering new perspectives on educating students from disadvantaged backgrounds, they review and address several myths regarding children in poverty. These include the bootstraps myth, the individual faults myth, the educability myth and the culture of poverty myth. Ullucci and Howard's (2015) research is inherently focused on the intersections of outside of school variables (e.g. poverty) and inside of school learning and it highlights the significance of urban school teachers understanding how students are impacted by their out of school circumstances.

In acknowledgement of the outside of school factors that impact students, there are pedagogical approaches that have important implications for students living in socioeconomically depressed areas that are responsive to their complex needs (Emdin, 2017; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004; Paris & Alim, 2017). Moreover, evidence revealed that teachers and teaching can be the most powerful inside-of-school predictors of success for students (Barton, 2003; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Warren, 2018). In writing about the out of school factors that impact students experiences in schools, Milner, Murray, Farinde & Delale-O'Connor (2015) argue that pre-service and in-service educators need to build a deeper understanding on the influence of poverty to what happens within the schools. Therefore if success for students living in urban areas is a priority in this country, then connecting schools and communities has much promise for advancing the academic outcomes for these students.

A fourth reasons why schools, particularly schools that predominately serve Black students, should be linked to the community is because Black schools have historically been connected to the Black community. Compared to other accounts of Black schools in society, there is a small but growing body of scholarship that illuminates the integral role that Black schools played in educating Black students in the midst of legalized racism (Anderson, 1988; Horsford, 2010; Jones, 1981; Khalifa, 2013; Morris & Morris, 2002; Perry, 2003; Pinkney, 2016 Siddle Walker, 1996, 2000). These scholars provide an alternative view of Black schools and Black communities by demonstrating that historically African American communities supported their Black schools, and, reciprocally, the schools played pivotal roles in their communities (Anderson, 1988; Dempsey and Noblit, 1993; Pinkney, 2016; Savage, 1998; Siddle Walker, 1996). Prior to Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 1954, Black schools were interconnected with the Black community and the Black educators in these schools played a

central role in shaping the social, cultural, schooling, and political experiences of Black children (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pinkney, 2016).

Far too many empirical and theoretical accounts of African American schools, educators, families and communities depict them in deficit-oriented and problematic portrayals that fail to capture their agency and success. While often aimed at addressing the structural inequalities impacting African Americans, at times, these students fail to fully report on the important ways that Black communities and Black schools were positive and affirming places for those who chose to enroll in them. Also missing from those studies is a nuanced account of the actions, persistence, and fortitude of African Americans in the midst of persistent structural inequalities, legalized racism, and segregation.

A growing group of scholars, mostly African American themselves, have documented the integral role that all-Black schools played in education Black students and connecting with Black communities in the midst of gross inequalities in the inequitable distribution of resources from states, municipalities, and local school districts. Particularly, scholars like Siddle Walker (1996), Anderson (1988), and Morris (2004) have discussed the interconnections between Black schools and Black communities for the educating and uplifting of Black students and families. These studies were useful in understanding the history of Black education in the midst of adverse conditions. While the success of all-Black schools, as well as their relationship with their local communities, is beyond the scope of this project, a historical understanding is vital when placed in contemporary discourse on de facto school segregation, community engagement, and school reform.

Vanessa Siddle Walker's (2000) review entitled "Valued Segregated Schools for African American Children in the South, 1935-1969: A Review of Common Themes and Characteristics" published in Review of Educational Research provides a synthesis of the scholarship on

segregated schools for African Americans children and provides a useful frame for unpacking the value and successes of African American schools for students, families and community members. Taking the social, cultural, and political moment as a backdrop to understand the available literature, her findings indicate that segregated schools in the South have certain consistent characteristics— well-trained teachers and principals who create a culture of teaching; curricular and extracurricular activities that reinforce the values of the school and community; parental support of school, both in its financial needs and its cultural programs; and school principals who provided the leadership that implemented the vision that parents and community members held about how to uplift race—that positioned them as valuable and pivotal for local parents, students and community members.

Siddle Walker's (2000) review, though useful to describe characteristics of segregated Black schools leading up to and directly following the Brown decision, has several limitations. First, and most germane to the current study, neither Siddle Walker nor the studies she explores, provide a discussion of the external and out-of-school factors that impacted schools. Instead, she broadly mentions "racism" as a unifying theme of the studies she examines. While, I agree that racism is indeed a major contributing factor to the conditions of inequitable all-Black schools, in and of itself, racism does not provide a nuanced understanding of the overlapping social, cultural, and political influences. Second, in her presentation of the characteristics of successful black schools within the context of racism and structural inequality, Siddle Walker presents the characteristics in isolation to infer their mutual exclusion.

In sum, to equitably improve urban schools and community outcomes requires solidarity among a range of stakeholders, including educational leaders, teachers, parents, community leaders and community residents. Indeed, poor Black children face a range of challenges just by the very nature of where they live. The aforementioned discussion reveals why schools should be

better linked to communities in the reform process in order to address the barriers to learning faced by students.

Engaging the Community in School Change and Reform

The call for increased community engagement in education is far from new. As mentioned earlier, federal education legislation dating back to Every Student Succeeds Act of 1965 has encouraged schools to work more collaboratively and closely with their local communities. Additionally, even looking farther back in American educational history, the work of Dewey has championed community engaged education reform. During the Progressive Era, educators saw the school as the community's central institution where students, families and community members could benefit (Dewey, 1920). Given the decades-long plea for increased community engagement in education has yet to fully be actualized, it begs to question why? Why hasn't community engaged school change become a staple in American education in the same way that high-stakes testing has? Why some communities are hardly engaged, if at all, while others have become integral school partners?

Scholars contend that part of the problem with education reformers adopting a sound approach to community-engaged school reform is due to the inconsistency of policymakers and scholars to define, observe and demonstrate it (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2012). Before expounding on how I use community engaged school change in this study, it is necessary to review how the concept of community engagement has been previously conceptualized by scholars. Several researchers have used the concept of community engagement to describe the ways that individuals outside of the school building are involved in school matters. For example, in connecting community engagement to service-learning, in an article titled "Service-Learning: Implications for Empathy and Community Engagement in Elementary School Children" Scott

and Graham (2015) borrow from Lenzi et al. (2012) and define community engagement "as attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills aimed to work for the common good, with responsibility to the surrounding community (p. 358). Similarly, Bebiroglu et al. (2013) explain it "as community-oriented participation with an emphasis on volunteer work and membership in community organizations (p. 155).

In addition, community involvement as a concept and practice has appeared in education scholarship. Sanders (2003) refers to community involvement in schools as the "connections between schools and individuals, businesses, and formal and informal organizations and institutions in a community" (p. 162). In examining the community involvement between multiple sectors and actors, or collaborative networks in reforming charter schools, Wohlsetter et al. (2004) defined cross-sector alliances "as a group of organizations working together to solve issues of mutual concern based on the benefits of collective actions" (p. 1079). Finally, Willems and Gonzalez-DeHass (2012) refer to community involvement as meaningful relationships with community members, organizations, and businesses that are committed to working cooperatively with a shared responsibility to advance the development of students' intellectual, social, and emotional well-being (p. 10).

There exists an important nuance between the terms community engagement and involvement despite scholars' tendency to use them interchangeably. Scholars contend that in order to create the kinds of school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve local communities and increase public support, then it is imperative that we arrive at an understanding between the terms (Ferlazzo 2011). Ferlazzo's (2011) provides a distinction that is useful here. He claims,

> A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth – identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its

> ears – listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve as a client but to gain partners (p.12).

Community engagement and *community involvement* are just the "tip of the iceberg" when it comes to the terminology used to describe involvement in schools. Khadaroo (2012) discusses community voice as a vehicle for community members to weigh in on school matters. Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015) define "public participation" to describe "activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions in public matters and issues" (p. 6). The list goes on.

Indeed, *community engagement* has become a catch-all term in education discourse to describe everything from parents' attendance at a bake sale (Warren, Hong, Rubin & Uy 2009) to two-way communication (Epstein 2018; Epstein and Sheldon 2002) to attending school-based events. Given the varying and inconsistent ideas surrounding engagement, it is necessary to define community engagement for the context of this study. Borrowing from Orr and Rogers (2011), I view community engagement as a set of strategies for addressing the unequal opportunity, unequal participation, and unequal voice. In their view, public (community) engagement promotes collective action towards shared interest. Oakes and Rogers (2006) noted that public engagement "aims to create a vital public sphere capable of generating support for adequate resources and sustaining ongoing improvement (p. 633).

In this study, community engagement captures both the singular and individual level engagement (mentoring one student) as well as the collective (school meetings, guest speakers, community volunteerism). I view both – individual and collective—as important in the school reform process. To transform classrooms and school culture, it is necessary to focus on individual students and groups of student simultaneously.

Given the definitional inconsistencies throughout the education literature and policy discourses, one might ask, "*What might community engagement look like in school reform*?". To address this question, I highlight a few examples of community engagement in school reform. In general, engagement between school officials (e.g. teachers, leaders, counselors, support staff, etc.), families (e.g. parents/guardians other family members), and community stakeholders (e.g. nonprofits, community residents, local businesses) are characterized by efforts of multiple parties, collectively involved in working towards common goals. In the schooling contexts, these goals have traditionally been school-centered focusing on student academic outcomes, such as increasing attendance or graduation and improving school culture. Scholars have also examined community engagement that focuses on community-centered goals such as neighborhood development (Green 2014, Horsford 2014).

Research on urban schools, overwhelmingly suggests that poor educational outcomes are spatially concentrated and are most pronounced in areas with high concentrations of low-income and students of color. Education has been hailed as "the great equalizer" possessing the ability to disrupt patterns of structural inequalities (e.g. poverty). At the same time, however, schools are shaped by and responsive to the complex neighborhood dynamics that surround it. Therefore, urban education reformers concerned with the lives and opportunities of low-income students and families, have attempted to better leverage schools in community-oriented strategies aimed at tackling disadvantages. Evidence of this can be seen in reform initiatives such as extended, full-service, and community schools (Cummings, Dyson, and Todd 2011).

Across the scholarly literature in education, there is a voluminous body of research that reports on the types of community engagement in school change and reform, particularly in low-income geographies. While the researchers do not always categorize their study as one of community engagement (at times using "community involvement" or "school-community

partnership"), their work nevertheless demonstrates engagement of parents and communities in school matters.

Take for example the literature on community organizing for educational change. This scholarship largely documents the ways in which community members, parents, and other stakeholders external to schools come together to incite school change or resist inequitable education policies. One recent example that illustrates the engagement of the community in school change matters can be seen in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) case of Dyett High School hunger strike. In 2012, CPS began closing Dyett, the last open-enrollment neighborhood high school in Chicago's African American Bronzeville neighborhood (Lipman & Haines, 2007). Parents, students, community members in collaboration with teachers petitioned the mayoral-appointed school board in protests. After years of petitioning and resisting, Black parents, Dyett students, and community members had made little progress in effecting the decision to close Dyett. Thus, taking an extreme measure, Dyett community members began their hunger strike (Lipman 2017).

The case of Dyett High School and the surrounding community demonstrates community organizing and resistance for quality public education, specifically for African American students. CPS officials ultimately decided to Dyett as an open-enrollment neighborhood school. I highlight this example because it and other similar forms of community organizing for educational change can be described as community engaged school change.

Calls for urban school reform to be connected to community engagement has come from numerous education researchers. For example, Warren (2005) argues that for urban school reform to be successful, it must be connected to improving the communities that schools' serve. Warren (2005) and other scholars posit that urban children in low-income communities cannot learn if their basic needs are not met (Davis & Jordan, 1994; Green, 2015; Hopson, 2014;

Horsford & Sampson, 2014; Horsford & Vasquez Heilig, 2014; Valli, Stefanski, Jacobson, 2016). Further, Warren (2005) and Green (2014) view community leadership in school change as an alternative to models of corporate school reform, much like those prioritized by current Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos as mentioned in Chapter 1.

One cannot look to scholarship on school-community engagement without encountering the work of Joyce Epstein and her colleagues (Epstein, 2001, 2010; Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). For several decades, Epstein has explored the interplay between schools, families, and communities. In her scholarship, she contends that schools, families, and communities are overlapping spheres of influence that collectively affect students' achievement and development (Epstein 2001, 2010) and argues that students have an increased chance at success when school, family, and community come together to focus on the learning and development of the child (Epstein, 2001; 2010; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Epstein et al., 2009). Inclusive in this model are six types of family involvement: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein's framework argues that the education of the child is not the sole responsibility of an individual entity—or sphere—and instead is the collective responsibility of multiple spheres to work collaboratively to ensure student success.

Several education researchers have utilized Epstein's framework to examine community engagement in school change. For example, research at the intersection of school, family, and community partnerships and student achievement, Sheldon (2003) examined data from 82 elementary schools to explore the relationship between involvement and students achievement test performance. Using Epstein's framework of overlapping spheres of influence, Sheldon found that when schools in low-income, urban neighborhoods establish community engagement

programs and meaningfully engage families and community, students are more likely to perform at higher levels on state-mandated achievement tests. This particular line of inquiry is critical as it suggests the benefit of schools to establish partnerships with families and communities and actively confront the neighborhood challenges that limit the involvement of these stakeholder groups.

Overall, the scholarly literature is split on the Epstein's contributions to the field. Some scholars have argued that the framework is a useful model for examining community and parental involvement in schools. Other scholars, however, have taken note of the limitations of the framework to bridge the cultural gap between schools and families. For instance, Bower and Griffin's (2011) argues that it is important to bridge cultural gaps between school and families in order to establish authentic relationships with families. Additionally, they argue that Epstein's model takes a deficit approach to communities from poor and low-income backgrounds and fails to capture the different ways communities are or want to be involved in schools.

On the other hand, scholars have utilized critical frameworks that center race in conjunction with Epstein's framework to examine school and community relations that address the needs of Black students. Building from and extending on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Sanders, 2006), Khalifa (2012) observes the actions of a school principal leading an alternative urban school to call for a "re-new-ed paradigm" in successful urban school leadership (2012). Specifically, his ethnographic study examines the impact of a principal's community-leadership has on school-community relations and student outcomes. Khalifa found that high principal visibility and advocacy of community-based causes led to trust, credibility, and rapport with the school's community. His research is significant because it takes seriously the particulars of the urban contexts and examines the actions employed by the principal to build school and community engagement. Khalifa's (2012) work is

aligned with other scholars who examine school leadership in urban contexts (e.g. DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Horsford, 2009, 2010; Shields 2010; Siddle Walker, 2009) and argue that the school leader plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining the relationship between schools and communities.

Exploring the intersections between community engagement, school and community leadership and school reform, Terrance Green (2014) examines the out-of-school challenges that sparked a neighborhood-driven community school implementation in the urban Midwest (p. 932). In his case study of Mandela High School, Green discusses how the actors from the local university, community center director, and neighborhood residents worked to reopen the high school. He identified three overarching actions taken by community stakeholders to implement the community school's reform strategy: (1) leaders and residents partnered with the university; (2) the leaders established a community-driven education taskforce; and (3) stakeholders developed critical relationships with multiple community-based organizations including churches, community centers, local parks and city officials. Collectively, school and community stakeholders confronted out-of-school challenges to implement a community school.

This study was similar to DeMatthews and colleagues (2016) whose in-depth qualitative case study explores social justice leadership in an elementary school in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico – one of the world's most violent cities. In this example, the school leader adapted her leadership to prioritize the needs of students and families through meaningful family and community engagement through adult education, community advocacy and critical questioning of the status quo. Specifically, the principal – Mrs. Donna – founded a private school that was rooted in community and parent engagement rooted in parent ownership, hope and service (p. 782). To achieve this, Mrs. Donna engaged the community to support in school reform efforts to ensure the success and safety.

In a 2002 study, Sanders and Harvey identified factors that supported the development and maintenance of effective school-community connection in an urban school district during a period of increased district reform. In a related study, Anderson, Houser, and Howland (2010) examined how school-community partnerships could promote both academic and socioemotional success in four elementary schools in a large urban Midwest school district. The researchers identified the following four central factors in partnership effectiveness: (1) the importance of a flexible, supporting coordinator; (2) adult buy-in and additional and continual training; (3) a positive school climate and a child-centered philosophy shared among stakeholders; and (4) wrap-around services including mental and behavioral supports. Their findings indicated that the implementation of the partnership program yielded positive outcomes on student behavior as well as increased school satisfaction for students.

In a 3-year case study, Peck and Reitzug (2017) describe the role of parent and family engagement and community outreach to improve a low-performing urban school – Brookdale Elementary. Their study examined school turnaround as a specific urban school reform approach. In their study, they explain school turnaround as “the application of intensive human resources interventions, such as principal replacement, staff replacement, and school closures, in the pursuit of quick, dramatic student improvement gains (Peck & Reitzug 2017; Trujillo & Renee, 2015). Their research found that school stakeholders believed that that family and community engagement were essential for generating academic improvement in an urban setting. This reified other scholarship examining the impact of community engagement on students’ academic outcomes (Garcia-Reid et al., 2015; Pemberton & Miller, 2015; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Cumulatively, the above examples are important because they focused on collective forms of community engagement, the individual-scale forms are also important in urban schools and communities. For instance, Pat Moore Harbour (2012) provides an example of a local barber in a

low-income urban neighborhood who provided books by ability level in his barbershop. While children got their haircut, the barber would ask them to read to him in efforts to support their literacy development.

It is also necessary to discuss attempts at school change that is detached from community engagement. There are various reasons why school reform has been disconnected from the community. David DeMatthews (1996) discusses how long-standing misunderstanding, as well as divides between communities and schools, might feed these challenges. Further, DeMatthews hypothesizes that the decline in connections between the public and their public schools may be connected to several factors, including dissatisfaction with school performance, community challenges between the schools and the public, and low rates of citizen engagement.

The recent example in Newark, New Jersey as Andrew Simmons (2015) notes, "shows how well-intentioned reform-minded outsiders may wade clumsily into a school system's entrenched webs of traditions, allegiances, cultural habits, and underlying conditions… they may make more of a mess than the one they mop up." In The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?, Russakoff (2015) tells the story of high-level reformers seeking to transform Newark Public Schools primarily through philanthropy. In particular, Facebook's Founder, Mark Zuckerberg donated $100 million to the Newark school district to hire private consultants to transform the district's schools. While the consultants literally had "a million dollar idea" they failed to engage the predominately low-income Black and Latino community in their reform plans and their efforts yield little change for students.

In conclusion, scholarship has consistently demonstrated the importance of community engagement for school change in urban areas. Academic debates persist regarding how, to what degree, and at what times communities should engage in school and school reform. While engagement varies across context, it is critical that communities are involved in their local school

reform processes, especially schools that serve low-income Black students. For those schools, community engagement has a history of success for Black children and families.

Critical Urban Theory and Critical Race Theory

Introduction

In order to better understand the out-of-school factors that intersected with educators' efforts to approach community engaged school reform, I draw on two theoretical frameworks: critical urban theory (CUT) and critical race theory (CRT).

Critical Urban Theory

Critical urban theorists argue that urban spaces such as neighborhoods and cities are sites of continual (re)construction and products of power relations operating in society. The utility of this framework requires a critique of ideology and power, inequality, injustice, and exploitations within urban spaces (Brenner, 2009).

Critical urban theorist ground their analysis in four primary propositions. First, critical urban theory insists on the need for abstract, theoretical arguments regarding the nature of the urban processes under capitalism. Additionally, it rejects the conception of theory as a formula for social change. Instead, Brenner (2009) posits that critical urban theory is explicitly intended to inform the strategic perspective of progressive, radical or revolutionary social and political actors. Stated plainly, critical urban theory is unapologetically abstract however it is made more concrete in its manifestations in the realm of practice. Scholars working from a critical urban theory perspective, should seek to situate their analysis in abstract terms, but also inform practice by discussing "what is to be done?"

Second, critical urban theorists view knowledge of urban questions as being historically specific and mediated through power relations. Specifically, aligned with the Frankfurt School

tradition, critical urban theory posits that knowledge is embedded within the social and historical conditions and is therefore intrinsically and endemically contextual. Those who seek to understand social (and spatial) actions, must ground them within the specific contexts understanding the social, political and historical conditions that shape the current environments.

Third, critical urban theory rejects market-based approaches that champion achieving an efficient and cost-effective end while failing to interrogate the ends themselves. Critical urban theorists view instrumental rationality as an approach to bolster the current dominant forms of power by suppressing alternative approaches. Finally, critical urban theorists view their task not only to investigate forms of domination but to also discover emancipatory possibilities that have been suppressed by the very system.

Collectively, the aforementioned propositions shape the theoretical and methodological utility of critical urban theory. Of course, these propositions are not mutually inclusive and at times, one might be privileged over others. For instance, in this study, I turn to critical urban theory for its focus on the inherent contextualized approach to understanding social, spatial and in this case educational issues. Additionally, in the conclusion, I return to the first proposition of critical urban theory to provide practical implications for educators.

Researchers interested in educational inequities have turned to critical urban theory to draw attention to the reality that urban schooling occurs in urban spaces that are socially, economically, and politically constrained (Anyon, 2005; Apple, 2001; Buras, 2011; Lipman, 2011, Pedroni, 2011). These scholars have critiqued market-based education reforms occurring in cities such as New Orleans, Chicago, and Detroit to examine the larger sociopolitical and cultural politics that impact urban communities and the schools they attend. Green and Gooden (2014) have utilized critical urban theory in their investigation of school and community partnerships to examine the out-of-school challenges that prompted a neighborhood-driving

community school implementation. In addition, scholars have conjoined critical urban theory and critical theories of race to further examine the permanence and salience of racism across education and community contexts (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Buras 2014).

Critical Race Theory in Education

As a complement to critical urban theory, critical race theory (CRT) is analytically useful for exploring educators' perceptions of the out-of-school factors that challenge their work as well as in analyzing inequality in schools and school systems.

There exist major similarities between critical urban theory and critical race theory, primarily the assertion and acknowledgment of socially constructed realities and the reproduction of power structures (e.g. through education reform or place). Of course, CUT focuses chiefly on the role of space in the reproduction of dominance and marginalization, whereas CRT seeks to illuminate the reproduction of institutional and systemic racism through all possible avenues, including community settings. In the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement, critical legal studies (CLS) arose as a movement to "challenge the role of law in helping to rationalize an unjust social order" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xviii). CLS scholars criticized the hegemonic nature of the civil rights reform, contending that anti-discrimination laws were ineffective in eliminating racial inequity.

Critical Legal Scholars (CLS) began to question the role of the traditional legal system in legitimizing oppressive structures in society. Derrick Bell asserted that one reason why the critiques of the law made by CLS failed to offer suggestions for social transformation was because it neglected to centralize race and racism into the analysis (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998) and CRT began to cultivate as separate from CLS due to a need to analyze racial

injustice while also valuing and legitimizing voices of marginalization (Delgado, 1988; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Crenshaw, 2002).

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged out of the thoughts and traditions of CLS, yet differed with respect to CLS scholars' ideals of a raceless, colorblind society. Critical race theorists contended that CLS was "elitist and exclusionary," and "failed to resolve conflicts of value" (Matsuda, 1987, p. 331). According to Crenshaw et al. (1995), CRT scholarship arose in the late 1970s in response to the opposition of the Civil Rights Movement. The origins of CRT can be traced back to a number of student-staged protests in reaction to the departure of Professor Derrick Bell from Harvard Law School to assume deanship at the University of Oregon in 1981 (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Edward Taylor (1998) noted in "A Primer on Critical Race Theory" that CRT operates as a form of oppositional scholarship that exposes, debunks, and challenges the myth of white normativity.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education and since its inception, many scholars have viewed CRT as a way to analyze and critique educational research and practice in order to make sense of the notion people have that racial inequalities no longer exist in society (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Several attempts have been made to articulate a solid definition of CRT. Each definition, while similarly linked, has unique nuances that advantage particular readings over others. Daniel Solórzano (1998) defined CRT as an evolving methodological, conceptual, and theoretical construct that attempts to disrupt racism and dominant racial paradigms in education (Solórzano, 1998). Within educational discourse, CRT continues to strive to the forefront of challenging and dismantling prevalent notions of fairness, meritocracy, color-blindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities (Parker, Deyhle, and Villenas, 1999). Over the two past decades, educational researchers have utilized CRT to

challenge and dismantle the prevalence of race, racism, and the intersections of racism with other forms of subordination in the lives of people of color.

CRT refutes the principal neoconservative and neoliberal claim that race is no longer a factor in American society largely, and education, specifically. Too often is this the majoritarian belief in education reform. It is this ideology that makes market-based educational reform complicated to address. Seemingly, the first challenge is reminding reformers that race and the implications therein are still at play. Further, the dominant discourse in education reform routinely excludes minority perspectives to justify and legitimize its power. This silencing of alternative experiences serves to minimize and obscure the interplay of power and oppression across time and place. CRT advocates a rewriting of history to include the lived realities of oppressed groups from their perspectives and in their words. Bringing these narratives into account challenges claims of neutrality and universal truths (Delgado, 1989).

CRT scholars anchor analysis of educational structures and inequities in at least five primary tenets: (1) The intercentricity of race and racism with classism, sexism, and other forms of subordination; (2) the challenge to dominant ideologies embedded in theory and practice that often claim objectivity and neutrality in educational reform; (3) the commitment to social justice through the critical examination and transformation of educational discourses and practices that perpetuate subordination; (4) the utility of interdisciplinary perspectives from fields such as women's studies and ethnic studies into education research to better understand various manifestations of discrimination; and (5) the validity of experiential knowledge and offering counter-storytelling, or highlighting the stories of often marginalized voices, as a credible methodological tool (Smith-Maddox and Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano and Yosso, 2001). A growing number of scholars have applied these tenets to a range of educational structures in attempt to uncover the impact of race and racism (e.g., Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-

Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez & Parker 2003; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, & Crosslands, 1998; Tate, 1994, 1997). Below, I review each tenet in more detail.

Tenet 1: The intercentricity of race and racism with classism, sexism, and other forms of subordination.

Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation theory argues that race is a social category used to control and exploit individuals based on difference. CRT builds on this premise and posits that issues of race and racism are endemic, permanent, and a fundamental component in explaining individual and structural inequalities (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992). Discussions of race within CRT begin with an examination of how race has been socially constructed in US history and how the system of racism functions to oppress Communities of Color while simultaneously privileging whites. CRT scholars generally, and Daniel Solórzano (2001) specifically have used Marabel's (1992) definition of racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5). CRT scholars situate issues related to socioeconomic status, gender, and sexuality and their unique encounter with race to seek out answers to theoretical, conceptual, and methodological questions as they pertain to educational inequities.

Tenet 2: The challenge to dominant ideologies embedded in theory and practice that often claim objectivity and neutrality in educational reform.

CRT scholars argue that traditional claims of race neutrality and objectivity act as a camouflage to further a colorblind perspective for the self-interest, power, and privilege of

dominant groups in U.S. society (Calmore, 1992; Solórzano, 1997). Ladson-billings and Tate (1995) asserted that, despite the salience of race in U.S. society, it remains untheorized as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education. Therefore CRT is committed to challenging these notions that have contributed to the deficit thinking about Communities of Color and have led to the exacerbation of inequalities in education.

Tenet 3: The commitment to social justice through the critical examination and transformation of educational discourses and practices that perpetuate subordination.

The term justice has several dictionary definitions. In this sense of justice as fairness and in conjunction with the establishment of rights under the law, the concept expands in scope to apply to many other conditions of social life and everyday behavior. Seeking to increase justice or decrease injustice thus becomes a fundamental objective of CRT scholarship. This goal is connected to a much broader goal of eliminating all forms of subordination by dismantling institutions that perpetuate and maintain racist ideologies. Secada (1989) challenges researchers to examine the link between educational equity to justice needs examining with respect to how changing notions of justice may give rise to different interpretations of educational equity. Finally, CRT is committed to an anti-racist social justice agenda that offers a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991).

Tenet 4: The utility of a transdisciplinary perspective from fields such as women's studies and ethnic studies into education research to better understand various manifestations of discrimination.

CRT acknowledges the simultaneity of both historical and contemporary contexts and therefore goes beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze and challenge the majoritarian ideology

of ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most discourses (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994; Olivas, 1990). CRT draws from and moves beyond critical theory discourses and literature in law, sociology, history, ethnic studies, women's studies and gender studies (see Aguirre, 2000; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Landon-Billings, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, & Crosland Nebecker, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Tate, 1997; Wing, 1997).

Tenet 5: The validity of experiential knowledge and offering counter-storytelling, or highlighting the stories of often marginalized voices as a credible tool for analysis.

CRT recognizes that the lived experiences of people of color are valid, legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding more deeply how Americans see race. These stories or narratives are essential in their duality. That is, on the one hand, they help to illustrate how and to what extent, race and racism mediate everyday life, but they also give "voice" to victims of racial discrimination who suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament. Delgado (1990) argued that people of color in our society speak from experience framed by racism.

Taken together, these tenets represent a collective challenge to counter the existing discourses on education reform, inequality and school reform in minority communities and reveal the ways racism and other forms of subordination mediate students' educational trajectories (Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001, 2002).

In sum, race and racism are interconnected. Further, racism manifests in different ways and ideologies of color-blindness, meritocracy, and interest convergence and works to mask and

maintain systems of advantage and disadvantage. CRT is an adequate analytic framework for exploring and understanding how out-of-school challenges are historically understood and product and process of racism.

Critical Urban Theory, Critical Race Theory and This Study

I draw on critical race theory and critical urban theory for this study because both theories are analytically useful to address some gaps in the literature on community-engaged urban school reform as well as assisting in analyzing the collected data. Within CRT, a vast amount of educational research focuses on how students have encountered school systems. Additionally, there is also a large body of CRT literature that examines teachers and teacher practice as well as inequitable education reform policies. When this study was proposed, there was a growing need to use CRT to examine urban school reform and community engagement. As such, CRT is useful in analyzing inequality in schools and school systems. As explained by Lynn (2014), "CRT begins with the notion that racism is a natural and, in fact, necessary part of a society that is founded on white supremacist principals" and "the education systems become one of the chief means through which the system of white supremacy regenerates and renews itself." Assuming that race and racism is a constant normative and permanent function in education definitely brings into question how urban school educators exercise agency and orchestrate urban school reform within such conditions (Horsford, 2010; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billing, 1998; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Lynn & Adams, 2002).

A second reason why CRT is an appropriate conceptual lens for this study is that it aligns with the demographics of the students and educators at the school as well as the community members in the neighborhood. I conducted research with an urban high school and its

surrounding community that is predominantly Black. Therefore, this framework allowed me to constantly focus on the intersections of race, place, and reform.

At the same time, CUT is particularly appropriate for this study for several reasons. One reason CUT is an appropriate conceptual lens for this study is because as a framework it examines the interplay of education reform and the sociopolitical, structural, and economic inequalities in play in urban neighborhoods. This is useful in investigations of out-of-school factors that shape the context for urban school reform.

A third reason why CUT is suitable for this study is because of its "urban praxis – a fusion of urban knowledge and practice" (Gotham, 2010, p. 939) of exposing, proposing, and politicizing injustices within urban communities (Lipman, 2011). This framework positions the findings of this study to be applicable not only to those working within the realm of research, but also those individuals working directly within these contexts primarily concerned with practice. Taken together, CRT and CUT are appropriate for this study because scholars working within either framework are concerned with disrupting, exposing, challenging, and changing racist policies that work to subordinate and disenfranchise certain groups of people that attempt to maintain the status quo (Green & Gooden, 2014; Tate, 1997).

Moreover, CRT and CUT guided by data collection and analysis in several ways. First, the frameworks guided my data collection because it informed the questions that I asked during my formal and informal interviews. It also informed what I focused on during my observations. Second, I utilized the frameworks to analyze the data. For example, I constantly looked between both frameworks and the findings and where applicable, drew connections. To be clear, I was not constrained by these frameworks and left my interpretations open to data that did not fit either framework. I remained open to other conceptualizations that emerged from the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter begins with a brief note on federal education policy and its promotion of parent and community engagement in schools. Federal legislation has mandated community engagement since at least the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and has continued in each reauthorization of this legislation. Title I of the ESEA ties funding incentives to engagement regulations. I used federal legislation to highlight the endorsement of community engagement in school reform.

The second section of the literature review makes the case for why schools and communities should be linked particularly in urban areas. Using a range of scholarly literature across multiple fields, I provide four reasons why this is important. The reasons provided were as follows: (1) top-down reform strategies disconnected from community realities and development have resulted in incremental improvements; (2) schools alone often lack resources to meet the diverse needs of students; (3) neighborhood conditions impact children's ability to learn in school; and (4) historically, Black schools have been connected to Black communities. My aim in this section was to review scholarship that explicates the reasons why schools should be connected to the community and the urgent need to do so.

In the next section, after tending to the definitional differences in community engagement (and involvement among other terms) within scholarly literature, I discuss examples of community engagement in school change and reform. I present several cases that illuminate the import of community engagement. As a counterexample, I also present a case of school reform that was disconnected from the community to demonstrate how this approach to school change is insufficient.

To end this chapter, I discussed the conceptual framework that guided this study, and in doing so, I outlined the propositions of critical urban theory and the tenets of critical race theory to explain how these frameworks are analytically useful. Ultimately, the goal of this study was to

understand how educators at Rutherford approach school reform and engage the community in the process. This case study seeks to provide insight and contribute to the literature on school change and community engagement. The following section outlines the methodological process utilized in this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I utilize the insights afforded by the earlier literature review (see Chapter II) to guide the construction of the accompanying study. More directly, in this section a discussion of the study's research design, population/sample engaged throughout the study, and processes of data collection and analysis will be presented. In addition, a rationale for choosing a qualitative study will be outlined, and detailed emphasis on the researcher's positionality and ethics will be elucidated. I have chosen to approach this study from the perspective of a critical researcher and as a result, was deliberately positioned to listen to and learn from the participants

of the study. Educational researcher, Katherine Kytten (2004) contends that "critical researchers need to give up the implicit assumption that they know how the world works and power operates, and the researched doesn't" (p. 96). Thus, through the data analysis, I allowed the data to speak to me to provide meaning.

Positioning the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study of community-engaged school reform at Rutherford High School was that of observer-participant. When I started this research, I intended to primarily observe and document the interactions between students, teachers, administrators, community members and stakeholders. However, given the frequency with which I was present in the school building and in the community, I was welcomed and encouraged to participate in several activities allowing me to interact with study participants. These interactions continued during interviews, rapport building, and member checking as well as through classroom activities, administrative and community meetings. I was able to manage this process by keeping copious field notes and by establishing boundaries for my participation at different points in order to make sure I was able to gain insight on aspects of school reform and school-community partnerships.

For example, during school meetings with community partners, I sat amongst the other community partners, careful not to position myself as an employee of the school. However, I was invited to present and speak at these meetings which, had the potential of shifting how I was viewed by community members. In such cases, I continued to sit in the crowd amongst other community partners. Also, I was conscious about whom I sat near during these meetings. I usually avoided sitting within groups of educators. To accomplish this, I would volunteer to distribute meeting agendas or other paperwork that allowed me to select my seat last after most attendees had selected their seats.

My introduction to education began in 2006; a decade before this project began. It was through the relationships I forged as a classroom teacher that afforded me the opportunity to center Rutherford as the site of investigation for this study. To be clear, I have never been a teacher at Rutherford, nor have I worked closely alongside any of the participants whose perspectives informed this work. I was able to gain access to the school by emailing multiple school administrators and discussing the mutual benefits this research would allow. At the same time, I was intentional in introducing myself as a "former teacher whose previous classroom experiences led met to this project." I had hoped this framing would allow educators to view not as an outside researcher coming in to "study" the school. The principal, who had also earned a researched-based doctoral degree understood the specific requirements and the labor related to the project and agreed to participate. She confirmed my access to the school via email as well as in person. The Division of Research within the Mountainview Public School district office authorized the research plan and procedures after I completed their Internal Review Board (IRB) process.

The designated Athletic and Activities Coordinator, Mr. Black, affirmed that the particular line of research explored in this study brought school personnel a new view of their practice and invited me to present the findings. The findings of the research were presented to a group of educators and community partners at the end of the process. Although this research project was not intended to ignite transformation in the school, it was able to serve as a reflective tool that may be able to highlight strengths of the school's program and also spur new thinking around strengthening the school-community networks in the reform process.

I have recognized my own bias as I planned and completed this study and I have consciously made an effort to keep an open mind. As I researched and synthesized the literature, I was careful to take a balanced approach in regards to my conceptual frameworks on urban

school reform and school-community partnerships. Likewise, throughout the data collection and analysis processes, I viewed all information as objectively as possible in order to present a thorough and credible discussion of the results. I leaned on the Maxwell (2005) who reminds that, “if your data collection and analysis are based on personal desires without careful assessment of the implications for the latter for your methods and conclusions, you are in danger of creating a flawed and biased study” (p. 18).

Importantly, I want to offer a few points about the researcher’s subjectivity. Glesne (2006) contends that “subjectivity, once recognized, can be monitored for more trustworthy research and subjectivity, in itself, can contribute to research” (p. 119). Through continuous examination and reflection, I was careful to become cognizant of my own subjectivity and the ways in which it might manifest throughout the research process. The subjectivity I brought to this study was two-fold. First, I am a career education professional who strongly believes in the promise and potential of a neighborhood public school, particularly one that has strong multigenerational ties to community residents. Having attended a public school in a similar context, I see myself as someone who has benefited greatly from a close-knit school-community as a student. My natural tendency would be to argue that this relationship is suited to produce students who are academically and developmentally successful. However, I have had to contend that the nature of public education has changed from when I was a pupil and therefore the structure of schools have shifted in order to survive. This framing has positioned me to regard public schools in the exact contemporary moment while examining the past to make sense of the present.

Second, through my academic training and development of critical frameworks to examine education reform and the social and cultural contexts of schools, I have become critical of current market-based reforms, such as increasing charter school and school choice.

Epistemologically, I align with the research that argues that such reform approaches exacerbate inequalities for poor Black students. I constantly reflected on my epistemological stance throughout the research process being careful not to superimpose a particular slant on the data or analysis. One way I avoided this was to constantly and continually utilize the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter 2. I also heavily relied on member checking as a tool to ensure accuracy in my interpretation of the data.

Given the aforementioned interests in this study, it might have been natural for me to regard the data from a particular textured lens. This could have led me to align myself with one perspective over another. To intentionally avoid this, an analysis of self was on-going as the data unfolded and I constantly had to check myself as a balanced researcher. Reflexivity was essential as I conducted data collection and analysis of this study. Glesne's (2006) definition of reflexivity is useful here. Glesne (2006) defines reflexivity as being "as concerned with the research process as you are with the data you are obtaining." She adds further researchers "ask questions of the process all along the way, from creating your research statement to writing up your report" (p. 125). Thus, I constantly asked questions of myself. Throughout the data collection process, I continuously reflected on how I might be influencing, guiding, or engaging myself in the information presented by the participants. I utilized a journal to document this process.

Given my prior experience in education, my personal history, and current engagement with urban schools, it was critical that I examined my positionality and subjectivity. I continually and systematically sought out my own subjectivity while the research was in progress. I maintaining a reflective journal and engaged in peer debriefing throughout the research process which allowed me to reflect on biases, illuminate and consciously attend to untamed subjectivity that arose throughout the process.

Features of This Case Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the out-of-school challenges that propelled educators to engage the community in the school reform process at a single, neighborhood public high school situated in an urban neighborhood within a metropolitan city. Specifically, this study was particularly interested in how the school linked its community engagement efforts with the out-of-school factors impacting both the neighborhood and the school. Finally, another purpose of this study was to consider the implications for school-community relations in similarly situated schools across parallel contexts.

To address the aforementioned purpose, this study is guided by the following primary research question: The primary question guided this study is: How do educators at Rutherford, a traditional neighborhood high school, approach school reform and community engagement? Additionally, several supplemental questions are used to strategically organize the project:

1. What out-of-school challenges (factors) did educators identify as having shaped their approaches to school reform in a traditional neighborhood public school?
2. How do educators-teachers and administrators—devise strategies to address/respond to these out-of-school challenges (factors)?
3. To what degree do the out-of-school challenges influence the strategies enacted by educators?

In what follows, I discuss the research design and methods employed to conduct this study. Next, I describe the context of the study. Then I provide information about data collection and analysis as well as trustworthiness and ethical considerations. This chapter ends with a conclusion that also provides a brief but important preview into the subsequent chapter.

Unpacking the Research Questions

My first research question focused on the factors and challenges external to Rutherford that educators perceived as having an impact on the character of the school. This question allowed me to describe the social and cultural context in which the community engaged school reform took place through the perspectives of those directly involved in and connected to those challenges. This is a deviation from related traditional research. In similar studies, inadequate attention is given to the context that surrounds schools in order to better appreciate and understand the reforms approaches implemented by educators. Indeed some scholars who focus on community engagement have nodded at the urban conditions which impact schools, however, even in those studies, the voices of community members and stakeholders are not centralized. My first research question takes seriously the living conditions of students and families and the working conditions of educators and uses their experiences as a springboard to best understand how they contended with those challenges.

In my reporting of the findings related to this question, my intention is not to portray Rose as a neighborhood of only deficits. Indeed, Rose, much like every other neighborhood has its challenges. As part of the interview protocol, participants were asked to share about challenges impacting the neighborhood and the school. As such, substantial attention was paid to those which were highlighted in the interviews. At times, educators identified assets in Rose and I included those perspectives as well. To bolster the data on the assets found in Rose, I use observational data and records from my field notes. Overall, the data collected from this research question illuminates the ability of communities in depressed conditions to persist in spite of these challenges. At the same time, it demonstrates that the educators at Rutherford were attentive to the particular needs of students and families despite overwhelming out-of-school challenges.

To understand how educators contend with the out-of-school challenges, my second and third research questions explore the relationship between those challenges and the reform

initiatives implemented. These questions allowed me to get a thorough and nuanced understanding of how educators grappled with a major issue facing schools across the nation: how to provide the best schooling experience possible in spite of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles facing students and communities. There is an important distinction between these questions worth noting. The second research question is primarily concerned with the reform strategies. At the core, the question asks what are educators doing to improve the school. On the other hand, the third question, asks how, if at all, those reform strategies are shaped by the factors external to schools.

Taken together, these questions allow me to understand the inextricable links between the neighborhood and the neighborhood school, the influence of neighborhood challenges on schools and the school reform practices implemented by educators to contend with those challenges.

The Study Context: Mountainview, Rose, Rutherford and Everything in Between

Demographic Realities in Rose

Rutherford High School is a Title I public school located in a mid-sized school district in the eastern region of the United States. I refer to this district using the pseudonym "Mountainview Public Schools (MPS)" and only provide basic information about the district in order to maintain confidentiality. According to the American Community Survey (2015), Mountainview is home to almost 700,000 residents, about 20% of whom are children ages 5-18 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). The Rose neighborhood had a population of slightly over 81,000 residents spanning its 8.7 square miles geographic zone. In 2015, the year before data collection of this project commenced, 74,856 African American residents were accounted for which represents 92% of the residents in the census zone. This number is nearly double the rate of total African Americans in the entire city of Mountainview at 310,678; accounting for 48%.

Whites accounted for 4% of the population in Rose at 3,502 residents compared to 36% of Whites across the city totaling 230,489.

A long view of the population dynamics as presented by Urban Institute in collaboration with National Neighborhood Indicators Partnerships (NNIP) reveals the trajectory of population change since 1990. According to this data, in 1990, African Americans accounted for 92% of the population in Rose and incrementally increased in 2000 and 2010 from 93% to 94% respectively. During this same time span, whites accounted for 6.4% of the population in Rose in 1990 and decreased to 4.9% and 3.2% in 2000 and 2010 respectively. For the1990, 2000 and 2010 years, Hispanics accounted for 1.1%, 1.2%, and 1.8% respectively.

The Mountainview schools only serve residents of Mountainview with few exceptions. For examples, employees of the school district may opt to have their child attend one of the schools by entering into a district-wide lottery. The two major school types in Mountainview are public and public charter. During the year of this study, 2016-2017 children were split almost equally with 54% attending public schools and 46% attending charter schools (State Department of Education, 2018). These figures represent a total of more than 91,000 children. The demographics of children enrolled in charter schools were 75% African American, 16% Latino and 5.9% White. 39.5% of the total student enrolled in charter schools identify as "economically disadvantaged."

On the other hand, nearly 48,600 students attend more than 115 public elementary, middle, and high schools in MPS district. Throughout the district student enrollment has continued to increase. Between the 2011-2012 and 2016-2017 school years, the district gained almost 3,500 students (School District Facts Sheet, 2018). At the time of this study, approximately 49,000 students were enrolled in district schools. Of these students, 82% were students of color. Specifically, 64% were Black, 18% were Hispanic, and 4% identified as Asian,

Multi-racial, or other. 13% of the students enrolled in district schools were White. Additionally, 76% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch, 15% received special education services and 11% were English Language Learners (ELL).

In the 2014-2015 school year, the district transitioned to the Common Core-aligned Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment which groups students' performance scores into five levels. Scores at levels 4 and 5 represent being "on-target" for college and career readiness (PARCC website, 2018). One year after this transition, of the students tested in 2016, about a quarter (25.4%) were at levels 4 and 5 in English Language Arts (ELA) and 23.9% were at levels 4 and 5 in Math. Finally, the district's 4-year graduation rate increased from 53% in the year 2011 to 69% in the year 2016.

The above data demonstrates a steady African American populace in Rose dating back thirty years representing what urban sociologist Marcus Hunter and Zandria Robinson (2018) refer to as chocolate city. Intended to disrupt and replace existing language utilized to describe and analyze Black American life, *chocolate cities* is offered as a sociopolitical concept and a comprehensive way to understand and do asset-based social science examination of Black communities. Hunter and Robinson (2018) explain the following:

> Chocolate cities are a perceptual, political, and geographic tool and shorthand to analyze, understand, and convey insights born from predominantly Black neighborhoods, communities, zones, towns, cities, districts, and wards; they capture the sites and sounds Black people make when they occupy place and form communities. Chocolate cities are also a metaphor for the relationship among history, politics, culture, inequality, knowledge, and Blackness.

Economic Realities in Rose: Income, Employment and Housing Data

Income data from 2015 reported that the median household income of residents in Rose was $30,910 compared to a median household income of $70,848 for residents across Mountainview. Additionally, 70% of Rose residents had a household income of under $50,000.

Approximately 40% of the population in Rose fell at or below the poverty line compared to 18% across the city. This figure is consistent with the data reported by the Urban Institute, which indicates that 38% of families in Rose live at or below the poverty line. The percentage of families in poverty in Rose has steadily increased since the 1980s, which at the time was 27%. Of particular importance is the percentage of school-aged children from Rose living in poverty which was reported at 50% (Urban Institute, 2018).

The unemployment rates and housing data are used to provide more detailed contextual information about the Rose neighborhood. The unemployment data indicates a steady increase in the rates of unemployment in Rose since the 1980s. In 1980 the unemployment rate was 10%, then increased to 13% in 1990, and by 2015 was reported at 23%. Housing tenure, considered a significant indicator of neighborhood stability, as assessed in 2015 reveals that of the 34,356 total housing units in Rose, 86% or 29,470 were occupied. In 2010, the total number of housing units was 28,122. It could be argued that the process of gentrification has given way to an increase in housing stock. Finally, renter-occupied dwellings account for 80% of the total occupied units in Rose.

The average persons per household and per family in Rose reported in the 2015 American Community Survey was 2.6 which is 20% higher than the figure in Mountainview which was 2.2. These figures should raise a level of skepticism especially given the empirical data that suggests that among the working and impoverished Black population multiple individuals and/or families share residences. 56% of the households in Rose were headed by women (ACS, 2015). In order to better contextualize the realities in Rose compared to other areas of the city, Table 2 below offers some demographic and economic data to illustrate the difference between various sections of the city.

In order to better contextualize the realities in Rose compared to other areas of the city, Table 2 below offers some demographic and economic data to illustrate the difference between various sections of the city.

Table 2: Mountainview Neighborhood Profiles

Neighborhood	Total Population	Race/Ethnicity	Poverty (Persons below poverty line)	Median household income
1	82,859	Black – 29% White – 44% Hispanic – 21%	13.5%	$82,159
2	77,645	Black- 9% White – 67% Hispanic-10%	13.4%	$100,388
3	83,152	Black – 6% Hispanic – 10% White – 7%	9.4%	$112,873
4	83,066	Black – 54% Hispanic– 20% White – 21%	11.9%	$74,600
5	82,049	Black – 69% Hispanic – 9% White – 18%	19%	$57,554
6	84,290	Black-35% Hispanic-6% White-51%	12.6%	$94,343
7	73,290	Black – 94% Hispanic – 3% White – 2%	27.2%	$39,165
Rose	81,133	Black – 92% White – 4% Hispanic-2%	**37.7%**	**$30,910**

Research Design: Bounding the Case

To address the research questions outlined in this study, I chose to employ a qualitative design because this methodological approach is best suited for analyzing a particular social situation, event, or interaction (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2004). This study is inherently qualitative in nature because it sought to examine how a traditional neighborhood school linked

school reform efforts to local community realities. With narratives that included multiple perspectives of the out-of-school challenges that shaped the school's reform approach, this study gained a deeper understanding of the complexity involved in reforming schools school in urban contexts.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), a research design is the procedure used to gather data, conduct an analysis of the data, and reach conclusion to add to the knowledge base of a particular focus area of study. To put it simply, it can be defined as "the researcher's plan of how to proceed" (p. 52). In particular, a qualitative researcher is interested in studying an individual's view of the world thereby interrogating the truth behind the story. By studying multiple points of views, however, the qualitative researcher is able to bring clarity to the problem and seek to find synergies between multiple viewpoints.

Given that this research intended to understand the approaches to collaborate with the local community to engage in school improvement, case study was the most effective strategy to answer the research questions by allowing the research to perform inquiry within a real-life context. Yin (1984) suggests that in general, case students are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed and is defined as an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon. Further, this study was conducted in great detail and often relied on the use of several data sources.

Target Population and Sample

I utilized purposive sampling to select both the research site and the participants for this study. Purposive sampling is an approach to identifying participants that is deliberate so that "the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1999). In addition to purposive sampling, at times, I also use snowball sampling (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1999) because as participants emerged from the site of investigation, I asked them to refer other individuals who could provide an

insightful perspective to my research. This proved to be extremely useful in connecting with parents and community members.

When I conceived and proposed this study, I intended that I would interview Black educators that had been at Rutherford for at least three years who were either from the community or had close ties to it. My assumption was that educators who were directly connected to the local community would be able to provide insight that would be impossible to get elsewhere. However, once the data collection process was in full motion, I discovered that this was not going to be feasible, partially because the actors involved in school reform at Rutherford were diverse and sometimes headed by administrators who were newly appointed to the school. I also planned that I would interview all the teachers in one particular academic department (i.e. English, Math, or Science) so I could also understand the intersection with the curriculum. However, the school was divided into academies and educators primarily worked within their assigned academies.

When I began recruiting participants for this study, requests were made through multiple media. First, the principal allowed me to detail the research study at a whole-school faculty meeting. This allowed me to present the specifics of the project in a large group setting, ensuring that potential participants all received the same information. Second, I followed up with an email to the entire staff (copy of the email in the appendix). This email requested that any individual interested in providing perspective to contact me directly. Third, I created a flyer that was placed in the teachers' mailbox, again, providing information about the study and asking that interested individuals to contact me. Finally, as I conducted interviews with educators, I requested that they provide the name(s) of other educators who could corroborate or contradict their point of views.

The recruitment of community members followed a similar process. At the initial community partners' meeting, I was given time in the meeting to discuss the project and solicit

participants. The leader of the meeting provided me with a copy of the attendee sign-in sheet that included names, organization, phone numbers, and email addresses of each individual present. I was able to use that to send follow-up emails providing more information about the study and requesting that interested individuals contact me directly. Finally, much like with the educators' interviews, I requested that community partners provide names and contact information for other individuals who could further color their narratives. This method was particularly necessary for parent participants.

Ultimately, the participants provided a useful insight into the community engaged school reform process at Rutherford. While I am aware of the potential for participant bias, aside from corroborating the data through multiple participant accounts, observations, and at times document confirmation, this potential flaw remains (Maxwell, 1996). Of the 40 participants interviewed for this project, there were twelve men and twenty-eight women. The participants included administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, community partners/members, school district staff. The time range of their professional experience within the Mountainview school district was between one year and 30 years. The table below organizes information about those interviewed for this project.

Table 2.1: Interview Participants

Position/Role	**Total Number Interviewed**
Administrators	12
Teachers	19
School Staff	6
Parents	4
Community Partners/Members	9
School District Staff	1
Total	**51**

Protecting Participants

Protecting the privacy of participants is a key ethical consideration in research involving human subjects. It is intended to reduce the potential back-lash or harm that participants may experience from being associated with research data. In the current educational climate where union-busting, at-will employment contracts, fear, and hostility surround the profession of teaching, it is especially important that an increased degree of care is taken to protect research subjects. In addition to shielding participants from harm, ensuring that research subjects' identities are protected could also enhance the data quality by reducing the likelihood that participants will withhold sensitive information (Brear, 2017). In this study, I subscribe to standard approaches in qualitative research to protect research participants.

First, before each interview, I carefully reviewed the consent form with the participants. In all cases, I went through each section of the consent form, highlighting and summarizing important elements. For each section, I provided more explanation and used real-life examples to describe the content of the consent form. For example, I explained to participants that I would not share the data or the names with any district-level officials and ensure that the information they share could not, in any way, influence their annual teaching evaluations. While most participants had already assumed this to be the case, that assumption was not consistent across all interviews. It is my assumption that some educators had previous negative experiences with research data. Thus, I was deliberate in assuaging those concerns, to whatever degree possible. After reviewing the consent form with participants, I allowed several moments – typically 1 to 3 minutes—for each participant to do an individual review of the document before signing.

Within a day or two of the interviews, signed consent forms were photocopied and shared with the participant for their records. This also allowed participants further review of the consent form at their discretion. The other copy of the signed consent form was securely stored as

directed by the University of California Internal Review Board (IRB). I was careful to observe the privacy standards, mandates, and ethical standards established by the IRB. Subsequently, all participant information was de-identified and maintained in a separate and secure file.

Data Collection

There were two primary data sources for this study: individual in-depth interviews with school administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and community members, and observations. Interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes and took place at the school, in coffee shops, an organization's office buildings, in parents' employment offices and over the telephone. One of the participants, who had been involved in the community for several decades offered to give a driving tour of the neighborhood while we completed the interview. I also conducted 2 focus groups: one with representatives from community organizations connected to the school and the other with a team of teachers. Finally, to get a broader sense of school-community relations, I interviewed district central office staff members and state level education administrators. These interviewers were useful to contextualize the perspectives of the others.

Interviews

The primary data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), interviews are "a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation" (p. 48). Thus, the semi-structured conversations I had with participants allowed room for greater depth and more variance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) to best understand the context under investigation.

I developed an interview protocol and shared it with the members of my dissertation advisory committee who provided feedback. Using this feedback, I adjusted the protocol. The

final interview protocol included 34 questions divided into four categories: personal background, community/neighborhood context, school change, and school climate. The nature of semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility and malleability in deciding which topics would be covered and questions asked. This was necessary because major immutability may have hindered my ability to navigate issues that emerged throughout the interviews, which would have hampered my accurate interpretation of and analysis of the data (Maxwell, 1996).

These formal, semi-structured interviews were supplemented with informal interviews throughout the data collection period. In order to gain a more clear and robust portrait of the community-engaged school reform at Rutherford, I relied on the perspectives of the individuals involved. At times, I utilized informal conversations to ascertain more information related to the study. For instance, after a particular community meeting where student attendance was the major topic of discussion, I approached a community partner to understand their perspectives on the issue. There were countless informal conversations that contributed to this study.

A substantial amount of data was gleaned from these formal, semi-structured interviews. Since my research questions seek to unearth participant perceptions and experiences with school reform and community engagement, interviews were most appropriate. In addition, interviews allowed participants to provide detailed accounts which were used in reporting the data. Interviews also correspond well with my methodological approach – qualitative case study – which frequently relies on interviews as an aspect of data collection (Schram, 2003; Stake, 1994). Through these interviews, I was able to understand how individuals have come to understand the external challenges to Rutherford as well as how those challenges impact individuals differently. Further, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the conversation to flow in a natural direction by permitting the participant to fully detail particular experiences that were more pronounced than others.

Table 2.2: Interview Participants, Name and Title/role

Name (Pseudonym)	Title/Role
Mr. Black	Athletic and Activities Coordinator
Ms. Coretta	Administrator
Dean Thompson	Administrator
Dean Givens	Administrator
Ms. Yolanda	Principal
Ms. Jasmine	Math Teacher
Ms. Nadia	Administrator
Mr. Wires	Technology Specialist
Mr. Martin	Administrator
Mr. Gray	Social Studies Department Chair
Mr. Wires	Technology Manager
Mr. Wade	Behavior Technician
Mamma Dee	Behavior Technician
Ms. Sheila	9th Grade English Teacher
Mr. Swan	Eagle Academy Administrator
Ms. Murphy	Teacher
Mr. Dixon	Band Director
Ms. Shelby	Administrator
Ms. Alicia	Teacher
Ms. Antoinette	11th and 12 grade Special Education Teacher
Ms. Marie	Teacher
Ms. Spring	10th grade Social Worker
Dean Thompson	Administrator
Mr. Scott	9th Grade Science
Officer Morton	School Security Guard
Mr. Nick	Administrator
Mr. Maurice	10th Grade Math Teacher
Ms. Alexandra	Science Teacher
Ms. Brandy	11th Grade English Teacher
Ms. Bailey	12th grade Teacher
Ms. Box	Parent
Mr. Daniels	Administrator
Ms. Peters	Special Education Teacher
Ms. Milly	Teacher
Ms. Ida	Teacher
Ms. Margaret	Teacher
Ms. Taylor	Suspension Coordinator
Ms. Maxine	Teacher
Ms. Rogers	11th grade parent
Ms. Curry	Parent
Ms. Freedom	Parent

Observations

In addition to interviews, this study also collected observation data on school and community relations. I conducted observations within the school and the surrounding community. I attended the community partnership meetings that happened over the course of a school year. I also observed meetings with school leadership and community partners. In addition, I attended sessions where community partners worked directly with students. On a monthly basis, the neighborhood advisory council met to discuss community issues as well as issues across the city that impacted the neighborhood (i.e. local legislation, residential/community development), I attended these meetings as well. Photographs and recording were prohibited at the neighborhood advisory meetings so relied on heavy note taking and personal illustrations to capture the essence of what occurred.

Importantly, I intentionally integrated myself into the community in other ways. For example, on Sundays, I frequented a local church in the area. I also visited a local barbershop that was recommended to me by a student at Rutherford. In addition, I ate at neighborhood restaurants and visited neighborhood parks, and attended Rutherford sporting events. While I did not always conduct informal interviews at these locations, they were used to provide texture to the observations as well as building rapport with potential participants.

Given that my IRB approval did not allow for student voices, observations were instrumental in capturing how students responded to the reform efforts through their actions and behaviors. Observations also, through observations, I was able to corroborate statements made during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Throughout my study, observations provided me the opportunity to observe social processes related to school reform, community engagement, as well as the conditions in Rose.

Moreover, observations allowed me to gather information about the process of engagement and the roles that various parties played in community engagement and school improvement. During moments of observations, I took notes about participant comments and actions as well as my perceptions of their reactions and used this information to follow up on events and conversations as needed. Observations also helped me to identify interview subjects and key documents for analysis. As it relates to the relationship between the school and community members, observations were used to assess power dynamics and social interactions within and between the school and community.

In my role as observer, I generally took a non-participant approach. I would only speak if directly spoken to and would otherwise try to blend into the background. Before each observed event, either I or the leader of the meeting introduced/identified me as a researcher and allowing them to opt out of being observed if it made them feel uncomfortable.

Documents

Documents were also collected to provide more detail about the neighborhood, school, and community. These documents represent a range of medium including print and electronic documents. Some of the documents, such as meeting agendas and presentations were bound by time and purpose (communication, etc.). While other documents were available for wider distribution to parents, students, school staff, community residents. Examples of these documents include event flyers, parent newsletters/communications, meeting agendas/minutes, meeting presentations, and community events postings

Field Notes and Reflective Journal

Throughout data collection, I constantly and consistently used field notes to personally document activities, questions, ideas, and thoughts occurring during interviews and observations. For example, during participant interviews, the use of field notes allowed me to jot down follow-up and probing questions and quickly reference ideas discussed in previous interviews for confirmation or contradictions. I utilized different color ink pens to delineate what was said by the participant and what my thoughts, ideas, and follow-ups were. During observations, field notes were used to sketch setting descriptions and write details about participants and documents shared at meetings or other events.

Lastly, I utilized a reflective journal to catalog my thoughts, misconceptions, understandings, and biases throughout the research process. Additionally, a reflective journal allowed me to chart the evolution of the research process and make sense of emerging themes and ideas. Within a few hours (and up to one day) after an interview or observation, I would add another entry to my reflective journal. In the initial phase of data analysis, my journaling increased to daily as new themes and ideas were constantly being discovered.

Data Analysis Procedures

With the exception of two, all interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder and were professionally transcribed (Maxwell, 1996). On one visit to conduct interviews, I realized that the reordered was malfunctioning. Instead of rescheduling the interviews, I conducted the interviews and kept copious handwritten notes. Once the recorded interviews were transcribed, audio recordings of interviews were compared to transcriptions to clean and edit the data. This process marked the initial emergence of themes and topics.

For this project, analysis of data included an iterative process of reviewing, analyzing, and coding all transcribed data. The analysis was conducted by reviewing interview transcripts multiple times for salient points, ideas, and perspectives that emerged across interviews with participants. Additional data that was coded included field notes and documents. This process involved writing memos, summaries, and outlines about each interview. An aggregation of the reviewed data was then coded for emergent themes and patterns and categorized accordingly. Based on iterative coding and categorization, the strongest and most robust themes emerged and are described in the findings chapters. During the data analysis process, I also constantly revisited and reviewed related literature as well as my field notes and reflective journal to think through connections and contradictions. Borrowing from Marshall and Rossman (2010) who posit that "qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes; it explores, describes, and builds on grounded theory" (p. 207).

In order to make clarifications about information, and in some instances to test the power of these themes, I revisited the school in the study in light of my preliminary findings. I continued with themes that were most consistent across the school and which I felt carried resonance overtime in my subsequent visits to the school. Open coding yielded the following themes: "school/neighborhood context"; "types of partnerships"; "strengths/challenges to partnerships"; "school improvement efforts"; "school/community changes"; and "community involvement". I wrote analytic memos to synthesize the connections across the themes and also revisited interview transcripts. Some themes were combined in light of similarities, while other codes became sub-codes or super-codes (Sandala, 2015). Finally, significant statements were determined and coded.

Trustworthiness

Several considerations were made to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. The time invested in interviewing and building relationships with participants contributes to this goal. As Patton (2002) contends, "time is a major factor in the acquisition of trustworthy data." The credibility of findings and interpretations of depends greatly on careful attention to establishing trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). Additionally, careful attention paid to the triangulation of findings, biases, researcher subjectivity, and limitations of the study, are important elements of establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Schram (2003) posits that the challenge of credibility should be addressed with other researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, but also in the eyes of the study's participants" (p. 132). In short, credibility refers to the degree to which the inferences and interpretations that the researcher makes are sound and congruent with participants' inferences and interpretations. To ensure credibility, I provide as rich, deep, and detailed description as possible of the community, people, schools, and events so that I immerse the reader as much as possible in the data that I have seen. One way I achieve this is through the use of verbatim quotations so that participants' words speak for themselves. It is my intention that this "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) allows for detailed descriptions of the studied phenomenon so that the reader can understand how I developed my interpretations and analysis. Notwithstanding, it is still possible for ethical concerns to emerge around how to present and interpret data, especially around the issue of protecting participants.

Schram's (2003) concept of "making public the private" and discusses the balance of sharing information without betraying the trust of study participants. I grappled with this notion constantly throughout the completion of this dissertation. I wanted to ensure that I told an accurate story of Rose and Rutherford that honors the voices and experiences of participants. Further, as the process of community-engaged school reform is on-going at Rutherford, I did not

want to offer an incomplete story that would leave readers wondering the potency of improvement efforts and community engagement. To address this, in the final chapter of this dissertation, I remind readers that the process of school improvement is on-going and I share the reality of which reforms have been successful, have produced mixed-results and those that have been less effective.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this presentation of the findings and other sections of this dissertation, I maintain participant confidentiality by using pseudonyms. In addition to using pseudonyms for participants, I also assign names to places, neighborhoods, community centers and other spatial markers that might reveal and compromise the actual site of investigation and individuals involved in this project. This ensures that participant integrity and that of the school are not compromised. Bodgan and Biklen (1992) discuss ethical issues, inclusive of concealing participant identity, obtaining permissions to perform research and report findings. Participants were informed and agreed in writing to the research protocol of confidentiality prior to beginning the study.

Chapter Summary

To review, I begin this chapter by positioning the researcher in the study. I then provided a detailed description of the research design and methods for this study. Next, I discussed the data collection methods that I employed including interviews, observations, focus groups and at times document review. Following, I outline how I conducted data analysis, specifically the iterative process of review. Last, I discuss issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. In the next chapter, I provide a set of findings. In particular, from the perspectives of educators, I

discuss the out-of-school challenges that impacted the teaching and learning climate of Rutherford. Through the voices of educators, I provide a portrait of Rose and its influence on students, families, educators, and community members.

Chapter 4

From Segregation

Out-of-School Factors and the Impact on Rutherford High School

Introduction

The findings indicate that teachers and administrators at Rutherford High School reported several out-of-school challenges that shaped their approach to school reform and improvement. The reform efforts employed by educators at Rutherford seriously took into account the social, historical, and cultural contexts of the school. This acknowledgment and understanding of the lived realities of the students and parents served as a means to engage with families, community members, and school partners with culturally-relevant and context-specific practices. I define their practices as culturally-relevant because they were predicated on a contextualized and authentic knowledge of the neighborhood.

Briefly, as I will show in this chapter, school staff at RHS identified out-of-school factors that they felt strongly impacted students, families and ultimately the school culture. This awareness and knowledge illustrate the imperative to develop a deep understanding of the urban environment by interrogating the factors and their overlapping influence on the character and composition of the school, as well as school reform initiatives developed by educators. For teachers and leaders at Rutherford, this knowledge was pivotal in shaping the ways in which they engaged with students, parents, community members and school partners to improve the schooling experiences of students. These practices not only signal the importance of place and space in school reform, but also the necessity for educators to link school reform and improvement to community realities.

I center the perspectives of educators – teachers, administrators and support staff—to illuminate the social, cultural, and political context external to Rutherford that had profound

impacts on students and the school. As mentioned in chapter 2, in an era of educational reform in which accountability and choice are emphasized, growing attention has been paid to performance indicators such as achievement test scores, graduation rates, and consumer (i.e. parental) demand for enrollment. Unfortunately, however, this has contributed to declining education reform and policy attention to the out-of-school variables that dramatically shape the educational experiences of students and the working environment of educators. In what follows, I consider the interconnected spaces of neighborhood factors, students, and school reform. In particular, I utilize critical race theory and critical urban theory as conceptual and analytic tools to illustrate, problematize and unpack how structures, systems, and policies external to schools greatly impact the within-school experience for students, in particular, Black students, from the perspective of educators.

Neighborhood Conditions

Across multiple interviews with instructional and administrative staff members at Rutherford, it was revealed that out-of-school factors of drugs, violence, and concentrated poverty had a profound impact for the school environment. In this section, I discuss these out-of-school factors and their impact on the character of Rutherford, particularly highlighting why improvement efforts were needed. Educators at Rutherford recognized that students, families, and the school are impacted by the outside-of-school variables. These variables, overwhelm the teachers and administrators who choose to work in Rutherford.

To best orient the findings related to question one, it is necessary to establish a baseline understanding of the demographic, economic, social and educational realities in the Rose neighborhood a few years prior and through the time of the study. The dominant demographic trend is the concentration of poor, African-Americans. The processes of gentrification occurring across the city had two important effects in the Rose neighborhood. First, Blacks who were

displaced as a consequence of gentrification occurring in neighboring residential zones were relocated to Rose. Rose maintained its demographic makeup as a majority African American neighborhood located in the far southeast region of the city. In other neighborhoods, however, White, upper- and middle- class residents increased. These trends in the demographic composition of neighborhoods contributed to the segregation in Mountainview. Second, the initial stages of gentrification had begun to take form in Rose. Those stages included the razing of housing projects and the construction of new and expensive housing developments and condominiums. A full discussion of gentrification is beyond the scope of this project, however, given that this perspective arose from interviews, I briefly share below.

On the other hand, it is important to note the assets within the Rose community. Several participants spoke on the close-knit ties of the families in Rose. In their accounts, despite the challenges impacting rose, the individuals and families within the neighborhood demonstrated community cohesion and had strong allegiances to "insiders" and were suspicious of "outsiders". For example, in describing the Rose community, one administrator noted that "They stick together." She continued, "[it's] a pretty family-oriented community, but a tough [community], in the sense that they don't trust outsider individuals." This tight-knit community feel is grounded in the notion that several families are long-term residents of Rose and many families have lived in the same house for generations. The rootedness of several family members to remain in the neighborhood has contributed to the closeness of the community. The school administrator notes that the neighborhood is comprised of "a lot of extended families, so we do have a lot of grandparents raising their grandkids. We do have a lot of young people who may be in group homes, foster care situations and things like that. But I would say the majority of the young people are living in a home and doing pretty well."

The juxtaposition of both community assets and challenges for students and families can be noted in the accounts above. In describing Rose, this administrator, as well as other study participants, described the community through multiple lenses. While it was evident that there were challenges and assets co-existing in Rose, participants provided balanced perspectives of Rose. The neighborhood was rife with complexities, messiness, and contradictions.

Holding her walkie-talkie in her left hand, and a lanyard full of keys in her right, Ms. Coretta, a tall and stocky African American woman reminisced about her childhood in the Rose community. With a smile, she recalls, “Growing up here, we had fun. We felt it was safe even though I look back and I’m like it’s crazy because I grew up in the era where crack was starting to become an issue in the community.” Ms. Coretta shares her memory of the neighborhood with a child-like naïveté yet she situates her reflection within her current, adult realization and considers the very real existence of drugs that surrounded her at the time. Not only was Ms. Coretta from the Rose community, she also attended RHS. She remembers “even with going to school, it was definitely a sense of danger. We didn’t have metal detectors or anything like that, so if [someone] had a gun, more than likely it was in a locker at school.” Ms. Coretta’s assessment of the conditions of Rose is uniquely intertwined with her lived experiences growing up in the community. As an insider, she is able to account, in specific and nuanced ways, the conditions that had a dramatic influence on local residents.

Ms. Coretta’s assessment of Rose was similar to others who described the neighborhood. As such, they often recalled the challenges they faced but also described positive moments that surrounded these challenges. Neighborhoods such as Rose are complex. Simultaneously possessing challenges and benefits. Participants provided balanced accounts that were instrumental in disrupting the dominant notion that Rose was entirely bad.

Across several interviews with educators, they consistently reported drugs as a neighborhood variable that impacted the community, local neighborhood residents, and families. I return to Ms. Coretta's words because they summarize and bear witness to the challenges presented by the presence of drugs in Rose and shared by other participants. Continuing to speak about the Rose community, Ms. Coretta identifies another challenge that impacted the community. She describes, "I would say that drugs play[ed] a big part of most the neighborhood that I grew up in. And it wasn't even one of those things where a guy stood on the corner and it was just him [affected by drugs], it affected everybody." The widespread drug use in Rose and other parts of the city is well-documented in news media sources. Residents from the Rose community mentioned that the drug epidemic (which was widespread in the 1980s) disproportionally affected their neighborhood.

Despite the overwhelming presence of drugs, Ms. Coretta recalls a sense of community togetherness that persisted. She leaned back in her oversized, black-leather office chair, and after staring at the ceiling for a few seconds, cracked a half smile and said: "I think the drug dealers were nice." To some, this may seem perplexing as those called "drug dealers" are often regarded in society as deviant. Ms. Coretta offers an explanation, "If you were going to school; if you were doing certain things, [the drug dealers] protected some people like 'oh no, leave them alone. They going to school.' Or the old lady coming up the steps, 'uh uh leave her alone.'" Here, Ms. Coretta illustrates a long-stand sense of community in the neighborhood that included individuals that, in popular discourse stemming from the news media and politicians, consider to disrupt "community". However, in the Rose community, members contributed to a shared sense of community support. Ms. Coretta summarizes, "I would say [the neighborhood] was very dangerous and criminal, very drug infested… but it was like respectful." Her example also emphasizes a community perspective on education and its importance to residents in the

neighborhood. She shares that when youth in the community were attending school, they were often shielded or protected from some of the danger that was present in the community.

Ms. Coretta's assessment of the neighborhood as "dangerous," "criminal," and "respectful" presents an interesting analysis of urban place. Here, she appears to describe the neighborhood through multiple lenses. As a child growing up in Rose, her personal experiences remind her that community members were respectful and kind. At the same time, however, the social constructions of urban and inner-city areas as "dangerous" and "criminal" have shaped how she has come to remember her home place. The ways in which discourses influence how individuals recall the past contributes to the politics of memory that determines how the past is remembered and passed on. This is not to suggest that Ms. Coretta's recollection of Rose is inaccurate. Instead, the ways in which discourses and narratives about urban place and urban residents influence memory should be considered. Further, the juxtaposition offered by Ms. Coretta illuminate the complexities within urban neighborhoods.

In addition, Ms. Coretta's expression of Rose demonstrates a robustness that exists in inner-city neighborhoods. While it is simple for politicians to write-off urban areas as inherently "bad," Ms. Coretta proves that there are positives in these areas. Importantly, both the "bad" and the good within the environmental contexts inexorably affect the fundamental character of neighborhood public schools. These external constraints, while in large part are beyond the reach of educators, drastically affect the conditions in which they teach and students learn as well as the school improvement efforts of educators.

To be clear, Rose was not the only neighborhood in Mountainview that faced depressed conditions. Some might even argue that the challenges facing Rose residents were typical in other parts of the city as well. However, the presence and impact of these challenges were disproportionally situated in Rose primarily due to the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic

composition of the community. In spite of this, however, residents had an extensive record of disrupting negative perceptions and focused on the assets. Their focus on assets and community-based resources was paramount in constructing new realities and changing discourses across Rose community and Mountainview.

The "danger" (i.e. violence) that Ms. Coretta and other participants mentioned that is present in the Rose neighborhood can be further understood by situating it within the broader context of the city. Here, the reflections of Dean Thompson are useful. He recalls that there was "a lot of shooting … a lot of drug activity" in the neighborhood. Then he elucidates the connection between this micro-history to other areas of the city. He explains,

> This city has a history of what you call neighborhood beef. There wasn't a lot of gang activity, but more neighborhood beef. If you were from Holland or from Coppers Park and ran into each other, it may have been an issue. If you had someone that came from Bar City, which is all the way on the other side of town, I mean and they came here, then there was a major issue for us [the school] and we couldn't have those neighborhoods together in the building because it would erupt into something violent. And we've seen it in the past, but this is literally a systemic issue. We've seen it over time. If Granddad had a beef back then, then you going to continue that been within that generation.

Dean Thompson's comments are essential for at least three reasons. First, he highlights the importance of community cohesion for students and the individual charge that comes with being connected to others in a particular place. Ongoing disputes or "beef" between neighborhoods are to some extent about a neighborhood's reputation and the relative safety that comes from being affiliated with a tough neighborhood. Therefore, those who are members of a community –as defined by place—contribute to maintaining the reputation of the neighborhood and see defending the honor of the neighborhood as a social responsibility. Students sometimes demonstrate their connection to a geographic zone through their willingness to turn to violence to preserve the community. Schools are neutral spaces where contestation and conflict play out and

thus impact the school environment. The school becomes a site where issues occurring outside of the building can "erupt into something violent." And educators are left with managing these issues. Overall, community cohesion and neighborhood place-making for black youth was an important reality for students and represented a positive feature of growing up in Rose.

Second, Dean Thompson understands that violence, as structured by neighborhood-based rivalries, transgress temporal boundaries. He refers to the neighborhood beef as "systemic" and often related to earlier generations. Neighborhood-based rivalries sometimes go back for several years and can, therefore, impact a neighborhood school for long periods of time. Educators must address the within-school violence that stems from outside-of-school conflict. It is also important to note that out-of-school conflict such as that described above is directly related to issues of concentrated poverty in neighborhoods and municipal disinvestment in the individuals who reside in such spaces.

Finally, Dean Givens explains more about how the outside-of-school factors impact students and teachers. He notices that there is, too, a shift in the "behaviors" of students which gives way for a different set of needs. This again explicitly illustrates educators' acknowledgment and understanding of the ways in which the outside-of-school forces impact students and thereby requires the school staff to do something different for students. He continues and attempts to bring clarity to the distinction: "We have to not only deal with the social-emotional piece, literally for hours before we can even say, 'hey, here go to class.' Where I think [before] when you had the neighborhood stuff, [students] would go to class. They would do certain things and we didn't necessarily know everything that may have been happening in the home."

Indeed, according to administrators and teachers, the conditions of inner-city neighborhoods can and do shape the schooling experiences of students as well as the climate of

schools, especially at Rutherford. In speaking directly about how the out-of-school challenges shape the students schooling experiences, Ms. Shelby paints a vivid picture:

> When they [students] go out there, it's like they're walking down the street and they're just picking up bricks and putting them in their bag. And that's how they're carrying it for the rest of the day. And then they get here and [some teachers] expect them to drop that bag at the door and come on in. Uh-uh, they bring that bag right in the building. That's how hard Rose is. It's extremely hard and it's a lot of heavy lifting. Children trying to determine, how and when should I let my baggage go. That's Rose.

Ms. Shelby describes the realities students may experience growing up in Rose as "bricks" that students tote with them as they traverse neighborhood and school spaces. According to Ms. Shelby, the figurative weight of carrying around multiple bricks cannot be ignored by teachers who just expect students to leave it at the door. Students then must negotiate between the procedure ("how") and temporal ("when") to set aside those realities and focus on other endeavors. Her comments further emphasize the interconnections between the out-of-school realities and the school environment. She acknowledges that students carry those bricks (or stressors) with them throughout the day, even while entering the school building and classroom spaces. Finally, she dismisses the notion that students can enter the learning environment and simply "drop the bag at the door." Instead, teachers must contend with the lived experiences of students. She refers to this as the "heavy lifting" of teaching at Rutherford.

Ms. Shelby views educators' responsibility of addressing the interconnectedness of the out-of-school factors and the within-school environment as part of the job. She doesn't necessarily regard it as separate, but part of what must be done to ensure students safety and success. Educators at Rutherford and other urban schools take up the onus of helping students navigating their complex backgrounds in the absence of holistic education reform that takes seriously those variables. As such, those individuals who teach in urban schools are further

charged with this task in addition to the nuances of teaching and learning. Based on narrow policy reform, students, on the other hand, are expected to "put aside" their personal backgrounds and focus on passing high-stakes state assessments.

Additionally, the staff at Rutherford understood the representations of lived experience that carried into the classrooms, cafeteria, gymnasiums, and other spaces across the school campus and therefore saw part of their role as heeding, interpreting, and facilitating students meaning-making of those incidents. A Black female math teacher, Ms. Jasmine, sums it up by saying: "But our kids deal with a lot. A lot of trauma before they get in this building. A lot of generational trauma, mental illness, drug abuse, physical and sexual abuse. Those kinds of things can certainly impact our students when they come into the building a can certainly be factors that either contribute positively or negatively to their learning." Ms. Jasmine's observations reveal an awareness of the interplay between the outside of school variables and the learning environment. Educators at Rutherford, are further saddled with the responsibility to act where social policy has not. To frame it another way, the failure of social policy to address the neighborhood issues impacting children forces educators at the neighborhood school to assume the responsibility.

The conditions of the Rose neighborhood are similar to those experienced in inner-city communities across the US. From Chicago to Detroit, to New York City, and Atlanta, children who reside in poor neighborhoods face challenges unlike their peers in more affluent neighborhoods. Because outside of school conditions shape the schooling experience, students from poor neighborhoods are forced to cope with their circumstance. Teachers, like those at Rutherford, act as the first line of defense to help students navigate their surroundings and their manifestations within the school.

While some educators discussed the presence of challenges such as violence in Rose, other teachers and administrators believed that the neighborhood had experienced a shift and that

some of those challenges had lessened in recent years. Several educators talked about changes in the neighborhood that were an added benefit to students and their families, particularly as it relates to drugs, violence, and safety. For example, Ms. Spring, the 10th grade social worker explained:

> I feel like the level of violence [in Rose] has shifted. It's not as intense as it used to be. I'm looking at it from a school perspective because they come in from their neighborhood… I feel like the kids are more invested and the community, the violence has kind of calmed down a lot. That's what I feel like has changed.

As a school social worker, Ms. Spring believed the issues outside of school, such as violence was limiting students' ability to be fully invested and engaged in school matters. Indeed when students are faced with hardships outside of the school day, they can affect students' interactions in the school including engaging with course materials. In her view, however, Ms. Spring believed that the violence was shifting and not as intense as it used to be. I note this here because it also demonstrates that not every educator at Rutherford held the same perspective of the outside of school challenges. To some, the violence was a longstanding hardship that students grappled with daily. While other educators, including Ms. Spring, noticed that the violence was "shifting" and essentially improving.

Further, RHS administrators regarded challenging experiences, though different in scale, as part and parcel of growing up in Rose, and therefore represent potential points of connection between students, and in some cases staff. They also considered these experiences as influential in shaping the schooling environment. Ms. Jasmine recalls:

> I had some students last week-- two students to be exact -- both of them lost their dad in the same week. Came to school. Came to school. Did not stay home and grieve. Came right into this building. Said nothing to no one right away. That first meltdown. Dad died. Wow, and you still managed to come to school. What does that say about what our community is doing in the inside? That it's so

> heartbreaking that they'll still come to school. Something inside of that building that can help me right now. And that's what we get.

Ms. Jasmine's comments serve to further emphasize the inextricable links between the school and community as well as the ways outside of school realities enter into the learning environment. In her account, students dealing with personal traumas still find community and connection to the physical school building and the educators therein. In some ways, while Rutherford is physically interconnected to Rose in important ways, students experiencing crises see the school as a place of refuge from their realities – a symbolic and literal safe space.

Ultimately, outside of school challenges can lead to students becoming school dependent (Delpit, 2012). In this sense, school dependence happens when student's life experiences cause students to depend on the school (teachers, counselors, and administrators) to provide resources to assist them in their development that they may not receive or that may be challenging because of their outside of school lives (Delpit, 2012; Milner, 2012). As students require more support from the school, urban school educators are stretching to develop tools to respond to the individual needs of students.

I asked Ms. Jasmine and other educators if they felt prepared to assist students who deal with crippling dramas like the unexpected death of a parent or peer. All teachers expressed that they were not trained to counsel students in such circumstances. Instead, teachers relied on instinct to help students.

A conversation with a high-level administrator further illustrates the relationship between the outside of school conditions and inside of school climate. In the below discussion, the administrator elucidates several important points. Frist, her comments are congruent with other educators who report that Rose was burdened by gangs, violence, and crime. She also mentions the intergenerational family networks that are present in the community. Next, she explains the

ways outside-of-school challenges impact students as they navigate the school environment as well as how educators at Rutherford have responded. She reports that some students come to school without having eaten a nutritious and satisfying meal and how educators have responded. The below example illustrates how teachers and administrators address students' personal challenges as part of a daily process of meeting the needs of students.

> *Interviewer*: Tell me a little about Rose, the neighborhood that surrounds Rutherford?
>
> *Educator*: Lord… So a lot of our kids are from that area. They have gang activity going on. They're very protective of that. That little community itself is very protective. But again, this is generations of a family being in that area. Rose is extremely tough. Our Children, to be honest with you again, when they leave [the school] and they go back to Rose, anything goes. Every day there's a robbery. Every day there's some shooting or a murder. There are drugs. There are so many broken families, people just get angry, angry, angry, angry. And it's baggage, often baggage for our young people.
>
> *Interviewer*: And how does that influence what happens at the school?
>
> *Educator*: So, the children that come into our building who didn't eat last night, didn't get much sleep because somebody didn't come home to take care of the baby, that child still has to eat. That child not going to be able to focus on math first period and hungry. Now [the student] got an attitude [they] only got a couple hours of sleep. They are tired. We might have to feed that child. We may have to say, "Hey, they going to need another 15 minutes before coming in." And simply sit down as you and I are right now and watch them eat. And they say, "Okay, well, how are we going to make it better for tonight or tomorrow? Who I got to call? Do I need to come on over to your house and talk to somebody?" That's how that goes.

Finally, throughout this section, my intention was to describe the some of the complexities of Rose including its challenges as well as its assets. In addition to the community cohesion – the community "togetherness"—that was referenced by multiple community

members and educators, there are several other assets worthy to be noted. During my frequent trips through Rose to get to Rutherford I encountered a number of "gems" in Rose. First, along with the main thoroughfare in the neighborhood, there is a huge park that sits at a major intersection. The park is filled with park benches, picnic tables, and barbeque grills. Regardless of the time of day, there were often dozens of community members at the park. For residents, this park represented a community space where residents can congregate together and further develop a sense of community among residents. There were also street vendors present in the park who sold a range of products, including portraits, scented oils, and skin care products.

Across from the park, there was a string of small business, including corner stores, independent restaurants, a barbershop, beauty shop, nail salon, day care, and other shops. Essentially the park and the nearby shopping complex served as a "mini-downtown" to fit some of the needs of the community. Residents could frequent the shops, purchase products, and connect with neighbors in the park. This area was filled with cultural representations like murals of prominent historical African American figures, musicians, and artists.

In sum, in this section, I have provided a detailed description of the Rose neighborhood completely through the voices of educators and community members. In doing so, I discussed the presence of drugs, crime, and violence as out-of-school variables or neighborhood conditions that impact the very character of Rutherford making the school ripe for the implementation of reform initiatives to address these challenges. The perspectives of community members and educators illustrate the context of Rose, particularly in relation to other neighborhoods in the city. Within this section, I described the complexities of urban neighborhoods being both spaces of challenges and assets. Across multiple interviews, participants described Rose from multiple frames often juxtaposing the challenges present in Rose with the community-assets. This is an important framing as it demonstrates the multiple and intersecting forces surrounding

Rutherford. Additionally, these forces lay a foundation for the community engaged school reform educators employed. In the next section, I discuss the student and family homelessness and housing instability as an out-of-school variable that educators regarded as shaping their approaches to teaching, learning, and leading at Rutherford.

Student and Family Homelessness and Housing Instability

Educators identified challenging student and family home structures as an out-of-school variable that influenced students' experiences and school climate at Rutherford. These home structures ranged from housing instability to homelessness and several gradations in between. On the one hand, characterization of students' living situations varied due largely to inconsistent and unclear conceptualizations of homelessness in the literature and in society that color how educators define homelessness. On the other hand, students and families living situations were constantly changing and continually in flux which is common for individuals dealing with residential uncertainty. For clarity, a working definition of homelessness is needed. Nooe and Patterson (2010) provide a definition based within an ecological perspective of homeless that is useful here:

> Homeless individuals may experience changes in housing status that includes being on the street, shared dwelling, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent… hospitalization and incarceration in correctional facilities. (p. 105).

Critical race theory is a theoretical framework that examines and challenges the ways in which race and racism manifest themselves in social structures, practice, and discourse. Tate (1997) contends "… the significance of race in the United States, and more specifically 'raced' education could not be explained with theories of gender or class" (p. 196). As such, CRT

provided a space to theorize and further examine the ways in which race intersects or overlaps with homeless youth and schooling.

I first met Ms. Nadia, a school administrator in spring of 2016, after communicating with her via email regarding this project. Prior to working at Rutherford, Ms. Nadia worked in the city's social service sector as a licensed clinician dealing mostly with youth who had learning disabilities. In an interview with Ms. Nadia, she discussed the additional responsibility of Rutherford staff in educating students burdened by residential uncertainty given the lack of structure and support that homelessness offered students. In spite of this, she mentions that educators contended by creating structure within the school. She explains, "It was a tough environment for us [educators] because you have those young people who didn't have a lot of structure and obviously who are coming from a background where they've received little to no support. But we created an environment where the young people felt like they were a family as well as the staff." When describing her motivation for working at Rutherford, she talked about wanting to make a bigger difference than she had in her previous role. She said, "I wanted to do a little bit more. I wanted to feel like I was actually doing something." Prior to working at Rutherford, Ms. Nadia recalled working within several systems including adoption and foster care and social work. For her, working at a public school offered an opportunity to work with a similar population with a similar set of needs while also addressing their "backgrounds" more holistically.

Interviews with multiple educators across the school revealed that students faced insurmountable challenges with housing instability and homelessness and this factor had profound impacts on the character and shape of Rutherford. The impacts were consistent with the literature on homeless youth and educational experiences. Teachers expressed feeling the need to help students navigate their home backgrounds to ensure their success in school and beyond.

Unpacking the concept of "background," and providing a range of the homeless issues faced by students, Ms. Nadia sums it up by saying:

> We definitely have a significant number of students who are homeless, in between homes, living in hotels because their family is now trying to figure out where the next Section 8 situation is happening….A lot of students live with grandparents, aunts, and uncles. People whom they call aunt and uncle, that are not their blood family. A lot of them are split up from their siblings because some of them have so many siblings, people can't take them all. A lot of them will verbalize how… they won't use the word "lost", but just that connection and wanting to be with their siblings, and wanting to try to figure it out.

In the above quotation, Ms. Nadia describes variations of student's residential situations. Importantly, her description highlights the extended family networks that students in vulnerable living conditions may leverage. She also describes the "split" or disconnection from siblings. Students who experience homelessness are therefore caught between extended family networks (i.e. assumed relatives) and disjoined blood relatives. This has the potential to play out in the school setting in complex ways. For example, such students might experience difficulty disclosing with teachers and peers these complex situations. This is further evidence by Ms. Nadia's observations of students not using the word "lost" to describe their circumstances. Indeed, students are not "lost" in the physical sense. Instead, some of these students are caught in the middle of non-traditional familial networks that they struggle to name. Teachers, then, must help students to navigate and make sense of their residential backgrounds a task not typically ascribed to teachers.

Further, according to Ms. Nadia and other educators, youth homelessness and other out-of-home situations affect students' social and emotional needs that teachers must tend to. In the above quotation, she mentions students' feelings of being "lost' or disconnected from their siblings. The social and emotional development of all students is critical and requires careful attention. However, for homeless students, the concern for and attention to the social and

emotional needs is extremely urgent. Such students endure the added challenges of feeling isolated and disconnected from peers, teachers, and other social networks revolving around the school. These feelings directly influence to what extent they are able to dedicate attention to the academic and social demands of high school. Until social policy significantly addresses youth homelessness, teachers, already burdened with the complexities of working in an urban school, must, too, tend to those specific needs of students.

Multiple educators reported that homelessness, as an out-of-school factor impacted the school and teachers at Rutherford. For example, during the initial interview with Mr. Wires, he articulated his awareness of students and their lives and family structures. According to him, this knowledge informed how he interacted with individual students. Mr. Wires recalled an incident with a particular student who had recently been in transitional housing situation with his family. Due to the relationship developed between Mr. Wires and the student, the student felt comfortable seeking Mr. Wires as a source of support. Mr. Wires shared the following account of his encounter with this student.

> [Homelessness is] a very sensitive situation as well. So I told you about the laundry thing. That's a big one. [The student says] My clothes dirty. I'm embarrassed. So I'm going to come with what I have. Don't turn me around, please. I really want to be in this building. [Mr. Wires says] Sure. How about this? Bring your stuff in a trash bag. We'll wash it. And then you can take it home with you. This is what we're doing. This is real, really, really real.

This situation is particularly compelling for multiple reasons. First, it demonstrates the nature of the student-teacher relationships at Rutherford. Students feel a level of comfort and care with educators to communicate their “embarrassment” and seek assistance. Indeed, educators at Rutherford prioritized cultivating caring and nurturing relationships with students that focused on students’ success – both individually and collectively. Second, this example bears witness to the ends educators are willing to explore to support students in dealing with

challenging backgrounds. Washing student's clothes is not typically associated with the responsibilities of a teacher, however, educators at Rutherford were consistent "role benders" to address the needs of their students. Mr. Wires' actions illustrate this. Finally, Mr. Wires concludes by describing the situation as "real, really, really real" to highlight the seriousness and pervasiveness of student homelessness at Rutherford. Educators, overwhelmed by the outside of school variables impacting students, are committed to enduring the additional tax to ensure student academic and developmental success.

Several educations talked about the challenges they encountered when working with students and families who experience homelessness or other housing stability challenges. For instance, one challenge mentioned by Mr. Scott, a 9th grade science teacher, centered on getting in contact with parents and their availability to volunteer at and contribute to school activities. Despite this challenge, teachers also expressed their willingness to do whatever is necessary to meet the needs of students. As a response, teachers collectively created opportunities for parents to be involved in the school in non-dominant ways that took into account their individual circumstance. CRT is useful here as educators challenged dominate ideals of parental involvement which are based on white, middle-class approaches. Instead, educators at Rutherford provided avenues for parents of homeless youth, in this case, Black parents, to be involved in their child's education in ways that took into account their challenging contexts and lived experiences.

One administrator, Dean Givens, who oversees 10th grade students as a grade-level administrator described parents facing homelessness as hardworking yet "encounter[ing] unfortunate circumstances." She was extremely empathetic of the conditions of some families and simultaneously aware that those conditions shaped, in part, the teaching and learning

environment and working expectations of teachers. In reflecting on her duties as an administrator she explains:

> The biggest challenge can be feeling like it's sort of the school doing most of the work versus home, school, and student having a tight connection. It can be an overload and very stressful at times because when you [someone] comes into this building, this is not your ordinary school building. You are finding yourself nurturing a lot of kids, treating them just like they're your own.

To be clear, educators at Rutherford felt overwhelmed by the added responsibility of serving as a buffer for students from challenging conditions such as homelessness or housing insufficiency. Instead of regarding their work with a deficient perspective of students, families, and communities, educators worked to exceed the traditional roles of teachers in order to meet the diverse needs of students. In the above quotation, Dean Givens admitted that Rutherford is not "ordinary" and the challenges experienced therein are unique to the school. To thoroughly drive home this point, she emphasizes further:

> There's a lot of frustration that can come with it as well because of me wanting to see change so fast and knowing that you have to take the baby steps to get there. My patience at times runs low. But the biggest challenge is definitely just sort of feeling like you're overloaded and not having the support or connection with all parties that need to support the child.

Here, her comments illuminate the internal struggle experienced by educators engaged in this work. Educators might understand the urgency associated with addressing students' residential challenges, while simultaneously attending to a level of patience needed to endure the traditionally slow changing policy contexts. This point is particularly important. Educators who work with students and families from low-income backgrounds must be both urgent and patient. This distinctive positioning required of urban educators contributes to feelings of fatigue and overwhelm that shapes their working conditions in schools.

Taken together, her reflections are not intended to pathologize parents, as Dean Givens was very cognizant of the structures (i.e. poverty, unemployment, and increasing housing costs) that gave way to student and family homelessness. Instead, her words are indicative of the type of stress associated with feelings of being overwhelmed that educators may experience when working within such challenging contexts. Feelings of stress and overwhelm were expressed across several interviews with educators. Educators at Rutherford were keenly aware of the out-of-school conditions that impacted their students, families, and school environment. In spite of this, these same passionate and determined educators were focused on providing students the very best education they deserve. As one teacher shared in the focus group, “The odds were always stacked against our kids. I want them to just be able to reap the benefits, or just get the opportunity to do whatever it is that they want to do, that these other kids get.” Here comments reflect CRT’s notion of intersectionality, which recognized that no person has a single unitary identity. The same can be said for homeless students. The identity of homeless students encompasses their social, racial, and class statuses.

It is important to note that youth homelessness is not uniformly experienced. Additional factors, such as age, duration of homelessness and condition of homelessness significantly contribute to how students and family experience homelessness. In general, the effects of homelessness on students in schools spans across structural, physical, mental and academic challenges. For example, homeless students experience difficulty enrolling in school due to logistical and procedural barriers. Things, like obtaining complete educational records or having a physical mailing address, are among such challenges. Additionally, the presentation of physical and mental health issues increase the likelihood that homeless students will be labeled as special-needs students (e.g. special education). These factors converge to decrease the chances that homeless students will attain school success.

CRT's notion of intersectionality brings to light the multiple identities held by homeless youth, and acknowledge the multiple ways in which they are perceived and discriminated against by traditional approaches to schooling. Educators at Rutherford worked to debunk traditional accounts of schooling, particularly for homeless youth. Educators demonstrated their willingness to implement and enforce perspectives and approaches to improve educational opportunity and access for homeless youth and their families.

School Stigma and Reputation

Another theme that emerged as an out-of-school variable impacting students, families and the school was the concept of reputation, specifically the perceived reputation of Rutherford. For the purposes of this study, reputation can be understood as a relatively stable, long-term collective opinions, judgments, and perceptions held by individuals outside of the immediate school community. These perceptions were most often negative. Further, through a CRT lens, the reputation can be understood as the intersecting of deficit ideals of race, class, and place. Educators were asked, "What are outsiders' perceptions of Rutherford?" The intention behind this question was to ascertain how educators felt their school was regarded by the community and if that reputation shaped their ability to establish external, community support in the school reform processes.

How can the school's reputation be an out-of-school challenge? One can expect such a question to arise in a discussion on the social context of urban schools. The research literature on school context typically does not deal with a school's reputation or image as a contextual factor that impacts teaching and learning. However, within the current education reform climate, it is essential to examine factors that have largely remained at the margins of social and cultural contexts of schools. A discussion on the perceptions of place can contribute to a more nuanced

understanding of the ways in which scholars understand its overlapping and intersecting impacts. I contend that it is of critical importance to inquire what it means to enroll and/or work in a traditional neighborhood school in the midst of the dramatic restructuring of public education. Not only does market-based reform regard neighborhoods and the concept of community as inconsequential, but it also devalues the neighborhood school as an institution.

As a framework, critical race theory is adequate to highlight the rhetoric around school choice that distorts the racial histories pertaining to and shaping the problems of divestment, neglect, and segregation in urban schools. Neighborhood schools are porous, influenced by conversations outside of them between the state and district levels that construct policies that affect them, as well as among community members and families that currently wrestle with school decisions for their children. Importantly, CRT highlights how the political and social construction of neighborhood school's image is deeply rooted in notions of race and its intersection with other forms of identity and has exacerbated issues of declining student enrollments, and community connectedness. The political and social construction of a school's reputation has grave effects for neighborhood schools, particularly when students, parents, staff and community members make schooling decisions based on those perspectives.

The marketization of education, specifically the school choice and charter school movements, has contributed to the exacerbation of the negative reputation of Rutherford. As charter schools and the school choice movement is touted by proponents as the solution to ineffective, "bad schools" discourses are used as tools to paint public schools, by virtue of their reputation as undesirable to consumers (i.e. parents). Often resulting in lower enrollment numbers, decreased financial and personal resources and fewer community partners. Educators already burdened with overlapping challenges traditionally revolving inner-city schools must also navigate the negative stigma of their school contexts. It is important to first understand how

the school's negative reputation is translated from the institution to individual students, families, and educators. The school's reputation can and does have a dramatic influence on students' ability to learn and feel proudly connected to the school, teachers' sense of pride in their place of employment and community organizations desire to invest supports and resources into to the school. In short, a school's negative reputation has the potential to drastically cripple the teaching and learning environment and the overall school climate.

Discussing student enrollment, the school's reputation as shaped by media reports and "choice", Ms. Brandy, a 11th grade English teacher shared the following:

> We have kids that have their mom and their dad in their household. We have kids that mom's worked for various government agencies and stuff like that so we already have in the school a mixture of kids from different incomes. But Rutherford is always going to be looked at as the poor school because like I said, it's public. When we get really good press, I would say, for a year the enrollment goes up. Negative press, the enrollment, you know, kind of teeters just a little bit.

According to educators, for several decades, the school was perceived as being a "bad" school earning it the moniker of "Rough and tough Rutherford." This reputation was not solely geared toward the school and was deeply intertwined with the reputation of the Rose neighborhood and community residents. Specifically, this reputation underlies racialized notions of space and the institutions and individuals who abide therein. The discourse of "rough and tough" as used to describe people and the space they occupy is at the very core inherently linked to ideas of race, class, and place. "Rough and tough" is discursively tied to images of violence, crime, danger, blackness, and poverty that have been historically linked to poor, Black inner-city communities.

Within a reform climate of school "choice" driven by market-based logics of education reform, negative stigmas generally revolving urban schools is intensified as charter schools are branded as the "best option" for parents. Evidence of this can be seen in policy mechanisms and

media messages that tout public schools as “dangerous” and “failing”. This discourse is fundamentally linked to negative ideas of traditional public schools including those who attend and work in those institutions. Schools are directly influenced by the rhetoric outside of them between state and district officials that develop reform policies that determine their fate, as well as community members and families that wrestle with making the best decision for their children. Educators tied to these schools must cope with and address these messages while maintaining adequate learning environments for students.

Also contributing to the negative reputation and stigma of Rutherford is the prison-like design and technological features present in the school. The presence of metal detectors and scanners contribute to the negative stigma by creating an oppressive prison-like environment. Across several interviews, educators reported on the prominent role that security devices play in students’ daily school lives. Given that students had to pass through metal detectors and scanners each day to enter the building, they were frequently confronted with the stigma that those in the school are “dangerous”. In addition to students, all visitors were subject to having their belongings scanned and physical persons patted down in the name of school safety. While on the one hand, metal detectors provide the allusion of safety, on the other hand, however, it contributes to the stigmatization of fear and the widely assumed idea that Rutherford is violent and dangerous.

When speaking with one of the school’s security guards, Officer Morton she discussed the perceptions of parents and visitors upon entering the school. Officer Morton was a short, non-threatening African American woman who wore her hair in corn-rolls. Standing at about 5-foot-6-inches, her chocolate completed face always wore a smile. Because I interacted with her almost upon every visit to the school, she and I had several informal conversations as I was scanned and subjected to walking through the metal detectors. On one visit, I asked her if she

thinks that parents feel their children are safer here because of the metal detectors. She replied by saying the following:

> I mean, the metal detectors don't always help because I got in a debate with one parent [whose] kids now go to a charter school. Charter schools don't have metal detectors. So it's one of those things where it's a necessity but when you see it you already feel like I'm in this different type of violent atmosphere where I don't know if I feel safe.

Her account speaks to the contradictions that accompany the use of metal detectors in inner-city public schools. While metal detectors are supposed to increase feelings of safety among parents and students, they also have the potential to undermine these efforts. Additionally, it highlights the reality that feeling safe and being safe are both important but not always compatible goals. Further, her remarks position Rutherford in against local charter schools who do not utilize metal detectors. While local charter schools do not use metal detectors, according to Officer Morton, parents view these schools as safer.

Teachers and administrators perceived that the reputation limited their collaboration efforts with the outside community. Thus, in order to be better situated to attract, develop and maintain partnerships with the surrounding local community that would promote school improvement, educators set out to re-make the school's image. Particularly they understood this rhetoric to be tied to a history of the school and neighborhood that they were deliberately seeking to reframe.

When educators described the perception of Rutherford High School from those outside the school, they often recalled how the school was discussed in relation to the local neighborhood context. For example, Mr. Clue, an administrator at Rutherford who constantly interfaced with community stakeholders, explains: "Everybody knew that Rose has, for the most part, been the toughest neighborhood to live in, to ride through, and walk through. And Rutherford High School has always been perceived as having the toughest kids [across the

district].” He makes clear that individuals outside of Rose perceive the community and the school as tough. In his view, he suggests that this perception is widespread across Mountainview.

In the interview, he continues and reports that the school itself, with its current student body, and in contrast to negative perceptions and media coverage, is just another ordinary school like others in Mountainview. His comments raise an interesting tension. His statements – highlight the idea of the school being tougher than other schools and the second idea of the school being ordinary and similar to others in the district – highlight a spatial and structural tension. While many perceive the students at Rutherford as threatening and dangerous, his experiences working directly with the students bear witness to a different narrative. He refers to Rutherford as an ordinary school. While some people might regard the school in negative terms which further marginalizes students and families, individuals, like Mr. Clue who are directly tied to the school frame the school as similar to others in across the district.

Teachers, administrators, and staff must attend to the conditions and moral associations tied to schools with negative reputations. In the era of school choice, schools with negative reputations or a perceived negative identity risk declining enrollment increased negative media coverage, and withdrawal from local and community stakeholders. Educators must respond to the social and academic consequences experienced by students and their families who choose to enroll in traditional neighborhood schools. When students are associated with a negative label or stereotype, they often internalize those ideas and perform worse. For example, as students experience the ramifications of attending a school deemed “failing”, such as academic disinvestment, lowered academic self-identify, and educational disengagement, educators must work more deliberately to offset these experiences by restoring confidence in students through their schooling experiences.

The ideas reported by Mr. Clue were similar to those shared by other educators at Rutherford. Indeed, the social construction of Rutherford's reputation was deeply interlocked with its surrounding urban space. Taking it a step further, the social construction of the school's reputation is filled with connotations that have been influenced by the media, social actors, and local-community and non-community members. Meanings attributed to place have material consequences for both the place and the individuals who live there. Language is a pathway through which individuals construct meaning. Negative language exchanged between social actors to describe a place works to construct related negative mental images. Discussions of the school's reputation are intertwined with raced and classed understandings of the individuals connected to the school. When a school is labeled "rough and tough" it invokes a sense of danger and fear that has historically been tied to black individuals and spatially manifested. Such descriptions perpetuate a history of place-based inequities and marginalization.

Discourses that perpetuate negative perspectives of urban space, the individuals associated with that space and the institutions embedded in place (i.e. schools) are often produced and reproduced locally via social networks and media outlets. The social constructed of the school's reputation is directly linked to deficit perspectives of race, class, and place. Critical race theory is useful in unmasking the racialized stereotypes that shape the social construction of the school's reputation by examining how social constructions are implicated by racist ideologies. As such critical race theory allows researchers to challenge frameworks that position segregated urban schools, those serving Black students, and families, as "failing".

Indeed ideas about urban space were essential to shaping the perspectives of parents and community members about Rutherford. Additionally, the physical building of the school – the brick and mortar—played a role in how the school was stigmatized. Multiple educators discussed the new school building as having an impact on how the school was regarded by those external

to the school. Also, according to some educators, the new school building demonstrated district and municipal investment in the neighborhood community. Ms. Alexandra, an African American science teacher, shared the following:

> The new building really helped as far as knowing that the city was willing to invest in the community because we weren't going to get a new building at first, but that definitely helps because [students] are just like, 'oh, well, it looks like a school where learning can be taking place so maybe I should give it a try.

Sociologist Brene Brown (2006) conceptualize stigma as "unwanted identity" and uses the notion of "double-bind" to examine the accompanying shame felt by students and families connected to a neighborhood school. Neighborhood schools' students, teachers, and administrators are subjected to negative stereotypes that dominate in society based on their connection to their local school. As a social actor, media sources have dramatically shaped how schools are socially constructed. The media perpetuates the narrative of Blacks as violent criminals while simultaneously circulating images of urban spaces as dangerous and unsafe. Together, the narratives and images reinforce each other shaping negative perceptions of communities and schools and the neighborhoods in which they are embedded.

Across multiple interviews, participants discussed the role of media in shaping dominant perspectives of Rutherford's reputation. Generally, educators discussed that the media's report of events related to the school was a direct reflection of how they were perceived by the community. For example, Mr. Maurice, an African American 10th grade math teacher, shared the following:

> Now, we still don't get the best rap for it being a safe place to be but we haven't been on the news. Like, we were in the news because it was a shooting at the school. Not like the kids think, I mean the parents would think that people were just wandering around the school with guns, but you know we did have a shooting that occurred at the school at the entry point so that was not a good moment.

Mr. Maurice makes clear the relationship between negative news reporting and the parents' perceptions. Media accounts of the school shooting published in the local newspaper reported the incident in conjunction with a stream of other incidents that had recently occurred at the school given parents the allusion that the school was "unsafe" and rife with dangerous incidents.

Participants also mentioned that, at times, the media reported on positive things that were happening at the school, such as successful academic programs, skillful band, and the increase in graduation rates. Mr. Maurice felt that the media coverage shaped parent's perception of the school and ultimately impacted their feelings towards enrolling their children in the school.

> But now, I would say we've had some things that have been successful, that has gotten good press. Like the band's gotten good press. You know the school with the [high] graduation rate last year's gotten good press and stuff like that. So it's one of those things where [parents] are like 'maybe I'll give Rutherford a try'.

Overall, the media played a significant role in shaping parents' perception of Rutherford.

In addition to Rutherford's reputation invoking raced and classed notions of spatial inequality, Mr. Wade's report demonstrates that Rutherford also is inextricably intertwined to symbolic power relations between its geographical location and other parts of the city. He elucidates:

> Rough and tough Rutherford, that's just what it was. I mean, you had Rutherford. You had Longfellow [other neighborhood high school]. But it was just always, I mean, the perception of Rutherford coming into the city, was you know, well known. You don't really want to mess with, you know, that side of town [Rose] because it was just a lot. I guess I would just say it was just negative more so than anything. People didn't really see anything positive coming out of Rutherford at that time. [emphasis added]

The phrase "that side of town" is used to discursively marginalize Rose from other parts of the city. Importantly, the Rose neighborhood is physically separated by a river from other city neighborhoods. The phrase emphasizes this disconnection. This also encompasses a negative

connotation about the community, school, and students. The reputation of Rutherford was essentially interlocked with perceptions of its Rose. It is possible for urban space to overshadow the schools' internal practices. It could be argued then, that the rebranding of Rutherford must be situated in a rebranding of Rose. However, as often suggested in urban renewal literature neighborhood rebranding sometimes serves as a precursor to displacement and marketing to a racially, culturally and socioeconomically different population.

Collectively, responses from participants raised questions not only about how a school's identity is connected to its surrounding urban space but also about how perceptions external to the school are shaped. Often without engagement with the realities of those connected to the school, namely students. In defense, Ms. Antoinette argues:

> So when I talk about image, I'm really talking about how the outside looks inward not having a clue what these kids' lives are about or their stories are. Not having a clue that some of these kids only eat once a day, not having a clue that there is no mom and dad at home. I am the mom and day. You see. Not having a clue that [some students] only have one uniform shirt and one pair of uniform pants, and [they] don't want to wear them in the building like that because I don't have no way to clean it. [They] have no money. [They] have nothing. Can you help me? Can I please come in the building today? You see.

Schools that serve large populations of low-income and Students of Color are often, but not exclusively, described in positive terms by their actors, including teachers, students, and administrators. These accounts and representations are important for a number of reasons. Frist, they derive from and contribute to a community discourse anchored in relation to positive relationships and experiences in their daily lives and daily work. Also, they are the first line of defense against pathological and deficit-laded ideologies about "urban" students, families, school, and place.

A few administrators and veteran educators described the tension between the school's reputation of being an unsafe place and the reputation for being a good academic environment.

Rutherford housed one of the district's Math and Science Academic Enrichment Academy (MSEA). MSEA was touted as one of the district's premier programs that emphasized rigor and prepared students for college readiness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Across interviews, participants described the intersections of the school's reputation with their academic programs and perceived safety. While on the one hand, enrollment into the MSEA was highly desired by students across the city, concerns of safety persisted. Below, the words of Administrator Mr. Nick capture the essence of what participants shared:

> So, it's just one of those things where yea, [Rutherford] was perceived as this dangerous place to go but if you were into math and science [academy] then you went to Rutherford because we had robotics, we had this, and we had that. And that kind of sort of was the thing, so it wasn't viewed as unsmart but it was viewed as unsafe.

Even the presence of additional resources and rigorous academic programs did not eliminate the stigma that the school was a dangerous place.

To recap, the above examples illustrate the overall negative reputation of Rutherford and how that reputation was closely linked to conceptualizations of urban space, in particular, the Rose neighborhood. I highlight this important link because educators perceived this to be a factor that shaped the teaching and learning environment at the school. The reputation or Rutherford, they felt led some families to see alternative options for their children and the declining enrollment numbers deprived the school of critical resources and staff. Thus teachers were expected to offer similar services with fewer resources. This becomes an essential driver for teachers and administrators to engage the community in school reform.

The social construction of Rutherford's reputation is partially taken up by reform policies that exacerbate educational and neighborhood stratification along race and class lines. As charter schools increase and the school choice movement intensifies more students are fleeing traditional

public neighborhood schools for “alternative” choice options that have the luxury of selecting which students to enroll. As a result, disproportionate numbers of students with special needs and the student’s labeled “at-risk” are relegated to neighborhood schools further heightening stereotypes about these students and their schools. These schools are then framed by reformist, policymakers legislators, and media outlets as “bad schools” which serve “bad kids” and “fail” to provide “quality” education according to high-stakes exams and other academic indicators. By association, teachers who work in these schools are regarded as “unqualified” to teach with “careless” approaches to instruction. Parents are described as “disconnected” or “disinterested” in their child’s education. At the very core, this rhetoric is a racialized and spatialized stereotype for low-income and Black families who declare their faith and commitment to public schools. In the following section, I discuss, in part, how the school choice movement exacerbates these stereotypes by positioning charter schools as the antithesis to failed public schools.

School Choice and the Growing Presence of Charter Schools

Relatedly, teachers, administrators, and even parents suggested that the growing number of nearby charter schools precipitated negative perceptions of Rutherford and therefore another outside of school variable. Several teachers mentioned that the growing presence of nearby charter schools presented an additional challenge by forcing Rutherford to compete for students. This competition, too, added to the pressures that overwhelmed teaches. Overall, charters are often proposed in districts and neighborhoods where parents and other corporate or community organizations have been dissatisfied with the local public schools because of perceptions that children receive poor quality education in public school.

Empirical studies examining neighborhood effects and out-of-school factors generally do not recognize charters as an out-of-school factor. There are valid several reasons for this

oversight. One reason is due to the belief that proponents of charter schools assert that such they have the potential to transform the urban district into educational marketplaces where charter and neighborhood schools would be evaluated and sustained based on their performance. Schools that did not demonstrate evidence of "effectiveness" as measured by state exams could potentially face closure or reconstitution. This logic, rooted in the market laws of competition, is believed to spark improvement in all schools.

Reform approaches of this type are seen to "help" schools and not "harm" as out-of-school factors are traditionally understood. There is an abundance of research that illuminates ways in which charter schools do in fact "harm" traditional public schools (see. i.e. Buras, 2011; Henry & Dixson, 2016; Lipman, 2013; Smith & Stovall, 2008). Thus, charters could be understood as an out-of-school factor to traditional public schools. As a reminder, one of the goals of this study is to center the perspectives of grassroots actors in naming the challenges external to the school that impacts the teaching and learning environment. Given that multiple actors discussed charters and their ability to shape what happens inside the public school, it was necessary to include those findings alongside more traditional out-of-school challenges (i.e. poverty, homelessness, violence, drugs, gangs).

Along with negative perceptions of Rutherford, teachers, and leaders in Rutherford High School named the growing presence of charter schools as an out-of-school factor that not only played a role in maintaining a negative perception of the school, but it was also a contributing factor in how educators organized their relations with the local school community. One reason why educators at Rutherford regarded charter schools as an outside-of-school factor that impacted the school was due to ideas that some parents and district officials were hostile towards staff at Rutherford. Some participants mentioned the perceptions of parents concerning the quality and innovation of nearby charter schools versus the traditional public school. They

reported they believed parents were making enrollment decisions based on the negative reputation or perceptions of Rutherford and not on facts. Other participants discussed the negative view that district officials have been promoting regarding traditional public schools. Finally, educators discussed their concerns that charter schools adding to the strain of public school resources.

The school staff understood the tensions associated with school choice, for the school as well as the parents. Particularly, the increase in competition between RHS and the nearby charter schools was fueled by the need to maintain student enrollment numbers and the school's reputation played a huge part. Educators discussed reasons they feel that parents were enrolling their children in charter schools as opposed to Rutherford. One administrator hypothesized that parents were becoming "dissatisfied" with someone or something in the school and believed that a charter school could provide a "safer" environment with higher expectations. This administrator further felt this idea was deeply connected to the reputation of Rutherford.

This out of school challenge required staff at Rutherford to grapple with how to best respond by recruiting parents. Ms. Coretta and Mr. Martin, for example, were administrators at Rutherford. Each spoke about their responsibility to speak to parents of the feeder middle schools to "recruit" students to attend the public school, a task they believed was non-negotiable to his or her school's approach to community engagement. "So I think it's really just communicating to parents that this is a better education for your kid [pointing to recruitment flyer]. We could get them here. We just have to let [parents] know about everything we offer and that we are better than the charter."

Traditionally, public schools, especially neighborhood schools are not responsible for recruiting students to the school. However, the current climate of school choice forces all schools

to compete for students. This added burden further strains public school educators and takes time from the educating of the current students.

For Ms. Coretta and Mr. Martin, it's not simply the presence of charters and the recruitment necessary to maintain enrollments that presents a challenge for Rutherford. They articulate the correlation between an increase in charter schools presence and a district-wide strain in public resources:

> Charter schools. I would say the influx of school choice. When we were growing up, it was for the most part just the public [school] and now its charter schools everywhere. Which definitely effects public school because I just think that if you can have charter school funding, you can put more money into the public school.

Additionally, they regard parents attraction to charter schools as both attributed to their perception to provide something new to students as well as parents desire to ensure their child receives the best education possible. Ultimately, this is tied closely to the overall perception of public schools, generally and Rutherford High School, specifically.

> The thing is, and I think what most people don't think about sometimes is they think, "Oh, well these just poor people. If they're poor then they are unknowledgeable or they're dumb; they don't really know." But I think every parent wants better for their kids and the public school has always been there. So I think, like I said, with it being new, with it being different, and I think with some of the ways that they promote in the community, because I think [the] public schools, we're here and we're fine but I don't think we promote as much as some of the charter schools because they've got to get the kids in.

For these reasons, school activities like sporting events, musical concerts, and performances are intentionally promoted to middle school parents and students. For Ms. Coretta and Mr. Martin, the presence of charter schools in the neighborhood is not only an outside of school variable, but they also see it as an opportunity to better connect with parents and community members who are not (yet) affiliated with Rutherford. This reality has also deepened school staff's knowledge about the neighborhood and the importance of engaging parents in

context-specific and culturally appropriate ways. While the proliferation of charter schools has been seen across the city of Mountainview, Ms. Coretta notes a disproportionate number in the Rose area as well as the strain it puts on district resources:

> It basically shifts most of the parents to charter until they see some stuff and then they get disappointed and upset and then they come back to the public but they come back to public begrudgingly. You know, it's just one of those things but that's another concrete thing that I've seen. Definitely. Definitely, in this area, it's a lot of schools like [in other parts of the city] and stuff, I think that they did up the number of charter schools but not as much as on this side. Got charter elementary, middle and high schools on this side. But it breaks the resources up.

The perspectives of Ms. Coretta and Mr. Martin are shared by multiple school staff at Rutherford. Overall, school personnel sees the influx of nearby charter schools as an out of school variable impacting the Rose community as parents are forced to navigate the nebulous terrain of school choice that plays on parents' disenfranchised position while Rutherford and other area public schools receive fewer resources.

Chapter Summary

To conclude, in this chapter, I have discussed the out-of-school factors that Rutherford educators felt shaped the teaching and learning environment and school climate. In the first section, I highlighted the neighborhood conditions by discussing the neighborhood and school contexts. In doing so, I present census-level demographic and economic data. Next, I discussed student and family homelessness and issues of housing insufficiency that educators perceived to impact the school climate and students' academic achievement. Following, I discussed the perceived reputation of the school by internal and external stakeholders. Finally, I discuss school choice as a district reform strategy that educators regarded as contributing to the negative

reputation of Rutherford while also contributing to additional challenges for students, parents, and teachers.

Ultimately, in this chapter, I have presented the out-of-school factors identified by those most directly connected to and impacted by those factors. This approach was intentional and necessary for this research project. The literature examining the out-of-school factors and their influence largely regard those factors from an external, omniscient perspective. I, on the other hand, take a different approach, I center the viewpoints of educators in naming the externalities that manifest inside the school in varying ways. This is a pivotal shift as it situates school reform solutions in relation to targeted issues.

It is important to note, however, that while educators identified the outside of school factors, I do not intend to suggest that a singular set of factors were named. Instead, the factors named often intersected and overlapped and therefore were categorized accordingly to best present the data. In what follows, in the next chapter (Chapter 5), I discuss the findings in response to my research question about how educators approach school reform to these realities while also engaging local community stakeholders in the process. I do not suggest that a completely uniform approach to reform was shared between and across teachers and administrators. However, in individual and collective ways, students, parents, community members, and school partners were engaged in ways that promoted school improvement. For example, as I will detail, educators employed multiple actions to (re)position the school as a spatial neighborhood asset.

Chapter 5

To Congregation

Our Community, Our School, Our Kids:
Linking Partnerships to Place

"I know that these partnerships are changing and transforming lives. Whether or not the kids fully get it yet; I don't think they all get it. That's okay, because they're still being given the opportunity and their lives are still changing whether they see it, or believe it, or realize it, or not. Yeah, so I definitely notice it changing trajectories."
(Ms. Sheila, teacher interview, September 2017)

Educators at Rutherford demonstrated a fervent commitment to connect school reform initiatives to community realities and engage community stakeholders in this process. As such, I was inspired by the findings in response to my second and third research questions: How do educators-teachers and administrators—devise strategies to address/respond to these out-of-school challenges (factors) and to what degree do the out-of-school challenges influence the strategies enacted by educators?

Educators understood that addressing the out-of-school factors that influenced students' schooling experiences would be challenging. However, consistently educators articulated that it was worth it. Capturing educators' determined spirit, one veteran teacher, Ms. Bailey, simply said, "There is definitely beauty in the struggle. There's no such thing as a life that is better than this." Here, she nods at the rewards and advantages of working with students who persevere through the most challenging conditions. To her, and several other teachers, there is a sense of purpose and accomplishment that is felt when educating the students who have traditionally been underserved. Similarly, another educator reflected on the "struggle" but the tenacity needed in order to persist. She said:

> I just need you to know, it's going to be hard. Just be real with yourself. It's about to be difficult, and you might experience some things that you've never experienced. I need you to remember what the mission is. What is your mission with coming in here…I need you to really just not give up. I need people to really be tenacious. (Emphasis Added).

For these educators, the desire to ensure students' success far outweighed the challenges associated with the task. Again, the challenges mentioned are not from a deficient-laden perspective of what students can achieve. Instead, educators understood the contextual variables that shaped students' schooling experiences and were determined to provide the type of education and schooling experience that would allow students to navigate their surroundings and thrive in the face of adversities. Indeed educators at Rutherford where consistently stretching their limited resources to their fullest extent while also reaching out to the local community to supplement and support their endeavors in efforts to contend with the out-of-school factors that shaped students' experiences.

In this chapter, I describe two major approaches that educators and leaders took to address the interconnected and overlapping spaces of neighborhood conditions and school

reform and improvement. Both approaches described below are presented by its component parts (sometimes referred to as themes or actions). For example, in the first approach educators (re)fashioned the school as a spatial neighborhood asset within the community. To best elucidate this approach, I discuss the four primary actions educators took to achieve this. First, educators created an open-door policy to constantly and consistently welcome community members into the building for a variety of reasons. Second, educators increased their physical and symbolic presence in neighborhood spaces to illustrate the inextricable links between Rose and Rutherford. Third, educators prioritized community concerns and mobilized their capital and resources to advocate where necessary. Fourth, the school became a community "plug" by offering few, but critical services to the community.

As an important reminder, and as mentioned in chapter 1, I use the term educators to describe the teachers, administrators, and staff affiliated with Rutherford as the sum of its parts. At times, when a distinction is necessary, I use either teacher, administrator, or staff member to signal a particular role or involvement in the reform efforts. It is also important to note, that at times, I peripherally include perspectives from informal interviews with teachers, paraprofessionals, teacher aides, office assistants and secretaries, and security guards. Given their professional capacities, they sometimes offer an additional perspective that helps to color, more vividly the reform efforts and community relations.

It is important to present a few caveats before moving forward. First, the forthcoming reform actions taken up by educators at Rutherford may, to some, seem nonconventional, incremental, or insignificant. A mere "drop in the bucket", if you will. That response can be expected from those who are seeking solutions rooted in the traditional reform literature. Such a response can also be expected from those looking for quick solutions to implement in their immediate context. Thus, the solutions presented here may seem unsatisfying. Neither, however,

is the intention of this study. Instead, this study centered the perspectives of educators at Rutherford to name the neighborhood factors that they perceived to impact their school and examined their constructed reform efforts to address those challenges. Educators at Rutherford, with their limited material resources implemented school change initiatives that not only met students' needs but also linked to the realities of students' backgrounds. Such reform approaches are pivotal in urban schools.

Schools embedded in urban neighborhoods are consistently influenced by the external structures that trouble the community. Therefore, if school reform is to make a substantive and sustainable change, it must be linked to those realities. The case of Rutherford presents just one example of how that might manifest. It is not intended that the findings here are taken wholesale and implemented elsewhere. Conversely, this study highlights the potential and possibility when school reform is connected to community realities and incorporate community engagement.

Second, in this case study, I identify reform approaches that linked to community realities. However, in reality, several teachers, administrators and school staff members noted that it was difficult to connect one reform approach to a single community variable, challenge, or factor because everything was intimately interconnected. So much so that that the reform approaches are unable to be disentangled. That is, much like the outside of school factors are uniquely intertwined to make the collective impact on students and the school context. So too, are reform efforts, intimately intertwined and converged to make a collective impact. These integrative reform approaches overlapped to best meet the needs of students. The reform approaches engaged by educators are meant to be holistic and mutually constitutive. To reconcile this, I wrestle them apart and mention, where appropriate, the explicit connection of within school reform to the outside of school challenge.

Finally, the reform approaches taken up by educators at Rutherford were not linear, isolated, recursive, nor arbitrary. But rather the educators implemented purposeful, creative and collective reform approaches. Knowing that the challenges that students faced were, in many ways, simultaneously unique to context, emblematic of inner-city neighborhoods across the US and also unfamiliar to some staff members, educators were receptive and open-minded to new approaches. For example, Mr. Gray, who is the current social studies department chair was candid in declaring, "My interaction with Rose is limited in that I teach here… so, that being said, I don't know what goes on much outside the school building." Despite his residential disconnection to Rose, Mr. Gray was very committed to contributing to and at times leading reform efforts that would meet students' needs. In what follows, I present the two major approaches to school reform at Rutherford.

(Re)fashioning the School as a Spatial Neighborhood Asset Within the Community

In this section, I describe one of the reform approaches that educators at Rutherford utilized that linked with the outside of school factors which was (re)fashioning the school as a spatial neighborhood asset within the community. In doing so, I also discuss, in part, the significance of this approach. There were four primary ways in which educators positioned the school as a spatial asset. First, educators created an open-door policy to constantly and consistently welcome community members into the building for a variety of reasons. Second, educators increased their physical and symbolic presence in neighborhood spaces to better illuminate the inextricable links between Rose and Rutherford. Third, educators prioritized community concerns and mobilized their social capital and resources to advocate where necessary. Fourth, the school became a community "plug" by offering few, but critical services to the community.

In articulating an understanding of the (re)fashioning of the school as a spatial asset relevant to urban contexts, it is important to understand that before Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision, Black segregated schools and the communities they served were almost indistinguishable. During that era, schools were positioned as spatial assets that benefited both the community and school. Building on this tradition, educators at Rutherford created structures and processes that embraced and even merged the neighborhood and school environments to impact both the academic and social lives of students, their parents, and community residents.

Across several interviews with participants, one theme that emerged was the notion that educators situated their reform approaches in a way that led to the school positioning itself as a neighborhood asset for community members, which in turn led to increased meaningful community engagement. By situating the school as a central neighborhood space, educators were able to better understand and bear witness to the external factors that dramatically shaped students' schooling experiences and thus placed them at the center of the relationship and the teaching and learning processes at the school. This led to greater engagement from families and community members in the school improvement process as well as educators connecting reform efforts to the out-of-school factors present within the neighborhood. In deconstructing this finding, I primarily highlight how educators utilized building infrastructure and school resources (i.e. people, political power, social networks) to address out-of-school concerns affecting students, and families. In the most typical sense, urban community members rarely have a voice in how school-community engagement occurs. Educators at Rutherford, however, differed from this norm in that they validated local culture and gave community voice in constructing the school as a spatial neighborhood asset.

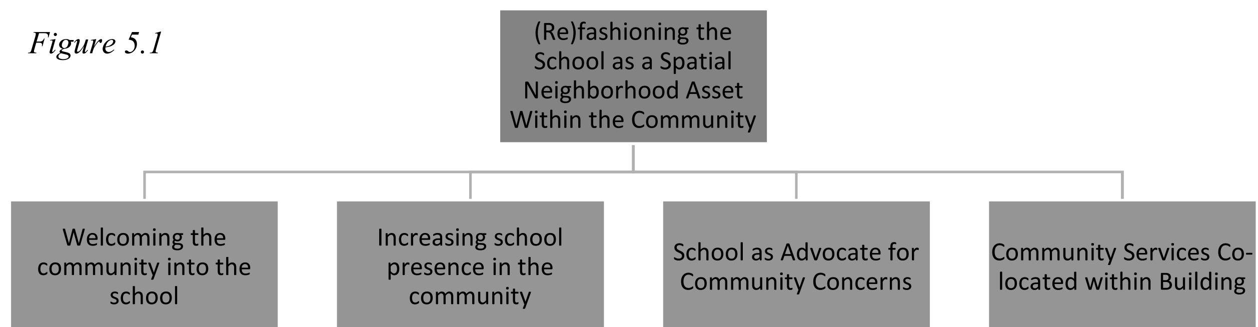
Findings in this section will also show how in the community surrounding Rutherford, educators acted as cultural workers (Cooper, 2009). Cooper (2009) defined "cultural workers" as

"cultural change agents – educators armed with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships culturally responsive" (p. 696). Further, she contends that educators can act as "cultural workers" by:

> collaborating with parents to co-create family literacy programs; seeking families' input on substantive reform matters, as opposed to simple school fundraisers and social events; forming professional learning communities that are open to all school community members and are guided by a critical multicultural curriculum; and forging partnerships with nonprofit organizations and local businesses who are willing to contribute staff time and monetary resources that help to support mentoring programs for children from low-income families. (Cooper, 2009, p. 698).

Finally, figure 5.1 below visually illustrates the reform approach of (re)fashioning the school as a spatial neighborhood asset within the community and its component parts. From the visual, the actual reform approach is listed at the top. Underneath are the ways that educators engaged with the community to achieve that reform approach. That is to say that in order for educators at Rutherford to (re)fashion the school as a spatial neighborhood asset within the community, there were four primary actions that educators took: welcoming the community into the school, increasing the school's presence in the community, advocating for community concerns, and co-locating community services within the building. Categorized in this way, and taken together, these primary actions more concretely demonstrate the particular reform approach. In what follows, I detail each of the primary actions that make up educators' efforts to (re)fashion the school as a spatial neighborhood asset within the community.

Figure 5.1



Spatial Asset: Welcoming the community into the school. For educators at Rutherford, one element of the school serving as a spatial asset in the neighborhood was allowing unrestricted, comfortable opportunities for parents and community members to enter the school building. In this regard, parents and members from the community were frequently present in Rutherford and engaged with administrators, teachers, and staff. To accommodate frequent visitors, Rutherford appointed a school administrator with the responsibility of liaising between the school and the community. Community organizations and partners, in particular, highlighted the fact that there was an identified individual whom they could engage with at the school site. During a focus group comprised of community partners and organizations, one of the partners reported:

> I would just add that Mr. Black exists. I think all of our other schools pretty much, external partnerships may be part of someone's job, but more often than not it's thrown onto an assistant principal's plate… the fact that there's a person that [we] go to and we know who that is and he's responsive and were able to build a relationship with him, I think overall five years has been helpful.

To be clear, Mr. Black, previously served as the school's athletic director, however, to accommodate the reform and approaches to increase engagement with community members, Mr. Black's responsibilities were increased to include coordination of community partnerships and collaborations. In this role, Mr. Black learned from community members what was going on with students and the community and partnered to strategize about how to best address those

challenges. His ascendency to this role demonstrates a schoolwide prioritization on community engagement and consequently, Rutherford served as an extension of the neighboring communities.

During one of my visits to Rutherford, I observed Mr. Black's meeting with a group of community partners. In this meeting, he shared information that he had received from school administrators, students, and other community members about opposing neighborhood gangs that were expected to come into conflict at the school. In this meeting, Mr. Black and the community partners identified students who were involved and also participating in different activities on campus. They created a plan to meet with students and intervene to prevent conflict. Unfortunately, I was unable to bear witness to the following meetings with students and the execution of their plan. However, it is reasonable to assume that their efforts were executed fully. This meeting represented just one of the ways that Mr. Black would liaise between community members and students and educators.

The appointment of Mr. Black underscored the school's unfettered commitment to engaging community stakeholders in substantive ways at Rutherford. Mr. Black was strategically positioned to listen to the community and student concerns and work alongside administrators, parents, and community members to address those challenges. In doing so, he collaborated closely with a range of individuals contend with the out-of-school challenges while promoting whole school improvement. Specifically, Mr. Black was instrumental in orchestrating the increased presence of community members present in the school building for various purposes.

Community functions were common at the school, and members of the community – parents, former students, extended family, and community residents – were constantly in contact with Rutherford staff. By community functions, I mean community meetings, trainings, festivals/celebrations, art shows, and other events hosted for the enjoyment of local community

residents. One parent-partner from the Rutherford parent community, Ms. Box, the mother of a 9th grade student, described the overlapping school and community contexts as an "open-door" between school and community by highlighting the following: "I will say that Rutherford has a really good open-door policy. They want the support from the community. Of course without crazy class disturbances, which is to be expected. But they definitely want more community engagement." Through the open-door policy, educators at Rutherford encouraged open communication, discussions, and collaborations with external community members and school partners.

To be clear, educators at Rutherford did not have an explicit and written open-door policy between the school and community. Instead, teachers and administrators were deliberate about (re)fashioning the school as a spatial asset in the community by opening its doors to community use. Parents and other members from the community were able to comfortably engage in school matters. The open-door policy contributing to an overlap between the school and community whereas the school was viewed as an extension of the community.

Additionally, throughout my time at Rutherford High, I attended meetings where community members and school partners would meet with Mr. Black, the school's Athletic and Activities Director. While these meetings served to coordinate the services that community partners offered to students, teachers and administrators were often invited to attend in order to elicit their input for more holistically collaborating with external partners and better engaging them in the school improvement process. Given the close nature in which teachers engaged with students, they offered valuable insight to community partners in how to best meet students' individual needs. Additionally, these meeting provided an opportunity for teachers to share the individual collaborations and partnerships they established through their social networks as well as identify and discuss students' academic and personal challenges and successes. Ultimately,

these meetings represent a formal structure where school-community collaboration was developed and improved to optimally serve students.

In addition, the formal structure of the community meetings helped to foster dialogue and critical conversations about out-of-school challenges, school improvement, student success, school and district policies, and neighborhood events. In one particular community partner meeting, Mr. Black provided a list of students who were experiencing challenges with attending school regularly. In this meeting, educators and partners did not blame individual students. Instead, they seized the opportunity to discover ways to better engage the students in the learning environment. They proposed matching students with community partners, community organizations, or school-based extracurricular activities that would hold the students' interests. Partners presented the purpose and goals of their program and its contributions to students' schooling experiences – the "why factor." Instead of castigating students, educators in collaboration with community members sought ways to best engage students in the learning process.

Administrators at Rutherford developed a Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) to weigh in on important school matters. One LSAT member described the group as "a team made up of parents, teachers, support staff, and community members… the group advises the principal on things like the comprehensive school plan, the budget, and other school initiatives." In addition, the group assists school administrators in developing a community engagement strategy that is directly connected to the neighborhood realities in Rose. To better understand the function of the group, I spoke with several different parents and community members who are part of the LSAT. Ms. Rogers, a parent of an 11th grade student shared:

> I've done a lot with Rutherford around the LSAT. I've attended all the meetings, definitely helped to push the group when they're looking at the budget, ensuring that they're sticking to the guidelines around not talking about people, but

> positions… and just helping them think outside of the box around different things. So if some (budget) cuts do need to be made, for example, does that mean instead of looking at the English department, is it the Arts, or is it PE? And we all know everyone is stretched, but what department could take a hit and its not like really harm the school community.

Another parent, Ms. Curry, who worked on communication, outreach and engagement shared,

> I've also been supporting the school as it relates to outreach in the community around what's happening at Rutherford, via social media especially on Facebook, Twitter, and Community Listserves. I've also been participating on their Parent Engagement Committee, around some of the things that the school should do to engage parents.

Similarly, another parent, Ms. Freedom, who assisted in coordinating events between the school and community shared the following,

> Actually, in my calendar, I have all the meetings and events that are happening in Rose. So if something is happening and it's going to affect the general Rutherford community, I try to encourage the school not to hold any events on that date because something else is happening. Because [the schools] want to be very strategic about events, as well as ensuring that they get the best bang for the buck. You do want a large number of parents to come so if there is a community block party, you don't want to have a meeting at the school.

I highlight these perspectives to illustrate the range of responsibilities, contributions, and roles that members of the LSAT take to assist educators in school reform that is tied to community engagement. In the latter example, the parent's managing of both the community's calendar and Rutherford's calendar and working to avoid scheduling overlapping events is another example of how the school and community worked together. The school avoided scheduling conflicting events not only to prevent low attendance and participation but also because the school regarded the community's events as essential and vice versa. In this way, they are able to work together to foster robust activities across Rose for students, families, and community residents.

Overall, the Local School Advisory Team demonstrates a collaborative effort between educators, parents and community members to meaningfully engage in the school improvement process as well as contribute to decisions that impact students, families and community residents, especially around out-of-school factors, student success and school environment.

Educators, in collaboration with the LSAT, were constantly creating opportunities to welcome parents and community members into the building in both structured and unstructured ways. Educators noted how the school might be thought of as a "neighborhood center" for the benefit of students and community members. In this way, students' learning activities could potentially contribute to community development and conversely, community activities could contribute to and enrich students' learning experiences within the school. Mr. Wires, the technology manager, described the resources at the school that frequently attracted local community residents. While giving me a tour of the school campus he proudly exclaimed:

> We have a lot of things here that the community could benefit from. We have the hair salon, the automobile repair facility downstairs, the day care center, the Olympic size pool – it's the only one in the district. Check it out! We even have a state of the art auditorium that we use for community meetings and concerts and stuff. [Chuckles] We really [are] a community center with classrooms. Oh yeah, I forgot about the workout room above the gym.

An essential part of (re)fashioning Rutherford as a neighborhood spatial asset meant constantly and consistently welcoming parents, family members, and community partners in the building. At times, for school-based events, but also for collaborating in pivotal school matters as such as decisions about school improvement and reform. For some teachers, this meant inviting community members into classrooms to serve as guest speakers, mentors, and experts on a variety of topics. Several teachers understood one part of their role in better engaging the community in reform that was linked to neighborhood realities was "setting up people to come in and talk to the kids." Teachers saw this as a key strategy in engaging students and community

members in a “linked approach” to better-developing students and the community. Teachers pointed out that students needed to see “people like them” from the community who could inspire them in different ways.

Several times during the school year, Rutherford encouraged community members to meet with students one-on-one to discuss academic progress and postsecondary options. One of the veteran teachers reported on this school-wide structure that allowed community volunteers and alumni to come into the building and work directly with students on improving their grades and setting academic goals throughout the year. He shared the following:

> When our students receive report cards and we have volunteers come in to meet with them and go over how they can improve this grade here and this grade here. How [students] can build a better relationship with the teacher so that they can go and ask for help or say, ‘I don’t understand what I’m learning here’. When those volunteers come in and the kid is looking like, ‘well, I don’t really know you, but okay, let me give you a try. And they shaking these people’s hands and these people are like, ‘Hey, take my number, I want to follow up with you. I want to make sure you get all the way through high school. This is not just about today and your grades this quarter. This is about the rest of the days of you being in high school.’ The students appreciate it. Even though the volunteers were strangers, they appreciate an African American man sitting across from them with his tie on talking to him about stuff beyond what was on that piece of paper.

This example illustrates how community members come into the school building and build relationships with students that not only focuses on academic but also students’ ambitions beyond school. It also demonstrates a genuine investment from members of the community in the success of the students at Rutherford. In addition, the aforementioned example demonstrates a community investment in the academic futures of students. The community members who sacrifice their time to mentor and build one-on-one relationships with students are indeed devoted to not only students at Rutherford but in the relationship between the school and community.

The time that community members spent inside the school and in classrooms were geared towards improving students' academic achievement. For example, community members who met with students individually often encouraged students to enroll in more rigorous courses as part of students' ambitions to attend college. While I did not observe one of these meetings with students, teachers and other participants reported that students often followed the guidance of the outside community member. In particular, community members encouraged students to speak with their teachers one-on-one to discuss their grades and opportunities to improve. Teachers shared that this resulted in students receiving additional "make-up" work and spending additional time after school receiving individual assistance. These efforts were geared towards improving students' academic achievements through engagement with and support of the community.

Indeed it was important for teachers, counselors, and administrators to (re)fashion the school as a spatial asset in the neighborhood by welcoming outside community partners into the school building. Another structured and formal way that administrators at Rutherford approached this was by bringing local community members into the school. Not solely as volunteers as the above example illuminates, but also as full-time staff members at the school. For instance, Ms. Yolanda was intentional in identifying members of the community who would be instrumental in transforming the school climate as part of the school reform process. Next, I discuss how administrators at Rutherford approached community engagement by hiring individuals from the local school community.

Another action that administration at Rutherford took, specifically the principal, was to hire individuals from the community that fit with the school's reform approach. Hiring individuals from the community that fit the culture of the school was a key ingredient to the repositioning the school as a neighborhood asset. Ultimately, the school offered employment opportunities in a neighborhood were options were historically limited. In addition, when the

school looked into the immediate local school community for personnel to contribute to the mission and vision of school reform, it demonstrates a commitment to connecting and extending the school's relationship with the surrounding community. In this way, those hired from the community are directly affected by the out-of-school challenges in both personal and professional ways allowing those individuals to speak to the root causes and effects from relationship vantage points.

Located a few blocks from the front door of Rutherford was a barbershop where several community residents, school staff, parents, and even students would go for their weekly haircuts. The barbershop was locally known as a community space and the barbers, particularly Mr. Wade was regarded as a well-respected and well-known community member. Knowing this, Ms. Yolanda, principal of Rutherford, sought to position him within the school allowing him to work directly with students, teachers, and staff. Indeed the local barbershop served, for some, as a social and cultural space in the community. It was here, that several social networks were cultivated; where informal community meetings were held; and where adults discussed challenges, changes, and successes happening in Rose. In addition to talks about the local neighborhood, this was also space where debates about professional sports, local and national politics, and reality TV were discussed. Overall, this was a space where men – both young and old – talked trash, talked community and talked culture.

In speaking with one of the barbers in this shop, Mr. Wade, reported that he had been cutting hair in the shop for thirteen years. It was through his work as a barber that he encountered several teachers and students affiliated with Rutherford. During our interview, Mr. Wade, a native of Mountainview, explained that what he enjoyed most about cutting hair was that it allowed him to uplift his clients "when you have a fresh haircut," he smiled, "you gone feel good." Mr. Wade also enjoyed the "chit-chat" that he was able to have with his clients and he

would often use that limited time to discuss a range of topics from religion to music. For many people, the barber shop was much more than a weekly errand. Instead, it was a space for community-building, cultural exchange, and Black social interaction.

As principal of Rutherford, Ms. Yolanda, was familiar with the barbershop, Mr. Wade, and the significance of the space to students and teachers. To support the school's focus on school climate, community building, inclusivity, and empowerment, Ms. Yolanda was able to hire Behavior Technicians to be part of the School Climate team at Rutherford. She was intentional in identifying individuals from the local community, those that were familiar with Rutherford to fill those positions. Mr. Wade was one member of the community selected for the position. As a behavioral technician, the technical components of Mr. Wade's responsibilities included assisting in school discipline matters, hall monitoring, controlling the flow of hallway traffic between classes, as well as arrival and dismissal duties. On the other hand, Mr. Wade was also purposefully selected to foster relationships with students. Educators at Rutherford avoided punitive disciplinary measures and instead considered relationship building as a means to reduce student disciplinary infractions.

Like Mr. Wade, Mamma Dee was also hired from the surrounding community to serve the students of Rutherford. Mamma Dee mentioned that she was referred by some as "the Mayor of Rose" because she was a long-standing resident of the community who was well-known by those across the neighborhood. Mamma Dee explains that she had been living on Mississippi Ave, a major neighborhood thoroughfare and one of the most dangerous streets in the neighborhood, for over 40 years. Mamma Dee was also hired as a Behavioral Technician to assist with school climate, therapeutic approaches to student discipline, and attendance.

Additionally, members of the community were also invited into classrooms to further develop students understanding, of course, curricular content by contributing to its relevancy and

linking it to their lived experiences. Ms. Sheila, an English teacher, invited two Black war veterans into the classroom to enhance the literacy instruction by relating the require text to students' interests. During the instructional unit on Tim O'Brien's war novel, The Things They Carried, Ms. Sheila welcomed a panel of local community residents to discuss war, trauma, PTSD and strategies for managing stress. The panel was composed of two community members who had previously served in the US armed services, a formerly incarcerated young adult male, and a trauma counselor. Panelist explored the following questions: "What does it mean to live in a war zone? How to deal with personal and family traumas? What are different ways that PTSD might be visible in our behaviors? What are some strategies to manage war and trauma?" Students related to the discussion by exploring the parallels between their background and experiences in the neighborhood and other challenging contexts. Thoughts of fear, uncertainty, weaponry, and survival all surfaced during the discussion. In this example, Ms. Sheila connected the school curriculum to the out-of-school contexts impacting students and engaged members of the community to do so.

Across multiple interviews, other teachers reported that they created similar opportunities for members of the community to enhance the teaching and learning by sharing their experiences and connections with the neighborhood conditions students inevitably experience growing up in Rose. For example, the social studies teacher used documentaries in his teaching of Mountainview history and partnered with community members to discuss the unique history of Rose. Through this project, students wrote letters to the locally elected official to share their feelings of spatial injustice, community instability, and educational inequity that they experience daily. This approach to shared instruction between teachers and community members also contributed to the inexorability between school and community by permitting entry into Rutherford by members of the community to contribute to the teaching and learning process.

Other teachers also mentioned inviting guest speakers into their classroom for various purposes. Indeed, sharing the learning space with community members and school partners was one of the ways that educators at Rutherford (re)fashioned the school as a spatial asset in the neighborhood. This was a key approach in connecting school reform to the outside of school variables that impacted students and the culture and character of the school. One teacher, who works with the Eagle Academy, the all-boys small learning community (SLC) reported that he brings in members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated to mentor the young males as part of the "Huddle". The Huddle, he explains as "a community event where the young men have 'guy talk' with men from the area about issues relevant to them."

Over the course of a year, the "huddle" became a sacred space where men –both young and old, from the school and community—discussed topics that were relevant to manhood, masculinity, growing up, personal safety, and education. Men from the community and those connected to the aforementioned fraternal organizations would speak candidly with Eagle Academy students about selected topics and inevitably served as mentors and models for the young men. In one "huddle" meeting that I observed, the men discussed the killings of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, and Trayvon Martin. Students shared their feelings about the events while the adult males facilitated students' understanding of the issues. One of the killings occurred less than 40 miles from Rose and students were able to personally relate to the trauma and discussed it openly with community members.

Several educators recognized that community members had a particular knowledge and skill set that should consistently flow into the teaching and learning curriculum at Rutherford. This was crucial, especially given the school's approach to be (re)fashioned as a spatial neighborhood asset in Rose. The bidirectional flow of skills and knowledge between Rose and

Rutherford was a key strategy in maintaining school and community interconnectedness. In this regard information regarding academics, social and personal development, strategies for coping with trauma, financial management, and action civics and community reform were all useful to students. According to one educator, Ms. Sheila, an African American 9th grade teacher recalls:

> Last year I partnered with Brave Actions, an organization that was started by someone from the community… She came in after school and talked to a group of girls about identity and goal setting. It was so powerful. She did a full-fledged session with the girls about identity and leadership. Just to see the girls dig deep inside, literally they look at themselves in a different light, in a positive light and can recognize and acknowledge their own leadership traits…Everyone's a leader, but a different kind of leader. So to see all the girls really enjoying and engaging with what she presented was powerful.

Mr. Gray, a teacher-leader who served as the Social Studies Department Chair, was particularly passionate about connecting school reform to neighborhood realities that impacted students. He believed that "youth voice and participation matter" in that process. As such, he developed a partnership with Positive Impact (PI). Mr. Gray described PI as an "action civics program where students analyze their community, try to determine what they want to address in it and try to figure out who has power over it. Then, figure out the most appropriate way to address that person or entity in power." This description was consistent with the information published on the organization's website. From their website, I also learned that the PI model "assumes that young people deserve a voice in our democratic process, and it challenges educators and public officials to invite, and meaningfully include, youth in civic decision-making." The mission of PI is to "develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society. Mr. Gray exclaims, "To me, that's the model that a partnership should be". Through collaboration with PI, students at Rutherford had the opportunity to directly connect their in-class learning with the out-of-school challenges that shaped their experiences. Students participated in "action civics" that allowed them to engage

other community residents in discussions, debates, and activities that uncovered neighborhood inequities and craft a proposal to address them through democratic processes.

Finally, Dean Givens eloquently summarizes the underlying assumptions and goals of welcoming community members into Rutherford as part of the strategy to (re)fashion the school as a spatial neighborhood asset. She added the following:

> When [students] leave outside of this building, they still see those same individuals in the community, whether they're owning those small businesses or running the rec[reation] center, but they're also taking care of one another. They still have their connection with each other. And so on a positive note, being able to have students come to school, learn, and do what they have to do here, but then when they leave, strengthening the relationships that they have with the community as well. And again, it starts right here… I know of a few schools that partner with government agencies and things of that nature. But a lot of our kids, this is all they know. And so I think the biggest part is making sure that they can go out there and build relationships with those that are in the community and value what they have.

Overall, the school's open-door policy included welcoming outsiders into the building for activities that could benefit students and other community members. For example, a community dance group and parenting class would arrange to regularly use school space for their activities. Administrators at Rutherford were intentional about allowing the school building to be a neighborhood space that was directly connected to community members. This contributed to laying a foundation for engaging the community in school matters. Additionally, educators saw community members and parents as part of the learning process for students and engaged them in the school's curriculum.

In sum, the school reform at Rutherford aimed at (re)fashioning the school as a spatial neighborhood asset meant having both a deliberate presence of the community in the school and a strong presence of the school in the community. Collectively, the educators, parents, and school partners vividly paint a picture of the strategies and approaches utilized to welcome

community members into the school as part of positioning the school as a neighborhood asset. In the following section, I detail the actions utilized by educators to increase their presence in the community.

Spatial Asset: Increasing school presence in the community. In addition to allowing unrestricted, comfortable opportunity for parents and community members to enter the school building, educators at Rutherford established the school as a spatial asset in the community by leveraging staff and other resources to support a regular community presence. Though all teachers were required to participate in certain community functions (i.e. art walk, report card distribution, etc.), the staff members with the most visible presence in the community were administrators, social workers, behavior specialists, attendance team, registrar, counselors and the activities directors, Mr. Black. At times, student presence was also part of the approach to increase the presence of Rutherford in the community.

In highlighting the school's presence in the community, it is noteworthy to point out that school administrators played a major role in driving this forward by approaching it in non-traditional ways. I use non-traditional here not to indicate a preferred approach or a "right" way to increase the school's presence in a community. Instead, non-traditional, as it is used here, is to acknowledge that some of the ways administrators approached reform are outside of what is generally discussed in urban school reform literature. It is essential, however, that these actions are illuminated as they offer insight into what is possible when administrators "think outside the box" or are open to employing new approaches given their unique neighborhood and school contexts.

Scholars use the term civic capacity to describe the actions and principles of educators to reach out to community members. Schools in Black neighborhoods have historically served as engines of neighborhood development, hubs of social support, and institutions of community

cohesion as well as sites of educational enrichment for students. Educators who exercise civic capacity reach out from the school to continue this tradition by helping to build or develop connections between community members and educators. As a concept, civic capacity goes expands conceptualizations of partnering or engaging. It is much less about soliciting support from the community but includes the participation in the political decision-making process on issues affecting local constituents. Importantly, civic capacity is not exclusively grounded in practices or actions. Fundamental to the concept is the belief that school disconnected from the community insufficiently serves Blacks students, families and communities. I lean on notions of civic capacity to understand the efforts of educators at Rutherford because they operate with the belief that traditional approaches to school reform must be disintegrated and replaced with more place-based strategies that account for the neighborhood factors that students experience.

A few blocks away from Rutherford was a local park that served as a regular informal gathering place for community members. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park was a space where local residents would convene and sometimes run into old acquaintances, distant relatives, and former friends. Stretching across several of the park's picnic tables, individuals competed in friendly games of chess or dominoes as bystanders watched and cheered for their favorite local champion. Sometimes, local vendors and up-and-coming entrepreneurs would sell merchandise. From incents to baked good and custom African-themed artwork. Ultimately this was an area of Rose where each day presented a new opportunity to encounter a new experience and be entertained by neighbors. Youth, too, found this to be a place where they could hang out and pass time by connecting with older siblings or relatives among other activities. Students form Rutherford were attracted to the park and sometimes would congregate at the park in lieu of attending class.

Given that educators at Rutherford were intentional about increasing their presence in the community as well as aligning reform efforts to the outside-of-school variables that, in part, shaped students experiences, they saw this as an opportunity to achieve both objectives. Thus, administrators and a team of teachers traversed the boundaries of the school into the neighborhood to encourage students into the building. During a teacher focus group, in reflecting on approach, Ms. Murphy, an African American English teacher who had been teaching at Rutherford for 8 years, referred to it as "creative" as she explained,

> The principal has been very creative this year. The kids were even telling me that Mr. Dixon, the band director, he was real live pulling up on kids on the K [Martin Luther King, Jr Boulevard] and telling them to get in the car. He said 'this is your uber, get in here, let's go.' It was real live teachers and administrators pushing them along and putting them in the cars, and getting them to class.

Similarly, during this same focus group, another teacher reported, "Ms. Shelby who's one of the assistant principals [the kids] said was in Lids, the store, fussing and telling the man, 'why are you letting all of them be in here? Look what time it is. You know they supposed to be in school. What are you doing?"

The increased presence of educators from Rutherford in community spaces geared towards increasing student attendance is significant for a number of important reasons. First, when school-based educators enter the neighborhood, they become more familiar with spaces that foster a sense of community for local residents. Scholars have argued for decades the importance of teachers and administrators to become more connected with the neighborhood where the school is embedded and the most effective way to achieve this is by actually spending time in these spaces. Educators at Rutherford were committed to identifying areas that were critical community spaces.

Relatedly, educators' face-to-face presence with local community residents engages the opportunity for residents and educators to build rapport and assume a shared responsibility in educating area youth. As this dissertation shows, teachers at Rutherford were committed to engaging the community in school reform and best meeting the needs of students. Indeed, engaging the community was done in formal, informal, structured and unstructured ways. In this way, educators presence in neighborhood spaces to get students to the school building demonstrates to community members that a priority of school officials is to get into the building. Community members can informally support this work by constantly encouraging students to attend school instead of the park whenever students congregated. Ultimately, significant actions were taken by educators to (re)fashion Rutherford as a spatial asset was to increase their physical presence in the community. In the above example, teachers and administrations entered community spaces to not only become more familiar with the area but to also encourage students to attend school instead of assembling at a local neighborhood park.

On the one hand, teachers' approaches to increase their presence in the community could be viewed as disrupting the traditional and somewhat arbitrary boundaries that separate the school from the community. Instead, given the neighborhood variables affecting the neighborhood, teachers at Rutherford saw their work in Rose as an extension of their classroom. There were multiple purposes that educators moved beyond boundaries to enter neighborhood spaces. In some cases, educators lead student organizations that were specifically designed for students to traverse school boundaries. For example, Ms. Murphy, who created a Girls Mentoring Group of young female students at the school discussed the ways both teachers and students into the community by highlighting a few of the group's activities:

> We go into the different schools on this side of town and do different workshops on teen pregnancy, resume and cover letter writing. We have different people who've been incarcerated come with us to speak about their experiences, what

> they did, their relationship with their children, and actually have their children share how they were able to process, what they were able to do while their parents were incarcerated. Those big-ticket items that are a major issue [in the community], really addressing the parents in the community as a whole… We feed the homeless, go out there on the 'K'. Just exposing them to different environments and different things so they can see the world outside of Rutherford, and so that the world can see them."

It was important for educators at Rutherford to be present in the community, not just in a physical sense, but also symbolically. By symbolically, here, I mean through material artifacts and objects. As the data above illustrates, educators were intentional about ensuring they maintained a consistent presence in the community. Their physical presence demonstrated the school's ties to the community. Further, educators constructed their symbolic presence in the community by providing school "swag" to students, parents, and community members. Swag included shirts, hats, umbrellas, coffee mugs, tote bags, binders, pens, flags, refrigerator magnets, chairs, blankets and other artifacts that displayed the school's colors, logo, and mascot – Kings. In fact, after my initial visit to the school, I was provided with a jumbo-sized umbrella, a travel coffee cup, a sweatshirt, and 2 magnets. When given the shirt, I was instructed by the office manager that I had to "wear this" and "show it off" because it meant I had "school spirit".

A few weeks after data collection commenced, I attended a partnership meeting on the Thursday of Rutherford's Homecoming week during the month of October. As mentioned in the previous section, partnership meetings convened monthly and were used to coordinate the services that community partners offered students. In the weeks leading to this particular meeting, Mr. Black sent an email to all partners reminding us to "wear your school swag". On the day of the meeting, school partners, community members, local residents and school staff all attended the meeting proudly wearing Rutherford artifacts. On the one hand, this demonstrated unity and solidarity among partners and community members affiliated with the school. On the

other hand, however, once meeting attendees left the meeting and re-entered neighborhood spaces, they symbolically carried a piece of Rutherford with them to their respective corners of the community. Such practices helped to symbolically position Rutherford in multiple neighborhood community spaces.

Students were also encouraged to represent Rutherford through artifacts. Throughout the academic year, students were awarded swag for various reasons. One teacher reported that students may receive school artifacts for "getting good grades, or high rates of attendance, and even good school citizenship recognition." The teacher continued, "Parents and community members were often given swag for attending school events, school raffles, planning/organizing school-community events, and other reasons decided by administrators." They were also allowed to purchase swag through the school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) which among its other responsibilities was charged with ensuring school artifacts and objects were present around the neighborhood.

In sum, school administrators and teachers worked to increase the presence of Rutherford in the community as part of the reform approach to (re)fashion the school as a spatial asset. Educators achieved this by engaging in formal, informal, structured and unstructured actions. This included traditional actions such as report card distribution and home visits. As well as non-traditional actions such as taxiing students from local neighborhood spaces. Educators also mobilized students in organized student-groups to enter community spaces to increase the school's presence in the community. Finally, educators at Rutherford also deliberately increased their symbolic presence in the community by providing "swag" to students, parents, community members, and school partners so that there was always a piece of Rutherford everywhere in the area. Taken together, these actions, position Rutherford as essentially indistinguishable from the Rose neighborhood.

Spatial Asset: School as Advocate for Community Concerns. The findings in this research suggest that when educators assisted parents and community members in community causes this further fostered the notion of the school as a spatial asset, especially for parents and local neighborhood residents. A white male social studies teacher noted, "I think the students need to know all that is around them. I think that students need to know that they're not alone and that there are plenty of people that are [t]here to advocate for them.

The type of assistance provided by educators varied and depended on a range of factors. Parents and community members' actions suggest that they viewed the school as a key neighborhood institution positioned to advocate on behalf of local issues. On the other hand, administrators at Rutherford knew how important it was to build trust from community members and parents to engage the community in the school reform process. As members of the community sought support from educators in addressing local concerns, teachers and administrators continued to position the school as a spatial asset in Rose.

Across several interviews, educators reported their belief that the school's previous negative reputation shaped community members perspective and influenced their ability to build trust with the school. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rutherford had been perceived as a "bad" school for several years. In part, this reputation was closely interconnected to the urban space environment surrounding Rutherford. Said another way, because the school was embedded in a neighborhood deemed "bad", it shared this perceived reputation. Additionally, as also mentioned in the previous chapter, educators voiced that the school's reputation was an out-of-school variable that educators needed to contend with. Educators shared that given the school's reputation, that several community members did not trust the school. In speaking about community trust, Ms. Nadia shares the following:

> I think it's 50/50. No, let me reframe. Community [trust] is about 70/30. I think you still have that 30% of the population who doesn't trust schools, who feel like we're out to get their kid or even them. And it's that 30% that sometimes is the loudest voice, and so they're the ones that are getting heard. Where the 70% I believe knows that there are some things that are happening here and [they] are really here to try to support. So we have a lot of community partners who really want to help us make a difference. We do have a lot of constituents that come and want to support and they see the wonderful things that are happening here.

It is easy to compare Rutherford to a scene from a popular culture film on education like Freedom Writers (2007) or Stand and Deliver (1988). Much like the schools in these education films, Rutherford was plagued with overlapping and interconnecting challenges. However, unlike these films, the case of Rutherford illustrates how passionate educators can collaborate with community members to build trust and partnerships in the school reform process.

To build trust with community residents and position Rutherford as a spatial neighborhood asset, administrators and teachers were socially anchored with community concerns thereby increasing the nature of the community engaged school reform. Educators understood that positioning themselves to be community advocates would further build trust with community members and foster better school-community relationships. To be clear, educators saw the community as an extension of the school and therefore the issues that were important to the community were also important to the school. This further illustrates the inextricable links between the school and community. Further, it demonstrates how outside of school issues can intersect with the inside of school matters. Community member regarded the school as a central neighborhood institutional anchor where they could seek support and assistance for concerns that plagued the area. One significant manner this occurred was through educators listening to the concerns and connecting community members to agencies, institutions and other resources. Educators reported that community members frequently contacted the school to address issues that were outside of traditional school functions.

In one example, shared by a school administrator, she reports: "A student got robbed at 7:30 pm. The parent doesn't call the local police department. They wait to come to the school to let us know that the child was robbed and possibly by a Rutherford student." This example highlights a growing trust for some parents in school officials. But it also demonstrates how individuals outside of the school rely on the school as a key institution in the neighborhood to assist in various matters -- even those not traditionally associated with schools.

In an interview with one of the school social workers, she reported a similar idea of community members and parents feeling more comfortable contacting the school to assist with community and family concerns than calling the local authorities. She reported an incident when a child and the child's parent got into a physical altercation. The parent arrived at the school the next morning, to speak directly with the social worker, not only seeking advice on how to handle the situation but also seeking support in working with the child to eliminate the behavior.

Such occurrences are critical moments that demonstrate the school's progress in serving as a spatial neighborhood asset. Prior to educators taking deliberate actions to be (re)fashioned as a spatial asset, there was a level of community distrust in Rutherford. However, the dual actions of increasing the school's presence in the neighborhood while simultaneously welcoming community members into the building disrupted the distrust. Additionally, these incidents also are reminiscent of segregated schools where community members held a high value in their local neighborhood school.

Further, occurrences like these left the belief with students, parents, and community members that educators at Rutherford prioritized the interest of their children and as such could be an asset to neighborhood concerns. During the data collection period, there were several local news reports about teenage girls being abducted from several neighborhoods in Mountainview. Several of these girls were kidnapped far after the school day had ended and in some

communities, police presence had increased to further ensure the safety of the youth. Much like parents and community members across the city, the Rose community had grown increasingly concerned for their children. Ms. Nadia reported that she received numerous calls regarding the issue. One call, she remembers in detail. She recalls, “I received calls asking what we are going to do to support. Parents calling me in the middle of the night asking what are we going to do to support. I even had a parent who came into the room and said, ‘how are you going to stop my child from getting abducted?’ Ms. Nadia continues, “I thought that was quite interesting, and I had to say to her, ‘you know that’s not a school issue, right? It’s not happening in schools. It’s happening within the community.’ The parent was like, ‘[the school] is our community.’

Another manner in which educators frequently advocated for students and community residents occurred during the Local Neighborhood Council (LNC) meetings. These meetings were primarily for neighborhood residents to discuss their concerns to their representative body who would escalate to the elected official as necessary. The LNC meetings were pivotal structures that contribute to and extend the school and community work together around community-wide issues. These meetings reinforce communal responsibility to the neighborhood and school. They also serve as a central rallying space to coalesce stakeholders to engage in dialogue, democratic participation and create opportunities for educators to identify additional community concerns where their advocacy is warranted.

Throughout data collection, I attended these meetings and would hear local neighborhood residents would voice concerns from the trash not being picked on time, to people loitering in the streets. In addition to these concerns, these meetings also convened to discuss when and where speed bumps and stop signs should be erected in the neighborhood and upcoming local events that could increase traffic in the area. Parents reported that administrators from Rutherford

attended these meetings to “talk about what has happened at Rutherford and how they can support kids in the community.”

In another LNC meeting that I attended, community members discussed spatial challenges that were present in Rose. There were approximately 40 community members present and four individuals that I had recognized from Rutherford. Most of those in attendance were persons of color (mainly African American). After the opening remarks from the LNC elected board, a lieutenant from the local police department shared updated on efforts to reduce crime in the neighborhood. He asked the room about “trouble areas” in the neighborhood. The lieutenant reminded community members to stay inside and avoid areas were crowds were loitering. One older resident retorted “I’m too old to run!”

Also present at the LNC meetings were local community-based organizations whose programs specifically targeted the Rose community. Specifically, an organization that addressed food insecurities discussed the unfortunate reality that there was only a single supermarket in the neighborhood and that it did not offer organic produce and meats. He referred to Rose as “one of the most underserved neighborhoods in the U.S.” and passed around a petition to get another supermarket built in the area. The four educators present from Rutherford signed the petition. To this, one of the administrators stood up and addressed the room. He offered to collaborate with the organization and house a neighborhood food garden at Rutherford. Several attendees nodded in agreement murmuring “good idea”.

Educators’ advocacy for community-based causes contributed not only to building a trusting relationship with community members but was also part of the larger strategy to (re)fashion the school as a neighborhood spatial asset. Many Rutherford educators play significant roles in supporting community concerns. The findings here indicate that community members and parents regarded the school as a place where their concerns would be heard and

advocated for. In addition, these findings report that advocacy lends trust and credibility in educators.

Educators, prioritized the needs of the community while also tending to the instructional demands their job entails. This demonstrates an approach to school reform that is tied to community realities and engages community members in the process.

Spatial Asset: Community Services Co-located within Building. As scholars like Green and Gooden (2014) have emphasized, there is a real danger in describing a community solely through its challenges and deficits. Doing so ignores and essentially denies the fortitude, vitality, perseverance, and strength inherent in such communities, particularly urban communities of color that must struggle against various obstacles (i.e. poverty). Indeed, despite the manifestations of poverty discussed in the previous chapter, as well as other tangible symbols of poverty in the Rose community, crucial supports resonated in some important spaces, including Rutherford that served as an identifiable spatial asset in the neighborhood.

In this section, I highlight various services and activities that operated or were co-located within Rutherford. Naturally, different schools might provide a vastly different range of services to the community given the unique and context-specific needs, priorities, and preferences. The services present in Rutherford were appropriate given the challenges endured by local community residents. To be clear, I do not suggest that these services, in and of themselves, were sufficient in addressing the full gamut of inequities endured by students, families, and community members. Instead, however, access to these services by those who needed them most, worked, in part to mitigate a number of accompanying stresses related to living in poverty. This dissertation contends that more adequate and holistic, wrap-around services are essential to support the development of schools and communities.

The school itself offered supports to children and served as a spatial asset or cornerstone of the community. For instance, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the school was equipped with an auto-shop, fitness center, and an Olympic-sized pool. In addition to these physical spaces, the school also housed several organizations that provided essential services for students, families and other community residents. Describing some of the services the school offered, one school-wide administrator, Mr. Daniels explained,

> One of the community partners that we have here is Children's Hospital. It used to be Unity Health Care and they would support the students that were part of the community here… That same thing with the daycare, Unified Planning Agency. And that's the umbrella for the daycare facility that's here. It's a community organization, but because they're housed in Rutherford, our young people get the first choice with the daycare slots. We have a lot of community partners that work with us like First Home Care, Department of Behavioral Health, STOPPs, City Year, Extend Incorporated, Mountainview College Planning, and a host of other agencies that are here.

In this way, the school was ideally situated to provide students and families with access to a number of essential support services. To be sure, students had first access to the services made available through Rutherford. Families currently affiliated with Rutherford, too, had access to remaining resources. In addition to the aforementioned services, the school made available a number of resources to parents. Such resources included financial literacy courses, parenting workshops, and resume workshops. These services positioned the school to be a "one-stop-shop" for several social, professional and personal services for students, families, and community members and further claimed the school's stake as a neighborhood asset.

If the conceptualizations of community services are defined as services and resources that contribute to community development, uplift, and sustainability, then students' learning activities and knowledge can be seen as a service to the community. Particularly, given the school's explicit focus on preparing students to transform their own communities. In this view, educating students was more than simply an academic venture. The products of the school (i.e. teaching

methods and academic knowledge) are in effect geared towards service for the community. For educators, it was an opportunity to ultimately, even in indirect ways, transform the community by equipping students with intellectual tools to make positive impacts.

Further, during data collection, educators, parents, and community members were asked specifically about what places define the Rose community. One teacher said, "you can never mention Rose without saying Rutherford, period. I don't care where you are. Period." Similarly, several interviews mentioned an annual community festival that took place in the center of the neighborhood which welcomed residents from across the city. The annual festival, UnityFest, was a collaborative effort between the LNC, Pleasant Grove Mission Baptist Church – a long-standing church in the community, local neighborhood vendors and business, and more recently, the Rutherford. In the recent years, the Rutherford Ensemble band performed at *UnityFest* and students' artwork was displayed. Not only does this demonstrate the school as an important neighborhood asset, but the showcasing of student artwork can also be understood as a school artifact displayed in the community (see the previous section).

In addition to the annual community festival, *UnityFest*, one teacher described neighborhood landmarks that were identifying features in the Rose neighborhood. A veteran teacher and long-term neighborhood resident exclaimed, "I think Rose is the heart of Mountainview. All the way through the olden days. You got Union Temple, *UnityFest*. Those things were landmarks of Mountainview that you will forever be able to talk about. The Big Shoe, Martin Luther King Avenue, those things are landmarks that you will always remember.

Similarly, Mr. Wade put it bluntly by adding:

> I just think Rutherford is just a [neighborhood] landmark. I don't think you have to really sell this school, even with it being a new building. Like, I don't think you have to. I think Rutherford is just, will always, and continue to be part of the community. Like, regardless, like I know people from the 80's and 70's who've graduated from Rutherford and they're alumni. You know? The alumni from all

> those years are still involved here. I don't think you have to just… There's not a spiel that you can pitch when it comes to Rutherford. It's Rutherford. It's just like saying, Rose. It's Rutherford. Like, you know what it is like it's always been part of this community. It's produced successful people out of this community and it will continue to produce successful people from out of this community.

One school administrator exclaims, "We only as big as this community. We only as big as the kids. And the kids are the ones that the community can connect with." Further, in defining school and community partnerships, Ms. Peters, a special education teacher suggests,

> I think the best way to describe or explain [school and community partnerships] is pretty much having the relationship outside of the building just as much as it is inside of the building. And I'm not saying that we have to have a relationships with a big corporation and that be defined as the community. The community can be a local barbershop. The community can be the rec[reation] center. The community can be your neighbor.

Overall, several educators reported that unused school building space can and should be used for public services offered to the surrounding local community. Additionally, they regarded unused space as a potential gathering point to bring the community together in the pursuit of shared social, cultural, educational, and physical benefit.

Throughout the section above, I was intentional in avoiding the term "community hub" when describing Rutherford. Ultimately, the term is rife with ambiguity that lacks intellectual utility. Moreover, the concept implies a unidirectional, structured flow of supports, resources, and services – that is, the community is drawn to the hub. Given this, the term is insufficient to detail the spatial neighborhood asset that is Rutherford's aim. Educators' efforts to (re)fashion Rutherford was not simply to draw the community to the school. Instead, educators were intentional, deliberate, and dedicated to entering neighborhood spaces and welcoming community members in unstructured and informal ways. This departure from traditional

conceptualizations of schools as "community hub" is not simply semantic. It is, however, noteworthy.

School Reclaimed: Addressing School Climate with Care, Healing, and College-going

In this section, I describe another reform approach that educators at Rutherford utilized that linked with the outside of school factors which was developing a school climate that focused on care, healing, and college-going. To accomplish this, I also discuss, in part, the significance of this approach. For educators at Rutherford, building relationships with students, families, and community members were critical for a school-wide culture of critical care. Additionally, a culture of healing at Rutherford emphasized using what educators referred to as a therapeutic

approach to working with students as well as utilizing restorative practices to restore and build community. Finally, a college-going culture included holding high academic expectations and emphasizing college-going as a postsecondary option for students. Below, I discuss each of these in greater detail by analyzing the perspectives of teachers, staff, and administrators and to some degree parents.

Figure 5.2

In figure 5.2 above I visually illustrate the reform approach of reclaiming the school with an emphasis on school climate. From the visual, the actual reform

approach is listed at the top. Underneath are the ways that educators focused on reforming school climate through care, healing, and college-going

School Climate: Culture of Critical Care. Before illuminating the perspectives of educators at Rutherford, a brief articulation is necessary to operationalize the concept of critical care in schools. Educational theorists have argued that an ethos of care within the student/teacher relationships is essential to student engagement and academic success. Scholars like Nodding (1984) and Valenzuela (1999) have suggested the educational success of students from vulnerable backgrounds – often low-income and youth of color—in particular, is dependent on being in a caring relationship with at least one adult in the school building. Developing this concept further, scholars of color, contend that communities of color understand caring within their sociocultural context and that this specific context must be acknowledged in discussions of care for youth of color. As such, the notion of critical care moves beyond colorblind and powerblind conceptualizations of care that are rife with complexities and contradictions and instead, accounts for intersections of identity and place (context).

Building on the educational caring scholarship, Thompson (1998) points out:

> Whereas caring in the White tradition is largely voluntary emotional labor performed in an intimate setting or else underpaid work in a pink-collar profession like teaching or nursing, caring in the Black community is as much a public undertaking as it is a private or semiprivate concern. It is not surprising, therefore that caring in the Black community is not understood as compensatory work meant to remedy the shortcomings of justice, as in the 'haven in a heartless world' model. (p. 9)

For educators at Rutherford, one common theme in developing and demonstrating a culture of critical care among teachers and administrators was centered on the importance of focusing on and building relationships with students and families. In fact, when asked

specifically to identify a strength of the school, several educators mentioned the relationships forged between staff and students. Additionally, the responsibility of building relationships was shared across several roles in the school. As part of the culture of critical care, school-wide educators prioritized building personal relationships with students and becoming familiar with their home lives – those outside of the school. One administrator noted,

> I would say, one of our strongest areas, is that we do a great job with relationships building. I think that the climate team, which encompasses the social workers, the deans, behavioral specialists, attendance team and the registrar, we all do a great job of welcoming young people or making them feel welcomed as well as parents and other constituents that come into the building. I think we do a great job with relationships.

During interviews with teachers and administrators, specific questions regarding relationships with students organically emerged. This was typically due to the fact that research participants offered reflections about their accounts with individual students. To describe relationships with students, several educators used the word "love" to describe their connection. During the initial analysis of the data, I honestly overlooked the utility of the word as a mere colloquialism. However, through the iterative process of data analysis, it became clear that the use of the word "love" illustrated high levels of care and connection to students.

For example, during a focus group with teachers, an African American female teacher, Ms. Milly, linked her "love" for students to transparency and accountability for student success. She mentions,

> Being transparent. As [the other teacher said] definitely holding them accountable, and being hard on them. Just as much as we're hard on them, we love them. We go above and beyond. Anything our children need, they can get. Literally. They spend time at our homes, we are all the way invested. I feel like I don't really necessarily know the cookie-cutter answer to that, but I do feel like a part of this work is it has to be your purpose and your passion.

The quotation above illustrates a high level of connectedness between teacher and students. By stating, “anything our children need” (emphasis added) Ms. Milly further demonstrates a closeness to the students.

In the quotation above, Ms. Milly also nods to the reality that the student-teacher relationships did sometimes extend beyond the school walls and into the homes of educators. Across multiple interviews, participants articulated the importance of authentically caring relationships with their students and described their relationships in contrast with more dominant approaches. For examples, educators recognized that inviting students to their homes was something unconventional given the “textbook” view of preparing teachers. Teachers also, as has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, recognize that given the unique context of Rose, that approaches tailored to the realities of students would be necessary. One way teachers demonstrate critical care for students is by traversing typical approaches to building relationships with students and pursuing those geared towards the students’ specific needs.

During the same focus group, teachers discuss how their love for children precipitated the ways they disciplined students. One teacher, in particular, likened it to how a mother might discipline her child. I found the close parallels drawn between the two relationships (teacher/student, mother/child) to be extremely intriguing. Ms. Ida, an African American long-term educator stated that “it’s because we love you and we want you to succeed in life.” According to educators, this “love” extended from students to their parents and was also reciprocated. Teachers claimed that parents appreciated when they disciplined their children and often offered support in doing so. In some ways, this demonstrated the overlapping forces of families and educators to ensure the well-being and success of the child. This also can be understood as the interconnectedness of schools and families/communities. In explaining how parents loved and supported teachers in student discipline, one teacher recalls,

> I was just going off, like worse than their mother. What's gone happen is, if they go home and tell they mother, 'Ms. Gipson cussed me out.' [Their mother will say] 'Oh, why?' [The student will reply] 'Because I was late'. [And their mother will say] 'Oh, well.' [Ms. Gipson continues] See that's the thing, their parents love us just as much as they love them. Parents sometimes text us and say 'go check my child'.

When asked why teachers disciplined students in the manner in which they did. One teacher, Ms. Margaret, connected it to the realities occurring outside of the building. She said,

> When I'm thinking about consequences, I'm thinking about the actual school-to-prison pipeline. And how, unfortunately, I don't feel like, in this building, everyone is setting our children up to really understand the end result of not doing what you are supposed to do… not giving them any real responsibility and accountability does not reflect the real world. What's going to happen, is they're going to go outside of these four walls, where most of the times, they're not even getting a first chance, but they're most certainly not given a second chance.

Several educators also mentioned the importance of students feeling a sense of belonging at school, thus they prioritized this as part of the culture of care at Rutherford. In their view, a sense of belonging is predicated on feeling welcomed and affirmed through relationships with adults and peers, academic curriculum, and, most importantly, cultural atmosphere. One teacher noted that "kids need to see people like them actually in the academic environment… it would be nice to see more men in here because it forms that community feels inside the school." This teacher was not speaking solely in terms of male teachers and administrators, but also support staff and volunteers.

Another aspect of increasing student's sense of belonging as part of the culture of care was related to students feeling safe inside the building. Educators understood that students navigate complex neighborhood spaces that were often associated with higher levels of crime, violence, and gang activity. As such, educators were committed to creating a school culture where students felt safe and cared for. One way educators achieved this was through a culture of

care that resembled the closeness of a family. Several teachers mentioned the concept of "family" when describing the culture of the school. They articulated that teachers related to students as if they were an extension of their own family. This included personal conversations about non-school matters, participating in events outside of school or after school hours, getting to know students personally and authentically. The suspension coordinator at Rutherford, Ms. Taylor, shared the following:

> I think we're really good on a social aspect. We have worked on kids feeling safe in the building when they get here. Whatever the perception is out there, these kids don't' want to leave. They don't. We've got to put them out, we've got to. (Chuckling) 'Look, the bell done rang, why are y'all still here at 5 o'clock? You're not in no extracurricular activities.' They just want to be in the building.

Not only was the notion of "family" developed through individual relationships, the school also institutionalized the development of strong student-teacher relationships by making structural changes within the school day. Specifically, the school carved out time in the daily scheduled where groups of students could meet with a teacher. This non-academic period was not only used to communicate important information and announcement to students, but it was also a period where teachers could check in with the students in their cohort to informally talk about personal matters that could be affecting students. This "advisory" period was a scheduled time where students could connect with an adult in the building further increasing students' sense of belonging and emphasizing the school's focus on a caring culture.

I had the opportunity to observe one teacher's advisory period as I waited for her to become available for our interview. During the advisory block, I observed her engage with several students in very individual and personal ways. In my field notes, I made this notation: "asked one student about his father's health. Gave another student cookies from her desk. Promised a student that she would come to his basketball game. Helped a different student log

into the computer." Over the course of data collection, I frequently visited this teacher's advisory period and noticed an increase in students who attended her advisory block. Jokingly, I mentioned to the teacher that her advisory had swelled. She responded, "because they don't never wanna leave, they think I'm their momma."

Additionally, some educators saw school swag as a part of an increasing sense of belonging and increasing their pride in Rutherford. In the previous section, I defined swag as symbolic artifacts that represented Rutherford in the community. Swag included shirts, hats, umbrellas, coffee mugs, tote bags, binders, pens, flags, refrigerator magnets, chairs, blankets and other artifacts that displayed the school's colors, logo, and mascot. In addition to swag increasing the school's symbolic presence in the community, it was a way for students to display their belongingness to the school. Ms. Taylor continues to describe students' sense of belonging by reiterating some important points,

> So, I would say definitely with the social aspect of being able to bring this as a family as you know, us being caring about our kids, like I said, [the school] being a safe place, especially with the swag. You want to belong to the school, so I think they have more pride in that whole thing. So I would say that's definitely a strength.

Indeed concepts of relationships, safe space and sense of belonging emerged across several interviews with teachers, administrators, and staff members. Collectively, they identified these themes as essential components of their school culture of care. One school administrator reported,

> I had to prepare myself and make sure I'm modeling for my kids so they can see that you can still do stuff [like go to college]. And I think that, like I said, with the team we got here, it's always about talking with kids about upward mobility and prepare them for next steps and stuff like that. I would say we do create a safe space and sense of belongingness for our kids with the swag and relationships and all that other stuff.

It is also important to note that the culture of care developed for students was extended to teachers as well. Multiple teachers shared that they felt that the administration trusts them and valued their perspectives. In addition, several teachers also shared that overall the school valued individual differences, diversity, and inclusion. This was commonly done by having transparent communication that focused on the shared mission of serving the students. Teacher, too, felt like students' voice was a major factor in school decision-making. Administrators would often hold student focus groups to gain perspectives on student experiences and challenges and make school changes accordingly. Ms. Maxine shared these thoughts:

> I would say, I love the fact that our leadership trusts us. I would say that's a strength. They definitely allow for voice. Student voice, too. Like they really. The principal, Lord Jesus (chuckles), would listen to the kids and if they want certain things, they would get them. I think it just cuts into the kind of trying to make sure that we're really serving them, so it gives us an opportunity to really listen to them, and with leadership, they really listen to us.

Indeed, the administrators at Rutherford posited that, given the challenging contexts that most students come from, teachers needed to approach their work with students in ways that acknowledged the students' realities. When asked, specifically, why school culture was important, educators at Rutherford understood that their students were impacted by multiple overlapping out-of-school factors traditionally associated with inner-city neighborhoods. Fueled by passion, Ms. Alicia, who had been teaching at RHS for 8 years, explains it by saying.

> I tell people all the time, it's all the way fucked up. When you really understand what our kids deal with, and [other] people, like she said, screw up their face and look at us, it's like 'how can you work there?' It's like, when you really understand [our kids], and know, yea, they get on my nerves. However, I got one student, I'm telling you, her house, seeing her mother get her ass whooped by the drug dealer boyfriend. Literally came up here last year, after house, it's dark. She ran up to the school because this is her refuge… You understand what I'm saying? Very drug-infested. Very much, numerous siblings. Students who literally don't eat. They don't know where their next meal is coming from. Students whose clothes are dirty, because nobody's washing clothes [at home].

In acknowledging the lived realities of students, it was essential that as part of the culture of care, educators at Rutherford redefined their roles, to meet not only students' academic needs but their social and in some ways their development needs as well. Ms. Alicia, for example, was 12th grade English teachers. She not only took pride in being able to establish a safe and caring environment for students, but she also regarded her role as much more than just a teacher. The "needs" of students that she described in the interview included the need to have a mentor, protector, friend, ally, and advocate. Having been teaching at the school for 8 years, Ms. Alicia explains:

> If you teach here, you gon' be the parent. You gon' be the psychologist. You gon' be the big sister, the big brother, whatever. Here, it's is magnified times a million… it took a village to raise me, being a part of that village. I feel like our [teachers] role is to be a part of the village.

As the founder of a school program that emphasized community service, Ms. Alicia believed that the students at Rutherford needed educators who are willing to go beyond the traditional role and address students' out-of-school realities through developing a culture where relationships, sense of belonging, and care were inherent. She believed in developing students by preparing them for other challenges that they might be presented in the future.

The notion that in a caring school environment, teachers might have to (re)define their roles beyond that of a traditional teacher was shared by another teacher, Ms. Antoinette, who taught students in 11th and 12th grade as well as students with special needs. For Ms. Antoinette, it was personal given her own academic background. She explained:

> What is my role? Like she [Ms. Alicia] said, your role is to be the mother, and the father, and the sister, and the brother, and aunt, and the uncle. And, it's draining. For me, it is…[stares at the floor while rubbing hands against her knees] If I was in high school again, I would fit in perfectly here. Just the perfect scenario of a girl who, academically, had it, but just decided I wasn't going to do it because I

> couldn’t manage the things that I could control at home, outside of the home, and anything that related to my just being at home, in our family. I just decided I wasn’t going to do it. I didn’t feel like I got… If I wouldn’t get the support then that these kids get from us now, probably wouldn’t… My entire path would be changed. For me, my personal goal is to allow them to get what I did not get, and what I needed most, that I didn’t’ get. Yea, that’s it for me in a nutshell.

As Ms. Antoinette mentioned, she saw the redefining of the role of the teacher as “draining” but she understands how students who experience challenging home lives can have their path “changed” when educators are positioned to support students in academic and non-academic ways. In particular, as part of the culture of the school. Of import is Ms. Antoinette’s understanding of students’ out-of-school challenges and how they can and do shape students development. She understands the transformative power of a caring educator who redefines their role to assist students “manage” the things they can’t control at home. Finally, she describes the need to redefine the role as a “beautiful struggle” which she believed that the kids deserve it:

> The struggle is real, but it’s worth it. It is worth it [clapping her hands together with each word]. We have some beautiful children who deserve, even in the midst of all the chaos, to have a real educational experience. If you [teachers] don’t focus on nothing else but them one or two, or however many [students] you got. I’m blessed to have quite a few and they deserve it. You have to come here [to school] for them. They deserve it.

School Climate: Culture of Healing (Restorative). In order to develop a culture of healing, educators needed the resources to support students beyond simply academics. Traditionally, urban schools lack the resources necessary to provide for the complex needs of the students they serve. Rutherford is not different in this regard. Educators understood that they lacked adequate resources to fully address the wide and varying needs of students. However, educators were able to “make the most of what we have” in order to “support our young people socially and emotionally. Several educators discussed supporting young people in “a more therapeutic kind of

way" and shifting from punitive approaches. For several teachers, this meant "[taking] the time to speak to our young people, speak to parents about the needs of the young people, and clearly [the parents] needs as well."

Across several interviews with educators, specifically teachers there was a collective acknowledgment that in previous years discipline was more "punitive". Teachers shared that students frequently were being suspended and "getting kicked out" because at the time "Rutherford was a no-tolerance zone." Jokingly, one teacher said, "We had big bouncers as our behavior specialists". The comparison of school staff is responsible for student behavior to security guards at a nightclub is reveals the ethos previously underlying school discipline at Rutherford.

What exactly is a therapeutic approach? After speaking with several educators and school staff, it appeared that the vast majority of educators at Rutherford were aware that students would be receiving more therapeutic programs and services across the school campus. While this message was clear among educators, the ways in which this was implemented varied within the school. For example, one of the Small Learning Communities (SLCs) was designated as a single-gendered, all male academy: The Eagle Academy. The Eagle Academy served 9th and 10th grade students and as part of the vision of the academy, therapeutic programming that centered on boys' development would be employed. When speaking with the founding administrator for The Eagle Academy, Mr. Swan explained it to me like by saying:

> So we're a restorative practice school. And so we hold a lot of circles to discuss the conflict, pressing issues, concerns, cares, and we even hold our community meetings in a circle. We do them amongst cohorts. So those are done that way. Basically, it feels like the purpose of the circle is that everyone as a voice. And so that's a thing. So anyway, we have the community agency that comes in. They've done the training for our teachers. They've done the training for our young people. And I partner with them in our rites of passage for our young people and then [the community agency is] here Tuesday and Friday working with 9th and 10th grades on separate days. And then on a regular day-to-day basis, there's

> another brother who comes in and just kind of works with me on conflicts and stuff. He's connected with social services.

For Mr. Swan, therapeutic approach and restorative practices were interconnected. He contended that restorative practices aligned with the ways he "believed we should develop young people, particularly young boys." One of his goals as Academy Leader was to teach the students how to best cope with the out-of-school realities that plagued their community. He fully understood the drugs, violence, crime and neighborhood beef that shaped his students' experiences and saw it as his responsibility to ensure that the programming students received from the school addressed those realities. He actively sought an organization from the local community that specialized in conflict resolution, restorative, and therapeutic practices for young males of color. He notes that he wanted to work with an organization that "knows the kids and knows the neighborhood" and can "connect to what's happening outside of the building."

In a separate encounter, I observed Mr. Swan having a conversation with a fellow colleague who worked closely with the community partners connected with the Eagle Academy. In this conversation, they were discussing the possibility of solidifying another partner. After several moments of conversation and Mr. Swan explaining why the potential partner would not be selected, he exclaims "Because I understand, that's what's going to keep [the students] one, coming to school, and then two, they're going to be able to connect that with academic and then success outside of Rutherford."

Mr. Swan demonstrates one way in which Rutherford collaborated with the local community to implement a contextually specific partnership that addresses the needs of students impacted by out-of-school factors. Instead of establishing partnerships that did not address the lived realities of students, Mr. Swan and the rest of the Rutherford community implemented a

school-community partnership that highlights the importance and influence of place in the schooling experience for students.

Similarly, another teacher reported,

> Then, around restorative justice, I know [administration] did some outsourcing and brought in two people from the community do what's called restorative justice practices. What that is, is it's an intervention program to help our students… what word am I looking for? Manage their role as a student and their outside stressors. I've found that it's been very beneficial.

Educators realized that in previous years, black boys were suspended at disproportionate rates. This, however, was not an uncommon practice across the district. Educators at Rutherford were dedicated to break the cycle and provide opportunities for all students, and boys, in particular, to succeed in school. In order to do so, developing a culture of healing that included the utility of restorative practices was central. Interestingly, one educator saw the disproportionate suspensions as a failure of the school and not the misbehavior of individual students. She noted, "I would say we [the school staff] has a disciplined effort [to eliminate punitive discipline measures]. Especially at Rutherford, black boys get suspended so much. You know? Sometimes it could be problems with their IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and stuff like that. Teachers don't always follow what's in there."

She continues, "But being able to see discipline differently. We don't have the luxury to put them out anymore. The thing is, you can suspend a kid but we don't take that as a first approach. We are trying to be a little bit more restorative, really trying to delve into the problem, like, why did this happen." As a school community, there was a deliberate attempt to minimize suspensions and work with students to restore breaches in the community. One way in which educators achieved this was through relationships with students and, as the teacher mentioned above "delving into the problem".

Similarly, another educator, Ms. Marie, who had been a teaching at Rutherford for 6 years echoed the sentiments above. She mentioned, “We definitely have changed our view on the way that we discipline kids so that we can keep them in the building and sort shift the culture so that students remain in class. We [teachers] have found different ways to do it [discipline]. And then the leadership teams made it very important that we have the students' voice. The school social worker shared a similar perspective:

> We try to get everybody to approach kids with that [therapeutic] approach. Before, it was, ‘No, this is what it is. You got a problem, you can go.’ So now we’re trying not to do that and we’re giving kids options. I mean, some things weren’t ‘No, you have to go,’ but we really try not to go there anymore. So it’s a different field.

In describing the shift to focus on developing a culture of healing and the implementation of restorative practices, one teacher shared the following.

> I’ve found that it’s been very beneficial. Especially as a teacher, and someone who is very centered. It’s important to know where students are mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I felt like it’s been really helpful. There are a number of teachers in the building that have done it with fidelity who have actually seen the benefits of doing that. I know that there are some outset things that are trickling down within the school. But I feel like, in a school like this, you can never have too much. We need more.

To be clear, the responsibility to develop a culture of healing was shared by teachers, counselors, social workers, administrators, behavioral specialist, and other staff members. The social worker who served 10th grade students was intentional in making this point abundantly clear when she offered, “When I say, ‘we’ I mean not just the social workers. We’re expecting everyone to be therapeutic.” She provided an example of how teachers, without formal training, could, at least in a small way, be more therapeutic for students. She explains that they can “do the positive sandwich.” For her, this meant, “when you’re addressing a kid, you do the positive, then you do the negative, and end with another positive.” She continued to acknowledge that several students

come from backgrounds where, unfortunately, they do not frequently and consistently hear positive messages and therefore teachers, as well as all educators, must be deliberate in generously offering positive reinforcement to students.

In addition to school-based educators, school police officer –often referred to as resource officers—also assisted in developing and maintain a culture of healing through their restorative approaches in dealing with students and student misbehavior. On one visit to the school, I was included in a meeting between a school resource officer and two female students who had a recent altercation in the classroom. Also present at this meeting was the grade-level social worker, a school administrator, and a behavioral specialist. The meeting was lead mainly by the school social worker and the school resource officer. While the others observed and offered minimum input, the school resource officer guided the students through a reflective exercise. Asking questions like, "What could you have done differently?" "How do you think your actions made the other person feel?" "Does this get your closer to your goals or farther away?" and, "What do you have the power to control and how would you change it?" students communicated with each other to arrive at the heart of the issue and to uncover alternative solutions. The interaction between the school resource officers and the students demonstrated an intentional effort to restore community instead of removing student via suspension or other punitive forms of discipline.

School Climate: College-going Culture. Finally, as mentioned several times throughout this dissertation, Rutherford High School is a traditional public school which primarily serves local neighborhood students and families. The neighborhood where the school is located, Rose, is a community that has been impacted by poverty, local and state policies, unemployment, crime and other factors generally associated with inner-city neighborhoods. In spite of this, however,

Rutherford remains committed to its mission of developing and graduating globally competitive students for college, careers, and leadership. The school's curriculum, policies and procedures, and even the basic structure of the school are all intended to support this mission. In this section, I present themes that emerged relevant to the college-going culture at Rutherford.

Principals, counselors, teachers, and other staff members reported concerns with previous academic culture for students. One of the 12th grade teachers commented, "When I first came, I saw absolutely no book bags." Other teachers mentioned a lack of academic expectations and rigor. There was a consensus that academic rigor across the school needed to be increased and that higher expectations needed to be held for students. In addition to low academic expectation, teachers also shared that traditionally the school had lower graduation rates, low test scores and ultimately low numbers of students who apply for and attend postsecondary institutions.

To address these academic challenges and develop a college-going culture for students at Rutherford, school administrators implemented several initiatives, policies, programs aimed at increasing student success. One such approach was described by a 12th grade English teacher. Pointing to the closest on the west side of her classroom, she said, "If you look over there, that white binder. That box right there. We give them [the students] binders. The principal likes to do the organized binder system so the school provided binders for all however many thousands of children we have." The teacher's comments illustrate that the school has pivoted to a school-wide system of organization through the "organized binder system." As the teacher explained it, in this system, "all the student work goes in it" as well as their graded assignments, class notes, progress reports, course syllabus and assignment list. This system encouraged students to take full accountability of their academic success by increasing academic transparency. Additionally, the teacher's comments also reveal that the school utilized resources to provide a binder for each

student in the school which demonstrates a clear prioritization of academics, at least in the sense of organized binder system.

Another idea that came up in discussions of increasing the academic rigor was the differing academic levels of students and the ability of teachers to meet students at the current academic level to provide rigorous instruction that was accessible and could promote students to the next level. Consistently, administrators, teachers, counselors and other instructional staff expressed that identifying the present levels of students and meeting students that that level was an important element of improving academic rigor.

One of the grade-level administrators discussed the importance of working with students "where they are" in order to get them to the next level. He mentioned that given the diverse and challenging background of students and their out-of-school lives, that teachers must understand rigor "isn't one size fits all" and get to know the students' abilities early to provide "the best differentiated instruction." According to this administrator, this could only be possible if teachers "get to know the kids" and "make it personal for each child." While teachers agreed with the administrator's statement about rigor looking different for different students, they were also, as one teacher put it "stuck between a rock and a hard place." This was due primarily to the district's shared curriculum guidelines. One teacher passionate put it,

> The district will put on their teachers demanding us to differentiate between students in the given curriculum. But where is the differentiation when it comes to how we're supposed to be teaching our kids here? They want to roll everything out and everything is cookie-cutter for the district, but that doesn't work for our kids here. Then if they come into my classroom, and I'm not doing what they think everybody in the district should be doing, then I'll get penalized for it. If it's going to be a trickle-down effect, it needs to be a trickle-down effect, but there needs to be some room for our kids to succeed.

These comments are important as they also point to challenges from the district that teachers face when working to meet the specific needs of their students. In this example,

educators at Rutherford are developing an academic culture of college-going that aligns with the out-of-school challenges that students face, and are met with top-down pressures from the district that could threaten their job at worst, and at best, challenges their teacher evaluation score.

Another way that educators are meeting students where they academically within the college-going culture is by offering courses like Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Teachers identified this program as helpful in targeting students who are entering high school and yet lack essential skills to be successful. This program is designed to help support students and their families who are at risk from "falling through the cracks." The program has a clear college focus and several teachers across the school are responsible for participating in the program to reach high numbers of students.

It is important to note that, meeting the academic needs of students did not solely mean remediation and scaffolding for students who are behind grade level. In fact, Rutherford severed a high number of students who qualified for Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. These courses, too, are designed to meet students where they are and push them to continuous academic improvement. The school's lead counselor said, "One of our goals is to identify students who qualify for our different (academic) programs and make sure they are placed in them." It was evident from several interviews with teachers, and other administrators that this was a shared vision at Rutherford. Teachers described how they encourage and challenge students to take honors and AP courses thus ensuring that students were appropriately placed in courses that will ultimately meet them at their current academic levels and assist in pushing them beyond.

Indeed, course offerings were a major component of Rutherford's approach to meeting the individual academic needs of students as part of the college-going culture. In addition to AVID, honors, and AP courses, Rutherford also offered students dual enrollment, and career and

technical education (CTE) courses. The counselors mentioned that the varied course offering provided “options” for the students to be on the right “path towards college.” Ultimately, the goal of the course offerings was to ensure that every student at the school could be engaged in the type of academic experience that would “increase their college interest while enhancing their skill set.”

The school’s approach to individually meeting students at their current levels and assisting them to advance through targeted and focused means is an important element in the development of the college-going culture. This approach differs from whole-school approaches to improving rigor. Such approaches fail to specifically set college as the goal and instead focus on skills for “postsecondary success.” One example of this would be a school that institutes an “enrichment” period in the school schedule. While an enrichment period could be taken as an important initial step in preparing the needs of students, in and of itself, it does not identify and target individual students and in a structured way. It is important to note that educators at Rutherford perceived college as a direct next step after high school graduation and structured academic interventions, such as the increasing rigor, differentiation, and meeting the needs of individual students as appropriate steps in preparing students for college.

Another key element that arose in the development of a college-going culture at Rutherford was college-themed artifacts that saturated the school’s aesthetic presence. Artifacts are, indeed, a component of the school’s basic structure. As such, many of the artifacts are representative of a college-going culture. I begin with a few of my personal insights and observations. These details are helpful because they illustrate particular elements that were not mentioned by educators. When I entered Rutherford for the first time to meet the administrative team and speak to faculty regarding this project, I was immediately drawn to the symbols around the school that reflect the school’s mission. In the main lobby of the building, there is a painted

mural of African American leaders including Rosa Parks, Mae Johnson, Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Marion Barry. In addition to these historical figures, the mural also contains students who recently graduated from Rutherford high. The school's colors, serve as the backdrop of the mural and inspirational quotations cover the remaining blank spots. This mural was painted when the new Rutherford building was erected.

In the cafeteria, where students start their day with breakfast, morning announcements and sometimes study hall, has college flags hanging from the ceiling. Most of the universities represented in the flags are large, state-run, universities, like the University of Maryland and Virginia Technological University. However, there were also flags for Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Howard University, Hampton University, and Morgan State University.

In addition to these large spaces across the school, most classrooms and hallways also have artifacts that represented college-going. Throughout the hallways, there are college pennants lining sections of the walls separated by displays of student work. Various institution types are represented including Ivy League schools like the University of Pennsylvania, Historically Black College and Universities as well as large public universities. Several teachers displayed memorabilia from their degree-granting institutions. For example, one teacher displayed a photo of her wearing her graduation cap and gown framed in a picture frame shaped like a terrapin, which is a form of a turtle. Terrapin is the official mascot of The University of Maryland which was carved into the shell of the terrapin on the frame.

Another element of Rutherford's college-going culture is the partnerships that the school has established with community organizations. Rutherford is a district school for the Upward Bound program, a federal TRIO program designed to help first-generation and low-income students prepare for and access college. One teacher noted, "Upward Bound is the most effective

and beneficial for our kids." It also is one of the school partners of another college preparatory program called the College Success Foundation. This program provides a "unique integrated system of supports and scholarships to inspired underserved, low-income students to finish high school, graduate from college and succeed in life" (College Success Foundation website). These are only two college and community partnerships that support the college-going culture at Rutherford. Both of these partnerships provide students with additional support for college preparation and exposure to colleges and universities as part of the overall approach to school climate reform at Rutherford.

In fact, increasing exposures to colleges and universities was a major element of the college-going culture at Rutherford. From the very beginning of their time at Rutherford, students are provided opportunities to attend college tours. Unlike other high schools that selected the highest performing students to attend college tours, Rutherford encouraged and supported all students, regardless of academic ability in visiting colleges, speaking with college recruiters or current college students. In fact, one 11th grade teacher exclaimed, "I ain't never been on so many college tours in my life!" She reported that Rutherford held a college tour over spring break that students enjoyed.

Despite some teachers expressing that the students at Rutherford were heavily engaged in college torus to expose them to college, still, some staff members and administrators thought this was an area that could be improved. When speaking to an administrator who would be responsible for the upcoming graduating class about her goals and vision for the next year, she expressed her desire to increase students' exposure even beyond what they already have seen in terms of colleges and universities. She commented, "I want to do more around exposing them to different universities and schools." In addition to this, she wanted to "have people that look like

they come in and speak to them about college." Here, she was speaking specifically about students who come from neighborhood conditions similar to those of Rose.

Collectively, educators decided to name every Friday as "college day" as part of the development of the college-going culture. As it was described by one teacher, on college day teachers work college shirts, represented where they went to college and spent time talking to their classes about their college experiences. Teachers would also wear shirts to display their affiliation to a Greek Letter organization, such as Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated or Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority Incorporated.

Chapter Summary

To conclude, in this chapter, I began to describe two major school reform approaches that were linked to the out-of-school realities that influenced the school's teaching and learning environment. Indeed educators at Rutherford where consistently stretching their limited resources to their fullest while also outreaching to the local community to supplement and support their endeavors. The first approach was dedicated to (re)fashioning the school as a spatial neighborhood asset. There were four primary actions educators took to achieve this. First, educators created an open-door policy to constantly and consistently welcome community members into the building for a variety of reasons. Second, educators increased their physical and symbolic presence in neighborhood spaces to illustrate the inextricable links between Rose and Rutherford. Third, educators prioritized community concerns and mobilized their capital and resources to advocate where necessary. Fourth, the school became a community "plug" by offering few, but critical services to the community

The second reform approach explained in this chapter was to address the school climate through care, healing, and college-going. To accomplish this, educators at Rutherford prioritized building relationships with students, families, and community members. Additionally, a culture

of healing at Rutherford emphasized using what educators referred to as a therapeutic approach to working with students as well as utilizing restorative practices to restore and build community. Finally, a college-going culture included holding high academic expectations and emphasizing college-going as a postsecondary option for students. Below, I discuss each of these in greater detail by analyzing the perspectives of teachers, staff, and administrators and to some degree parents.

In what follows, in chapter 6, I conclude this dissertation by discussing the implications of the study for school reform, future research, leadership preparation and leadership practice. I also consider the limitations of the study and end with concluding remarks.

Chapter 6

Toward a Vision of Community-Engaged School Reform

Introduction

This study on community-engaged school reform began with two major objectives: (1) investigate the challenges and factors external to schools that shape the character of the neighborhood school through the perspectives of community members and educators; (2) explore the school reform approaches enacted by educators that were connected to neighborhood realities and engaged community members. As such, this study was guided by the primary question: How do educators at Rutherford, a traditional neighborhood high school, approach school reform and community engagement? Additionally, several supplemental questions were used to strategically organize the project:

1. What out-of-school challenges (factors) did educators identify as having shaped their approaches to school reform in a traditional neighborhood public school?
2. How do educators-teachers and administrators—devise strategies to address/respond to these out-of-school challenges (factors)?
3. To what degree do the out-of-school challenges influence the strategies enacted by educators?

In the previous two chapters, I discussed findings related to the aforementioned objectives. Now in this chapter, I turn to a discussion of the findings as well as the implications and limitations of this study. I begin with a summary of the major findings and include a discussion of outcomes of the particular reform efforts especially as it relates to students' academic achievement. Then, I discuss the scholarly contribution of this study to the field of education generally and the study of school reform specifically. Next, I articulate an approach to community-engaged school reform by using Rutherford as an example. Finally, I end this chapter with a discussion of future directions, limitations, and implications for leaders, policy, and practice.

A Recap: Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study were presented across two chapters. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings related to the neighborhood challenges that had profound impacts on Rutherford High School. In Chapter 5, I presented the findings related to community-engaged school reforms enacted by educators to contend with the out-of-school factors. Both educators and community members discussed the outside-of-school challenges that have a profound influence on students' experiences and outcomes inside of the school. Across multiple interviews with instructional and administrative staff members at Rutherford, it was revealed that out-of-school factors of drugs, violence, and concentrated poverty had a drastic impact on the school environment. Participants shared that neighborhood conditions that students were constantly and

continually exposed to shaped their ability to focus on academic tasks in schools. Educators reported the negative neighborhood conditions that influenced students' performance in the classroom. This is consistent with the ecological literature that explores urban school achievement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Further, educators reported that gang affiliation and gang violence had a presence in the community that impacted the school environment. While neighborhood "beefs" were primarily existing outside of the school building, at times, the school became a neutral battleground where the conflict played out. Additionally, students described the compounding of these challenges as "bricks" that students carried with them from outside of school, into the school building. That figuratively weighed them down and affected their ability to learn and succeed in school. Lisa Delpit (2012) discussed the notion of school dependence which occurs when student's life experiences cause students to depend on the school (teachers, counselors, and administrators) to provide resources to assist them in their development that they may not receive or that may be challenging because of their outside of school lives. Educators at Rutherford saw this playing out in their school context. Thus, teachers and administrators reported the idea of "role bending" in which they re-conceptualized their role as an educator to encompass a range of supports for students, often in unconventional ways.

Another outside of school factor that was highlighted by educators was student and family homelessness and housing instability. Educators identified challenged student and family home structures as an out-of-school variable that influenced students' experiences. They reported that several students lived in a difficult home environment including homeless shelters, transitional housing, and other forms of housing instability. According to their report, students identified as homeless were in a constant state of residential change that shaped their schooling experiences.

Across multiple interviews, both teachers and administrators reported that the school's reputation and stigma was an out-of-school variable that shaped the character of Rutherford. Multiple participants overwhelmingly reported the perceived reputation of Rutherford as a "bad school" from individuals across the city of Mountainview had a drastic impact on the school through student enrollment, school climate, and collaboration with outside organizations. Within the broader context of school choice, the social construction of a school's reputation can limit and prevent the ability of the school to engage community partnerships that could potentially provide students with necessary resources. Additionally, it can deter parents from enrolling their children in the school and instead of selecting other nearby options.

Relatedly, educators also reported that the growing presence of charter schools and the school choice environment presented a challenge to Rutherford. One reason highlighted across interviews was that public school educators were expected to form recruitment and marketing plans in order to attract parent "consumers" to enroll their child. Traditionally, public schools, especially neighborhood schools are not responsible for recruiting students to the school. However, the current climate of school choice forces all schools to compete for students. This added burden further strains public school educators and takes time from the educating of the current students. School personnel regarded the influx of nearby charter schools as an out of school variable impacting the Rose community as parents are forced to navigate the nebulous terrain of school choice that plays on parents' disenfranchised position while Rutherford and other area public schools receive fewer resources.

In Chapter 5, I described two major approaches that educators and leaders took to address the interconnected and overlapping spaces of neighborhood conditions and school reform and improvement. One of the reform approaches that educators at Rutherford utilized that linked with the outside of school factors which was (re)fashioning the school as a spatial

neighborhood asset within the community. There were four primary ways in which educators positioned the school as a spatial asset. First, educators created an open-door policy to constantly and consistently welcome community members into the building for a variety of reasons. Second, educators increased their physical and symbolic presence in neighborhood spaces to better illuminate the inextricable links between Rose and Rutherford. Third, educators prioritized community concerns and mobilized their social capital and resources to advocate where necessary. Fourth, the school became a community "plug" by offering few, but critical services to the community.

One element of the school serving as a spatial asset in the neighborhood was allowing unrestricted, comfortable opportunities for parents and community members to enter the school building. In this regard, parents and members from the community were frequently present in Rutherford and engaged with administrators, teachers, and staff. To accommodate frequent visitors, Rutherford appointed a school administrator with the responsibility of liaising between the school and the community. Community functions were common at the school, and members of the community – parents, former students, extended family, and community residents – were constantly in contact with Rutherford staff. By community functions, I mean community meetings, trainings, festivals/celebrations, art shows, and other events hosted for the enjoyment of local community residents. Administrators at Rutherford developed a Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) to weigh in on important school matters. , the Local School Advisory Team demonstrates a collaborative effort between educators, parents and community members to meaningfully engage in the school improvement process as well as contribute to decisions that impact students, families and community residents, especially around out-of-school factors, student success and school environment.

In addition to allowing unrestricted, comfortable opportunity for parents and community members to enter the school building, educators at Rutherford established the school as a spatial asset in the community by leveraging staff and other resources to support a regular community presence. Educators' face-to-face presence with local community residents engages the opportunity for residents and educators to build rapport and assume a shared responsibility in educating area youth. Teachers' approaches to increase their presence in the community could be viewed as disrupting the traditional and somewhat arbitrary boundaries that separate the school from the community. Instead, given the neighborhood variables affecting the neighborhood, teachers at Rutherford saw their work in Rose as an extension of their classroom. Educators achieved this by engaging in formal, informal, structured and unstructured actions. This included traditional actions such as report card distribution and home visits. As well as non-traditional actions such as taxiing students from local neighborhood spaces. Educators also mobilized students in organized student-groups to enter community spaces to increase the school's presence in the community. Finally, educators at Rutherford also deliberately increased their symbolic presence in the community by providing "swag" to students, parents, community members, and school partners so that there was always a piece of Rutherford everywhere in the area. Taken together, these actions, position Rutherford as essentially indistinguishable from the Rose neighborhood.

Educators assisted parents and community members in community causes this further fostered the notion of the school as a spatial asset, especially for parents and local neighborhood residents. To build trust with community residents and position Rutherford as a spatial neighborhood asset, administrators and teachers were socially anchored with community concerns thereby increasing the nature of the community engaged school reform. Educators understood that positioning themselves to be community advocates would further build trust with

community members and foster better school-community relationships. The school itself offered supports to children and served as a spatial asset or cornerstone of the community. Various services and activities that operated or were co-located within Rutherford.

Another reform approach that educators at Rutherford utilized that linked with the outside of school factors which was developing a school climate that focused on care, healing, and college-going. For educators at Rutherford, building relationships with students, families, and community members were critical for a school-wide culture of critical care. Additionally, a culture of healing at Rutherford emphasized using what educators referred to as a therapeutic approach to working with students as well as utilizing restorative practices to restore and build community. Finally, a college-going culture included holding high academic expectations and emphasizing college-going as a postsecondary option for students. Below, I discuss each of these in greater detail by analyzing the perspectives of teachers, staff, and administrators and to some degree parents.

For educators at Rutherford, one common theme in developing and demonstrating a culture of critical care among teachers and administrators was centered on the importance of focusing on and building relationships with students and families. Several educators also mentioned the importance of students feeling a sense of belonging at school, thus they prioritized this as part of the culture of care at Rutherford. In their view, a sense of belonging is predicated on feeling welcomed and affirmed through relationships with adults and peers, academic curriculum, and, most importantly, cultural atmosphere.

Additionally, educators at Rutherford transitioned away from their traditional approach to handling student discipline as educators viewed as punitive and instead opted for a more therapeutic approach where the focus was on positively addressing the needs of the whole child. Finally, to directly focus on student academic, educators at Rutherford implemented a college-

going culture which emphasized college activities, learning, and college pathways as integral to the school structure and curriculum.

Discussion

While examining the perceptions that existed among teachers, administrators, parents, community members and other community partners regarding their local school community, it should be noted that while there were also several points of agreement, points of disagreement were also present. For instance, while some community members felt that Rose was evolving into a safer neighborhood, other community residents still reported a sense of danger in their neighborhood. When I attended the neighborhood council meetings, discussions of both community advancements (such as new businesses and housing developments) and community challenges (food deserts, crime, limited police presence) took place. This not only reinforces the notion that community assets existed in Rose despite the challenges. It also proves that residents experienced the neighborhood differently. This is a critical point. In my presentation of neighborhood conditions, I attempted to shed light on both the challenges and the assets present in Rose.

Critical Urban Theory was a particularly useful framework as it emphasizes the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested and therefore malleable character of urban space (Brenner 2009, 198). In this study, critical urban theory provided the necessary vehicle to describe stakeholders critiques of ideology, power, inequality, and injustice within the urban context of Rutherford. Moreover, consistent with Brenner's assertion that critical urban theory is not a strategy for political action, but instead is an abstract and necessary moment that occurs before practical actions are proposed, I draw from the activist orientations of Critical Race Theory to describe and discuss the actions of educators.

The emergent findings of this study are valuable because they complicate the conversation of school reform while recognizing the influence that outside of school variables play in the reform process. Represented across the findings are the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups who are most directly impacted by and involved in the school reform process. Jeynes (2015) recommended more complex interdisciplinary approaches to understand, designing, and implementing urban school reform. This application of critical urban theory and critical race theory considered demographic, social, cultural, and spatial dynamics to analyze a school reform effort. Without these frameworks, the seemingly unrelated phenomena would not have materialized into a collective lens through which the school reform process at Rutherford could be understood.

Central to the core purpose of school reform at Rutherford was student achievement. Indeed, educators were focused on developing a schooling environment where students could be academically successful despite the hardships they encountered outside of school. This is evidenced by the findings in this study. For example, research examining the social contexts of urban schools has shed light on the process by which high school context influences the likelihood that poor Black students will select and enroll in elite colleges and universities. Given that disparities in course offerings exist between high schools, as is the case at Rutherford until the reform effort started, students have less opportunity to enroll in college preparatory courses like Advanced Placement and AVID. Klopfenstein (2004) found that mentoring Black students to enroll in advanced courses can decrease course taking disparities and increase students' likelihood to apply to and enroll in elite colleges. Not only did educators at Rutherford increase the course offerings, community mentors were also brought into the school to discuss grades, courses and student-teacher relationships with students.

Also, though qualitative classroom observations, I was able to witness increases in student participation and engagement in the school's newly developed advisory period and informal conversations with teachers about non-academic matters. Both actions would suggest that some students were beginning to feel more connected to the school. This is an important indicator as research on student engagement and sense of belonging suggests that those students who feel affirmed and connected to the school tend to perform well academically. While these depictions provide evidence that student achievement is expected to be improved, a follow-up visit could, in fact, confirm this. Ultimately, community-engaged school reform shows grave promise for improving urban schools and increasing student achievement.

What is Community-Engaged School Reform

The concept of community-engaged school reform provides a useful lens through which to understand the actions of educators at Rutherford. In contrast to school improvement approaches that are primarily driven and lead by district and school administrators or policy officials, community-engaged school reform would present an alternative approach to embarking on school change in solidarity with community stakeholders. In historically marginalized neighborhood public schools where parents and community members have been disregarded and shut out of the school change process, community-engaged school reform offers an opportunity to challenge discourses that communities of color, particularly Black communities are disengaged in their children's schooling.

Community-engaged school reform represents a deviation from traditional research in the field of educational leadership and school reform which tends to focus on the approaches school administrators draw on to improve and transform schools. Instead, community-engaged school reform draws from an emerging body of scholarship that emphasizes the ways community

members work in solidarity with educators to reform neighborhood public schools (Ishimaru, 2013; Rodela, 2016; Scribner & Fernandez, 2017; Wilson & Johnson, 2015).

Importantly, implementing and sustaining community-engaged school reform in urban schools would require changes in policy and practice at multiple levels— school, district, states, and the federal government. Indeed, improving urban schools requires multiple actors on varying levels to work together. Community-engaged school reform calls for teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to leverage their collective power and agency to disrupt and change the structures and policies that continue to depress the schooling experiences and opportunities for low-income communities of color. When low-income and communities of color access their collective resources to transform their local neighborhood public schools, then their communities are strengthened altogether.

Communities of Color as Expert Partners

Deficit views of low-income and communities of color can negatively affect school-community relations. When educators presume that families and community members are not valuable contributors to the education of children, then they restrict the access and meaningful assistance of those individuals. Deficit ideologies occur when school officials draw from negative stereotypes of historically marginalized communities as lacking cultural knowledge and in response, seek to eliminate students' knowledge and replace their ways of knowing with dominant cultural knowledge, norms and behaviors (Carey, Yee & DeMatthews, 2018). Instead, community-engaged school reform necessitates that teachers and administrators challenge stereotypes and deficit images of communities of color that they may hold and position community members as integral to the school change process. This requires an ideological paradigm shift in the beliefs of educators.

Urban schools typically allow community members to become involved in school matters in limited ways. While speaking at career day, attending school-sponsored performances and assemblies, or participating in school fundraisers are all important mechanism for community involvement, supporting school practices, and increasing community knowledge of school-based events, such opportunities do not regard community members are partners, let alone experts. Instead, however, those opportunities regard communities as passive participants and do little to challenge the power dynamics between school and the community (Fernadez, LeChasseur, &Donaldson, 2017; Fuentes, 2012; Warren, Hong, Rubin & UY, 2009).

Instead of limiting community input to patronage, community-engaged school reform encourages a reciprocal relationship between the school and the local community. Furthermore, it recognizes parents, students and community partners as experts on how policy and school change affects them. In some ways, this represents a dramatic shift away from dominant deficit views of low-income and communities of color. By situating families and community members as experts, educators stand to gain practical and context-specific steps to transforming schools and communities. This viewpoint is consistent with other scholarship that seeks to situate successful education and effective reform within multifaceted, strengths-based views of race, ethnicity, culture and the positionality of privilege within local neighborhoods (Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Garcia, 2007)

The notion that families and community members should be regarded as expert partners in the school change process is not new. Scholars have argued that it is parents and community members of color who possess the lived experiences and on-the-ground, insider knowledge of their neighborhoods and cultural communities; therefore their expertise should be considered in their children's schooling (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Fuentes, 2012; Hong, 2011).

It is important to note, that leveraging community cultural knowledge extends far beyond the classroom and reaches the level of whole school improvement. Given that community members are directly impacted by the local neighborhood context as well as the efforts to reform the neighborhood school, their insight should be leveraged as part of the school reform process. Steen and Noguera (2010) stressed the need for " an integrated approach that moves beyond merely implementing in-school interventions to involve all school stakeholders," including not just teachers and administrators, but also parents and community members.

In addition, Health and McLaughlin (1994) and Oakes and Rogers (2006) argue that schools should harness the expertise and of community members regarding effective strategies to engage and empower youth by responding to their lived realities. One such way this can be accomplished is through open, two-way dialogue between school and community. Open dialogues create opportunities for learning and change and instill a sense of trust in schools, which are necessary precursors to community-engaged school reform. Dessel and Rogge (2008) define community dialogues as intergroup conversations where individuals from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups meet to talk openly in a safe and structured environment. I extend on this definition and offer that for community-engaged school reform, the dialogue should also include how community members across lines of identity can contribute to the school reform process.

Not only does community-engaged school reform require that educators have a shift in their core beliefs about the local school community, it also necessitates that educators demonstrate a willingness to leverage the cultural knowledge of the community. When schools construct imaginary boundaries that separate the school from the surrounding community, then students are expected to shed their ways-of-knowing that have been established through their lived experiences with their neighborhood and assume new insights from educators. This

separation does not affirm nor value the insights, expertise, knowledge of children's lived experiences. On the other hand, when the knowledge of community members is seen as valuable to the learning process, then students can more meaningfully connect what they learn to their outside of the class experiences.

For educators at Rutherford, this was a consistent theme and evidenced throughout the findings of the study. For example, when Ms. Sheila invited the war veterans into the classroom to contribute to the instruction on war novels, the community meetings with community partners and educators, as well as the hiring of community members to employees at the school. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the school values the local community as experts partners in the school reform and improvement process.

Shared Leadership, Relationship Building, Collective Action

Educational leadership is generally associated with the district superintendent, school principal, and other school-based administrators. As such, school leadership is presumed to reside solely with the school principal from which all actions and decision trickle down. Community-engaged school reform does not subscribe to this prescriptive approach to educational leadership. Instead, it is a school reform strategy that relies on shared leadership, relationship building, and collective action. Research has shown that school administrators do, in fact, need the leadership of parents and community members to enact equity-oriented change (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2012; Mediratta et al., 2008).

Green's (2017) community-based equity audits approach advises that principals develop a community leadership team to build relationships and drive collective equity-oriented actions for school and community development. Key to the concept of community-engaged school reform is the notion of relationship building and collective equity-oriented actions geared towards school transformation and improvement. Community-engaged school reform brings

together leaders from both the school and community context including, but not limited to parents, community organizations, church leaders, and other community members to foster meaningful relationships and excite collective reform action.

Of course, the relationship building across stakeholders must be intentional and continually nurtured by all parties. Cook, Shah, and Brodsky (2017) found that relationships building between school and community can be done through sharing stories, crossing comfort zones, and coming together (p. 22). Such steps are essential for shared leadership, relationship building and collective action in community-engaged school reform.

Bidirectionality of Power and Capital

Research on school change recommends that both top-down and bottom-up power and capital is needed to make equity-oriented changes (Oakes et al., 2005). This bidirectionality is paramount to community-engaged school reform. For several decades, schools have enacted a decision-making process that maintains a top-down leadership approach that positions parents and community members at the margins (Ehrich & English, 2012). Departing from traditional approaches, one main objective of community-engaged school reform is to give those whose voice has frequently been overlooked the strategies to activate their agency and mobilize it to influence the school reform process in solidarity with those frequently heard.

Returning to the example of the LSAT in the case of Rutherford illustrates the bidirectional flow of power and capital. Community members worked in collaboration with educators on important school matters. In this example, the formation of the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) to assist administrators in developing a community engagement strategy is a direct example of the bidirectionality of power and capital. In this case, the LSAT comprised of parents, teachers, support staff and community members working in together in the decision-

making process allows community members to use their expertise to influence import school matters.

The Need for Community-Engaged Urban School Reform

One of the intentions of this project was to illuminate the out-of-school factors that significantly affected the teaching and learning opportunities for educators and students. In this project, I return to the examination of those factors and use critical urban theory to frame the discussion and explore ways that educators can confront outside-of-school variables present in their local context. Specifically, I use the framework's percepts of expose, propose, and politicize to guide the discussion. I first begin, by briefly revisiting critical urban theory.

According to Marcuse (2009), the ultimate purpose of critical urban theory is implementing the demand for a right to the city. Brenner (2009) added the assertion that critical urban theory insists that another, more democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanization is possible." By examining the social, political, economic, and racial injustices within urban communities, critical urban theorist aiming for an urban praxis that co-joins urban knowledge and practice. According to Marcuse (2009) researchers and practitioners who employ a critical urban theory perspective seek to "expose roots of the problem and making clear and communicating that analysis to those that need it and can use it. He continues to suggest that "propose, in the sense of working with those affected to come up with actual proposals and programs to achieve the desired results. And finally, to politicize in the sense of clarifying the political action and supporting organizing around the proposals by informing action.

In keeping with these precepts, I highlight a few ways educators might expose, propose, and politicize in their local contexts. First, there are considerable differences in every neighborhood, mapping is one method that shows promise in illuminating the assets and challenges present in place. In particular, geographic information system (GIS) mapping can be a

useful tool in gathering, managing, and analyzing spatial data. Notwithstanding the complexities of this approach, GIS is a relevant tool to visually display the spatial and demographic data concerns schools and neighborhoods. Alternatively, community walks could serve a similar purpose. While they do not afford the opportunity to visually map and spatially represent the neighborhood, they are significantly insightful. Those within and outside the school-community should become more familiar with the “geography of opportunity” as well as the “opportunities in geography” that shape student experiences.

In addition, these community walks can serve as an opportunity to engage neighborhood residents in conversations about how they perceive and make sense of their local context. As well as how they persist in the face of these challenges. Through these conversations, educators in solidarity with community stakeholders should propose strategies to address the issues. Marcuse (2009) contends that critical urban theory should help formulate responses that address the root causes and demonstrate the need for a politicized response. These proposed strategies should be grounded in and driven by the perspectives of those individuals directly impacted by the spatial injustices or neighborhood challenges. Finally, educators and community members should join with researchers, policymakers, local leaders, community-based organizations, parents, and district and city officials to support the development and implementation of the proposed strategies. Bringing together multiple stakeholder groups from multiple levels has the potential to ignite and inform action by drawing attention to the day-to-day politics impacted by neighborhood conditions.

Highlighting the out-of-school challenges perceived by educators at Rutherford to have an impact on the students, families and school, this study, not surprisingly, demonstrates that several of the variables identified are similar to those facing urban schools and urban communities across the U.S. If school substantive school reform is to take place, it must address

the outside of school factors. This is not to suggest that schools can or should be seen as a substitute for policy solutions that address the systemic issues that give way to issues in urban areas. Instead, neighborhood schools can better connect their reform to neighborhood realities by increasing community participation. Villenas and Deyhle (1999) remind that caring teachers, parents, and researchers are not enough to bring about change within and beyond schools. Persistent change generally can come when the community as a collective gains economic and political power. The interconnected spaces of neighborhood factors, students, and school climate must be understood by educators, especially in urban areas, who engage with young people on a daily basis. Even more so, school embedded in these areas must structure reform efforts with these outside of school challenges in mind by engaging the community in that process.

Over the past several years, discussions of school-community relationships have been taken up as one possible approach for addressing the intransigence of urban school reform. For urban high school reform to be sustainable it must be connected with neighborhood conditions and community participation. Explaining this, Noguera (1996) posits:

> Urban schools are inextricably linked to and affected by urban environments. While this fact seems obvious and irrefutable, the connections between the urban environment and urban schools generally seem to be ignored in most discussions about school improvement… urban schools have the potential to play a leading role in the revitalization of urban areas. (p. 1)

Noguera and other scholars who uphold this perspective –that schools and communities are inextricably linked (Anyon, 2005; Berliner, 2006; Green 2015) – argue that positioning urban school reform that fails to address community issues is incomplete. These scholars agree that communities in which urban schools are embedded have been ignored in the school reform and improvement process. Finally, Matthews (1996) contends that “reforms have to start in and with the community” (Matthews, 1996). In the next section, I discuss the limitations and significance of this study.

Limitations

In most studies, regardless of research questions, theory, or methodology, scholars have to make choices to give parameters to the research. These parameters are necessary to report as they allow others to “pick up” the study and continue the development of the ideas. In this section, I discuss the limitations of this study.

One major limitation of this study is that I did not include widely accepted, numeric student achievement data, such as test scores and grades. The question of “are the reform efforts working” can potentially arise for those interested in how school reform directly impacts student outcomes. Given that this study took place within a restricted time frame, student achievement data for the year of the reform was unavailable. Additionally, school change literature overwhelming agrees that dramatic improvement on student achievement takes time – months, even years to show progress. Follow-up research could reveal the numeric impact of educators’ reform efforts. As an immediate solution, in efforts to yield the relationships between school reform and student achievement at Rutherford, I triangulate the self-reported interview data with observations and document analysis. In several ways, this allowed for an understanding of student achievement, engagement, based on the school reform initiatives.

In order to maintain the focus of this dissertation and simultaneously manage the breadth of the study, I had to make several important and difficult decisions. For example, I had to limit the presentation of perspectives from some parents, community partners, teachers and support staff. My intention behind these decisions was not to sway or influence the perception of this work. Instead, I prioritized presenting a cogent and concise report of the perspectives shared by the educators involved in this study. Over my ten-month data collection period at Rutherford, I gathered enough data to write multiple volumes on a number of topics. Ultimately, I was faced with the difficult decision on what to include in this volume. So that which is included here is

directly related to the important themes germane to the research questions, literature review and narrative of school reform at Rutherford.

To reiterate, the themes and ideas presented were those most relevant to my research questions or those most frequently reflected in the data. It is possible that another researcher examining the same data set might choose to emphasize other findings. Given this, I include interview questions and in the appendix of this dissertation to allow others to determine how I executed my queries. Additionally, in detail, I discuss my process to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in my methodology chapter.

Finally, a significant limitation of this study was the omission of student perspectives who have had to survive and thrive despite the neighborhood realities. In a discussion on how neighborhood variables impact students and other stakeholder groups, the voices of students would shed light that other stakeholder groups cannot bear witness. While the focus of this study was on educators, community members and parents, adding students' voice in future studies will provide more texture and another level of nuance. Unfortunately, the district did not authorize students to be interviewed for this study. Another researcher might take this up. This and other research ideas are discussed in the future research section. Warren's (2017) Urban Preparation: Young Black Men Moving from Chicago's South Side to Success in High Education serves an example for scholarship investigating the intersections of place and education from the perspectives of students. Before delving into that, however, implications of the study are discussed.

Significance

Departing from existing discussions of urban neighborhood and urban school relationships emphasize the role of schools as the hub of the community, this research sought to highlight the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups and their collaboration around school

improvement. In this section, I discuss the significance of this research. First, this study is significant because it captures the implications of the outside of school variables on the actions social actors take to improve schools, from the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups, including those in-school actors most directly involved in the reform process. Research that identifies out-of-school factors that impact urban schools is often limited to a single perspective and focuses less on how those factors affect the actions of school officials. Parting from this, this study demonstrates the impact of external variables on the school reform decisions and actions of educators.

Second, this study is significant because it adds another empirical case study to the literature on urban high school reform within a challenging neighborhood context. Specifically, this study highlighted the collaboration within and between the community and the neighborhood public school and therefore contributes to scholarly research on community engagement in public school change specifically in low-income urban areas serving predominantly families of color. This case study contributes to the scholarship on school reform and community collaboration.

Finally, this study provides unique insight into the creativity and fortitude of educators and community members who are passionate about educating Black students. The current educational reform climate has created boundaries that are restrictive to the type of engagement traditionally representative of black segregated schools while simultaneously calling for stronger collaboration. In some ways, this duality is encouraging a specific model of partnership –one that inadequately supports schools and communities serving Black families. This study wholehearted rejects notions that communities and educators lack a care for Black students in poverty.

Implications

In the following sections, I address the implications of this study. Particularly I discuss the implications for the preparation of educators in urban schools, practice, and future research. The scope of the findings from this qualitative study adequately answered my research questions. First, the social and cultural context of the neighborhood surrounding Rutherford – Rose-- served as the basis of which educators linked to school reform to those realities and engaged community partners in the process. Through the narratives of educators, parents, and community members, the issues that plagued the local community and served as an additional obstacle of which educators had to contend were illuminated. Further, these issues are spatially situated and demonstrate that space is not a mere backdrop or contain where social life occurs. Instead, space and the variables it bears is a deliberate actor in the process of living and learning, particularly in urban geographies.

Other findings in this study illustrate the deliberate practices that educators individually and collectively employed to link school reform to the local neighborhood conditions. For instance, educators at the school were encouraged and support in their efforts to reposition the school as a spatial community asset which included getting beyond the boundaries of the school and increasing the material and symbolic presence of Rutherford in the community. Instead of solely relying on the school building – the actual brick and mortar-=- to serve as a community meeting space, educators positioned themselves outside of the building in ways that traversed traditional boundaries of physical space between the school building and the surrounding community. This reinscribed the notion that the neighborhood school is in and of the community.

Implications for Preparation

Several implications for the preparation of educators emerged from this research. First, given the current spatial moment, and increased attention to place is essential. Therefore, programs that develop educators should emphasize an approach to education that is intimately

intertwined with the social, cultural, and spatial realities of neighborhoods where schools are embedded. Schools of education charged with the responsibility of training the next generation of educators must, too, cultivate a spatial orientation for educators that is explicitly tied to the lived experiences of the students and families they serve. This is critically important especially since the current wave of education reform policies have regarded space as inconsequential and unimportant. Teachers and administrators must situate their teaching, leading and reform efforts in the immediate contexts of school and communities.

Second, urban education programs need to include courses and coursework that explicitly investigates the intersected spaces of neighborhood effects, students, and school environment. Too many preparation programs focus on the technical aspects of teaching and leading in urban schools. I attended both a non-traditional and traditional teacher preparation program and admittedly, these programs were qualitatively different. However, where they were similar was in their shared lack to illuminate the inextricable links between neighborhoods and schools and the implications for my practice as a teacher. During my second year as a teacher, I was blind-sighted with this reality and discouraged at the task of what it might mean to address these challenges without adequate training to do so. My preparation programs could have explored this intersection.

Implications for Practice

The first implication of this study for educators' practice is that educators should link school reform to the external factors that influence the schooling experience of students and teachers. However, this cannot occur if school-based educators do not become familiar with those realities by spending time in the community. Empirical studies have suggested that a growing number of public school educators are residing in neighborhoods away from the local school community. I do not condemn the individual choices of educators. Instead, this reality

sheds light on the fact that educators are become more and more distant – both figuratively and literally – from the students they serve. To remedy this, educators should prioritize community presence as whole school professional development then ensure that reform initiatives are linked to the outside of school realities. As an important note, adequate training and discussion are necessary so that educators develop the frameworks to regard external conditions as products of historic and systemic injustices.

Relatedly, the second implication of this study for educators builds on the previous one to identify and develop authentic meaningful relationships with people, organizations, and institutions in the community. Urban school reform literature overwhelming suggests that urban schools typically lack the capacity to undergo substantial and sustainable reform in isolation. This incapacity calls for collaboration with external stakeholders such as community members and school partners with shared interests in the current students attending the school. Educators must also be thoughtful and strategic of whom to develop such partnerships with.

Implications for Future Research

The current study makes space for other lines of inquiry that should be addressed in future research. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one future study that should address is one that incorporates the perspectives of students. While the perspectives of teachers, administrators, school staff, parents, and community partners provided a robust viewpoint from which to understand engaging community members in school reform that is linked to neighborhood realities, students are uniquely positioned to provide another layer on their experiences and perspectives. Especially if students voices are mobilized as co-constructors of school reform and not simply as informants. Through qualitative methods, one study could address research questions such as: How do students experience the impact of neighborhood conditions on their schooling? How do students perceive school reform that is linked to those neighborhood

conditions? Relatedly, this study should engage students in identifying and developing school-community partnerships by asking: Whom do students identify as community partners and how do they engage those partners in the reform process?

Second, given the current educational landscape that heavily focuses on academic outcome indicators, such as test scores and graduation rates, future research needs to focus on the quantitative impacts of student success as at an urban school with strong ties to the community. Over the past three decades and increased scholarly and policy attention has called for increased school and community partnerships as a means to improve urban schools. Few students have examined its quantitative impacts. The findings in this dissertation suggest neighborhoods are a key component of the school environment. This stance is in direct opposition to market-based approaches to education reform. Quantitative data will help demonstrate the significance in (re)linking schools to communities.

In sum, future research on community-engaged urban school reform that is linked to neighborhood realities should involve both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to capture the impacts and significance of this work. Students are key and their perspectives and experiences should be an orienting focal point.

The Bottom Line

The introduction of this study highlighted two important points: the dearth of research on the perceptions of school stakeholders regarding the out-of-school factors and the need for more case study examples of community-engaged school reform. The case of Rutherford provides insight towards both points. The conditions of the Rose neighborhood had profound impacts on the children and families who resided in the community. Educators identified those factors most salient and having the greatest impact on the shape and character of the traditional neighborhood

school. Educators at Rutherford demonstrated awareness of the out-of-school factors by embarking on school transformation that took these factors into account.

What Rutherford's story demonstrates is that community engaged school reform isn't just feel good fluff. Community-engaged school reform matter for students and families and it made the school better. Students, the families, and the local community became part of the learning process. The school made efforts to listen to students and their families. The reform process at Rutherford wasn't perfect and there is still work to be done to ensure all students and families are included. But at the very least, there was an awareness by the school that progress was being made, it would take continuous improvements in the process to address the complex needs of students. That awareness alone could make a difference in school policy and practice.

However, as not to paint a picture of Rutherford as a model or a perfect archetype, it is important to remember that Rutherford is still struggling to create a school environment that can account for the realities of the neighborhood. Just a week before I submitted this dissertation a 15-year old student from Rutherford was shot and killed a few blocks from the school. The school alone cannot stand in the place where adequate social policy should be. The challenge remains if and in what ways schools can be involved in calling for social policy reform so that the safety and learning of all kids can be a priority.

Final Thoughts

In 2007, George Lipsitz penned "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape." In this article, he suggests that inner-city residents turn "segregation into congregation" as a means of producing useful mechanisms of solidarity and attachment to place for inner-city residents. He posits that unlike their counterparts in the suburbs, who establish private governments that benefit from exclusionary zoning and tax-subsidized privatism, inner-city residents cannot control the uses to which their

neighborhood are put by the rest of the city and their only recourse is to increase the use value of their neighborhood (pg. 11).

Borrowing from this premise, this study aptly entitled From Segregation to Congregation describes the significance of the interconnection among race, place, and education in the United States. Indeed the challenging variables that are present in urban neighborhoods, such as poverty, crime, homelessness do shape the schools embedded in these contexts. The out-of-school variables further exacerbate the challenges already present in urban schools. Unfortunately, social policies have been negligent in adequately addressing poverty, racial and spatial injustices. This is unacceptable. All students, deserve the opportunity to learn in environments that affirm their identity and foster holistic development. Until politicians and policymakers take seriously the challenges of presented for individuals in policy, urban school educators will have to shoulder the onus of creating conditions that for our nation's most vulnerable students. This is not just an issue for urban educators. All of us interested and invested in equitable education and spatial justice can play a part in creating more equitable learning environments for all students.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Urban High School Administrators and Teachers

Participant's Name Code: ______________________ Date/Time: ______________

Interview: ____________________

School Code: ____________________________ City/State: ______________________

Length of Interview: ________________ Interview Location: ____________________

Purpose of this interview:

There are two goals for this interview. First, establish rapport with the interviewee. Second, gain background information on the principal's experience at the school and insight into the community and school's context.

Review Consent Form and Obtain Signature

I. Background Information:

Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and how you came to be a high school principal (teacher)?

II. Dynamics of the surrounding neighborhood and community

1. First, describe your connection to Congress Heights, both in the past and currently.
2. Describe your overall impressions of the school? How do you think this relates to the perceptions of parents, other teachers, and the broader community?
3. Describe your overall impressions of the community? How do you think this relates to the perceptions of parents, other teachers, and the broader community?
4. Please tell me about the Congress Heights community; that is what are the greatest strengths and challenges?
5. What if anything needs to be done to build on these strengths, and what needs to be done to overcome these challenges?
6. Tell me about the history of the neighborhood around the school and the school itself.
7. Please describe any changes in the neighborhood over the past 5 years. Explain how these changes have impact you or those you are close to? In what ways (if any) have you responded?

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

8. Please describe what things were like in the community when you began leading or working at this school?

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

III. School and schools context and culture

1. Please describe the nature of your work and your overall responsibilities at Rutherford High School.
2. Please describe what the school (e.g. student achievement, teacher morale, and school climate) were like when you first started working at this school.

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

3. Please describe the current school's culture?

Probe: Do you have an original story or example to help explain?

4. Describe any changes in the school (e.g. context or culture) that you have witnessed since being at this school.
5. Please explain 3 or more of the school's greatest areas for improvement?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Get interviewee to detail a story or reason why this is an area for change.

6. How do you understand the school's relationship within the overall district?
7. In your opinion, how does the community regard the school?

Probe: Do you have a story or example to support?

8. What else can you tell me about this school's context and overall culture?
9. What do you see as the role of teachers and community members to improve the school?

IV. School improvement

1. First, please tell me about your students; that is, what strengths do they bring into the school and what are some of their greatest challenges?
2. Please explain 3 or more actions or efforts the school has taken to improve student achievement?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Ask leaders to talk about their individual actions and involvement in these efforts.

3. How did, and how do you continually build your capacity and staff's to enact school improvement?

Probe: How do you know that school improvement is increasing student achievement, improving school climate and student behavior?
Probe: How do you know that this work is making a difference?

4. What are you most proud of in this work, and what are the strongest or most impactful areas of this work (school improvement)?

Probe: To what extent are they impactful and for whom? Are any populations (groups) being excluded from this work?

5. From your perspective, how can the surrounding community support this school's improvement efforts?

V. Local Community and Context

1. Who are the most impactful community-based organizations or people that the school has collaborated/established helpful relationships and partnerships with?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Who are the key people (or organizations) in the community that work with the school in different capacities?

2. To what extent and in what ways have these relationships/partnerships impacted the school? Local neighborhood community?
3. Please describe the role community leaders or community organizations have played in school improvement efforts.
4. Please describe all the strategies (actions) that you can think of that you have and are taking to improve and establish partnership with community members?

Probe: Please describe all the strategies (actions) that you can think of that other school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents, faculty), and community leaders have taken to improve community partnerships over the years.

5. How has your relationship/partnership/engagement transformed how these community organizations function in relation to the school?
6. What are the greatest challenges (e.g. internal and external) in doing this work?
    a.

b.
c.

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

7. Explain how you have overcome those challenges?
8. What are you lease proud of with this work?
9. Okay, to sum things up, if you were talking with a group of principals, what steps would you suggest they take, or should be taken to engage in meaningful partnerships with community stakeholders to improve local school climate? Please list as many critical; that is, most helpful actions that you can think of.
    a.
    b.
    c.

VI. Closing

1. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not already covered regarding improving school climate or building community partnerships?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol
Community Leaders

Participant's Name Code: ___________________________ Date/Time:
____

Interview: ________________________

School Code: __________________________________ City/State:
____

Length of Interview: ___________________ Interview Location:
____

Purpose of this interview:
There are two goals for this interview. First, establish rapport with the interviewee. Second, gain background information on the principal's experience at the school and insight into the community and school's context.

Review Consent Form and Obtain Signature

I. Background Information:

Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and how you came to be a high school principal?

II. Dynamics of the surrounding neighborhood and community

1. First, please tell me about this [insert name] community; that is what are the greatest strengths and challenges?
2. Please describe any changes in the neighborhood over the past 5 years.

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

3. Please describe what things were like in the community when you began working in/with this community?

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

4. What were the school's relationship like with [insert school's name] and this particular community?
5. When you came on board, what was your understanding of the partnership between [insert school name] and this community?

III. School and School Context and Culture

1. Please describe the nature of your work and your overall responsibilities in this community
2. Please describe what the school (e.g. student achievement, teacher morale, and school climate) were like when you first started working in this community.

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

3. Please describe the current school's culture as best as you know it?

Probe: Do you have an original story or example to help explain?

4. Describe any changes in the school (e.g. context or culture) that you have witnessed since being in this community.
5. Please explain 3 or more of the school's greatest areas for improvement?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Get interviewee to detail a story or reason why this is an area for change.

6. How do you understand the school's position within the overall district?
7. In your opinion, how does the community regard the school?

Probe: Do you have a story or example to support?

8. What else can you tell me about this school's context and overall culture?

IV. School Improvement

1. First, please tell me about your students who attend {insert school name]; that is, what strengths do they bring into the school and what are some of their greatest challenges?
2. Please explain 3 or more actions or efforts the school has taken to improve student achievement?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Ask leaders to talk about their individual actions and involvement in these efforts.

3. How did, and how do you continually build your capacity and staff's to enact school improvement?

Probe: How do you know that school improvement is increasing student achievement, improving school climate and student behavior?

Probe: How do you know that this work is making a difference?

4. What are you most proud of in this work, and what are the strongest or most impactful areas of this work (school improvement)?

Probe: To what extent are they impactful and for whom? Are any populations (groups) being excluded from this work?

5. From your perspective, how can the surrounding community support this school's improvement efforts?

V. Community Involvement and School Improvement

1. Please describe how you work with and support the high school [insert school name].
2. Please describe all the critical strategies; that is, most helpful (actions) that you can think of that you (or other members of the community) have taken to establish and strengthen your relationship/partnership with [insert school's name] over the years?
    a.
    b.
    c.

3. Who are the most impactful community-based organizations or people that the school has collaborated/established helpful relationships and partnerships with?
    d.
    e.
    f.

Probe: Who are the key people (or organizations) in the community that work with the school in different capacities?

4. To what extent and in what ways have these relationships/partnerships impacted the school? Local neighborhood community?

Probe: How do you know?

5. Please describe the role community leaders or community organizations have played in school improvement efforts.
6. Please describe all the strategies (actions) that you can think of that you have and are taking to improve and establish partnership with community members?

Probe: Please describe all the strategies (actions) that you can think of that other school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, parents, faculty), and community leaders have taken to improve community partnerships over the years.

7. How has your relationship/partnership/engagement transformed how these community organizations function in relation to the school?
8. What are the greatest challenges (e.g. internal and external) in doing this work?
    a.
    b.
    c.

Probe: Do you have any stories or examples?

9. Explain how you have overcome those challenges?
10. What are you lease proud of with this work?

11. Okay, to sum things up, if you were talking with a group of principals, what steps would you suggest they take, or should be taken to engage in meaningful partnerships with community stakeholders to improve local school climate? Please list as many critical; that is, most helpful actions that you can think of.
    a.
    b.
    c.

VI. Community Partnerships

1. Describe the involvement you think the local community should have with school reform?
2. What can communities do to work in partnership with schools?
3. What impact do you think strong school-community partnerships have on schools and students?
4. What are some challenges or problems with school-community partnerships?

12. Closing

1. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not already covered regarding improving school climate or building community partnerships?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX D

Dear Rutherford High School Family:

Rutherford's relationship with the surrounding community uniquely positions the school as an important site of investigation that has a lot to offer the DCPS as well as other districts across the country. The purpose of this letter is to provide a brief background of the researcher and to discuss the research project.

I am currently enrolled as a PhD candidate in the Urban Schooling program at the University of California, Los Angeles. My interdisciplinary research interests situates at the intersections of (1) race and class inequities in education; (2) school and district reform in urban contexts; and (3) the politics of space. Both my research and activism grow out of my personal commitment to social justice for traditionally underserved populations. Prior to pursuing my doctoral degree, I spent 6 years as a high school teacher in DC and in Atlanta where I also worked alongside communities to help improve local school conditions.

My dissertation, tentatively entitled "Black Oasis: From Segregation to Congregation" uses the spatial politics of Washington, DC and the impact of gentrification as a starting point to examine the relationship between a traditional public school and the surrounding community to promote school improvement. The overall purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to examine the relationship between a traditional public school and the local community; and (b) to theorize this relationship within the urban context. To achieve this this purpose, this study addresses the primary research question: How do school personnel and community members work together to support school improvement and increase educational opportunities for students?

In order to examine the collaboration between Rutherford and the surrounding community three primary data collection methods will be utilized: questionnaire, interviews and observations. Below, I will describe what each method will entail.

> *Questionnaire:* I have designed a short questionnaire that I will ask staff members to complete. The questionnaire will have no more than 10 questions and asks staff about their teaching at Rutherford and engagement with the community. The responses to the questionnaire will help prepare teachers to participate in the interviews.

Interviews: The interviews for this study will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Interview questions focus on the following topics: school and community contexts and partnerships, perspectives on surrounding neighborhood change and school improvement and educational opportunities. My goal is to interview at least 10 instructional staff members, 3 administrators and 10 parents.

The data collection will not impact any instructional time or school activities. All interviews will happen during scheduled planning periods or before or after school. All interviews will be de-identified as to not disclose information about the participant. Additionally, there is no risk to those participating in this research. All information collected is to help gain a better understanding of the collaboration between Rutherford and the surrounding community and potentially inform school and district policies and practices.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to be a crucial part of this work. I will be sure to periodically check in with you and keep you abreast on the progress and development of the data collection. If any questions arise, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly via phone at (XXX)XXX - XXXX or email at mrdjenkins@ucla.edu.

Humbly,

DeMarcus Jenkins, MA, Ed.M
Ph.D Candidate, Division of Urban Schooling
University of California, Los Angeles

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

From Segregation to Congregation: A Case Study of Community Engaged Urban School Reform

DeMarcus Jenkins, MA, Ed.M under the Faculty Advisorship of Pedro Noguera, PhD from the *Graduate School of Education and Information Studies* at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently working in or connected to a traditional public neighborhood school that is seeking to develop a safe school climate for its students. Your experiences are important in helping us understand how school-community partnerships can impact school improvement efforts. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

To understand the impact of neighborhood contexts on school improvement efforts focused on culture and climate through the perspectives of multiple grassroots stakeholder groups in a single urban neighborhood. The goals of this study is to determine the degree to which neighborhood change and school improvement are co-constitutive in urban communities. There is an abundance of scholarly research that shows the interconnected ways in which schools and communities exists. Our knowledge is still limited in understanding the degree to which neighborhood contexts impact school improvement efforts specifically focused on school climate and culture. A second goal of this study is to examine the varied and potentially related ways that traditional public schools are impacted by social, political, and cultural dynamics of the surrounding community. A third goal of this study is to understand how community engagement in school improvement efforts can promote increasing student achievement and successful schools. Finally, a fourth goal of this study is to investigate methods for partnership-building between schools and communities.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Complete one individual interview, lasting 30-45 minutes, with the principal investigator;
  - Interview questions will focus on (a) current perceptions of school climate and culture; (b) suggestions for school climate reform for increased student outcomes; (c) ways to collaborate with school or community to facilitate increased school improvement; (d) current partnership efforts between school and community.
  - Interviews will take place at the school site or another public location in the community (coffee shop, library, community center)

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of about a maximum of 90 minutes (questionnaire and interview). All participant interviews will be completed before December 30, 2017.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are none.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not directly benefit from the study.

The results of the research may help researchers, policymakers and other educational stakeholders understand how to build strong school-community partnerships to better support school reform in urban public schools across the state.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using coding schemes to hide the identity of participants and removing all personal information (name, age, position). The coding scheme will only be accessible by the principal investigator and will be kept separate from all interview data.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The research team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

  DeMarcus Jenkins
  mobile: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

  Pedro Noguera

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  10889 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 830
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

____
Name of Participant

_____________________________________ _____________________
Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____________________________________ _____________________
Name of Person Obtaining Consent Contact Number

_____________________________________ _____________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

References:

Affeldt, J. T. (2015). New accountability in California through local control funding reforms: The promise and the gaps. *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, (23).

Alexander, B. K. (2003). Fading, twisting, and weaving: An interpretive ethnography of the Black barbershop as cultural space. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *9*(1), 105-128.

Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Univ of North Carolina Press.

Anderson, M. L., Gallagher, J., & Ritchie, E. R. (2018). How the Quality of School Lunch Affects Students' Academic Performance. *The Education Digest*, *83*(6), 61-64.

Anderson, J. A., Houser, J. H., & Howland, A. (2010). The Full Purpose Partnership model for promoting academic and socio-emotional success in schools. *School Community Journal*, *20*(1), 31-54.

Anyon, J. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. Teachers College Press.

Anyon, J. (2005). Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and a New Social Movement.

Anyon, J. (2014). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. Routledge.

Apple, M. W. (2001). Markets, standards, teaching, and teacher education. *Journal of teacher education*, *52*(3), 182-196.

Auerbach, S. (2009). Walking the walk: Portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools. *School Community Journal*, *19*(1), 9.

Auerbach, S. (2010). Beyond Coffee with the Principal: Toward Leadership for Authentic School-Family Partnerships. *Journal of School Leadership*, *20*(6), 728-757.

Baquedano-López, P., Alexander, R. A., & Hernandez, S. J. (2013). Equity issues in parental and community involvement in schools: What teacher educators need to know. *Review of Research in Education*, *37*(1), 149-182.

Barton, A. C. (2003). *Teaching science for social justice*. Teachers College Press.

Bebiroglu, N., Geldhof, G. Pinderhughes, E.E., Phelps, E. & Lerner, R. M. (2013). From family

to society: The role of perceived parenting behaviors in promoting youth civic engagement. Parenting: Science and Practice, 13, 153-168.

Bishop, J. L., & Verleger, M. A. (2013, June). The flipped classroom: A survey of the research. In *ASEE National Conference Proceedings, Atlanta, GA* (Vol. 30, No. 9, pp. 1-18).

Bower, H., & Griffin, D. (2011). Can the Epstein model of parental involvement work in a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school? A case study. *Professional School Counseling*, *15*(2), 77-87.

Brenner, N. (2009). What is critical urban theory?. *City*, *13*(2-3), 198-207.

Brooks, J. S. (2012). *Black school, White school: Racism and educational (mis) leadership*. Teachers College Press.

Brooks-Gunn, J., & Duncan, G. J. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *The future of children*, 55-71.

Buras, K. (2011). Race, charter schools, and conscious capitalism: On the spatial politics of whiteness as property (and the unconscionable assault on black New Orleans). *Harvard Educational Review*, *81*(2), 296-331.

Buras, K. L. (2014). *Charter schools, race, and urban space: Where the market meets grassroots resistance*. Routledge.

Christenson, S. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2010). Culturally-based worldviews, family processes, and family-school interactions. In *Handbook of school-family partnerships* (pp. 119-146). Routledge.

Condron, D. J., & Roscigno, V. J. (2003). Disparities within: Unequal spending and achievement in an urban school district. *Sociology of Education*, 18-36.

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., & Peller, G. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. The New Press.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2010). Twenty years of critical race theory: Looking back to move forward. *Conn. L. Rev.*, *43*, 1253.

Cummings, C., Todd, L., & Dyson, A. (2011). *Beyond the school gates: Can full service and extended schools overcome disadvantage?*. Routledge.

Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D. J., Gatlin, S. J., & Vasquez Heilig, J. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, *13*.

Davis, J. E., & Jordan, W. J. (1994). The effects of school context, structure, and experiences on

African American males in middle and high school. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *63*(4), 570-587.

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). “So when it comes out, they aren’t that surprised that it is there”: Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational researcher*, *33*(5), 26-31.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Temple University Press.

DeMatthews, D. E., Edwards Jr, D. B., & Rincones, R. (2016). Social justice leadership and family engagement: A successful case from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *52*(5), 754-792.

DeMatthews, D., & Mawhinney, H. (2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion: Exploring challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequities. Educational Administration Quarterly, 50(5), 844-881.

Dempsey, V., & Noblit, G. (1993). The demise of caring in an African-American community: One consequence of school desegregation. *The Urban Review*, *25*(1), 47-61.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. Broadway Books.

Dewey, J. (1920). Americanism and localism. *The Dial*, *68*(6), 684-88.

Dixson, A. D., & Rousseau, C. K. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later. *Race ethnicity and education*, *8*(1), 7-27.

Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R., & Morrell, E. (2008). *The art of critical pedagogy: Possibilities for moving from theory to practice in urban schools* (Vol. 285). Peter Lang.

Duneier, M. (2016). *Ghetto: The invention of a place, the history of an idea*. Macmillan.

Dworsky, A. (2008). Educating Homeless Children in Chicago: A Case Study of Children in the Family Regeneration Program. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago*.

Emdin, C. (2016). *For White folks who teach in the hood... and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Beacon Press.

Epstein, J. L. (2018). School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Routledge.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). Building bridges of home, school, and community: The importance of design. *Journal of education for students placed at risk*, *6*(1-2), 161-168.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi delta kappan*, *76*(9), 701.

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *95*(5), 308-318.

Florida, R. (2017). *The new urban crisis: How our cities are increasing inequality, deepening segregation, and failing the middle class—And what we can do about it*. Basic Books.

Ferguson, C. (2005). Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections? A Strategy Brief of the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)*.

Ferlazzo, L. (2011). Involvement or engagement. Educational leadership, 68(8), 10-14.

Foster, M. (1997). Black teachers on teaching. New York: New Press.

Freeman, L. (2011). *There goes the hood: Views of gentrification from the ground up*. Temple University Press.

Garcia-Reid, P., Peterson, C. H., & Reid, R. J. (2015). Parent and teacher support among Latino immigrant youth: Effects on school engagement and school trouble avoidance. *Education and Urban Society*, *47*(3), 328-343.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Gooden, M. A. (2005). The role of an African American principal in an urban information technology high school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *41*(4), 630-650.

Gordon, C., Purciel-Hill, M., Ghai, N. R., Kaufman, L., Graham, R., & Van Wye, G. (2011). Measuring food deserts in New York City's low-income neighborhoods. *Health & place*, *17*(2), 696-700.

Green, T. L. (2015). Leading for urban school reform and community development. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *51*(5), 679-711.

Green, T. L., & Gooden, M. A. (2014). Transforming out-of-school challenges into opportunities: Community schools reform in the urban Midwest. *Urban Education*, *49*(8), 930-954.

Green, T. L. (2017). Community-based equity audits: A practical approach for educational leaders to support equitable community-school improvements. Educational Administration Quarterly, 53(1), 3-39.

Henig, J. R. (2013). *The End of Exceptionalism in American Education: The Changing Politics of School Reform*. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Henig, J. R., Hula, R. C., Orr, M., & Pedescleaux, D. S. (2001). *The color of school reform: Race, politics, and the challenge of urban education*. Princeton University Press.

Heilig, J. V., Romero, L. S., & Hopkins, M. (2017). Coign of vantage and action: Considering California's local accountability and school finance plans for English learners. *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, (25), 1-24.

Hess, F. M., & Leal, D. L. (2001). A shrinking "digital divide"? The provision of classroom computers across urban school systems. *Social Science Quarterly*, *82*(4), 765-778.

Hopson, R. (2014). Why are studies of neighborhoods and communities central to education policy and reform?. *Urban Education*, *49*(8), 992-995.

Horn, L., Kojaku, L. K., & Carroll, C. D. (2001). High school academic curriculum and the persistence path through college. *National Center for Education Statistics*, *163*.

Horsford, S. D. (2010). Mixed feelings about mixed schools: Superintendents on the complex legacy of school desegregation. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(3), 287-321.

Horsford, S. D., & Sampson, C. (2014). Promise neighborhoods: The promise and politics of community capacity building as urban school reform. *Urban Education*, *49*(8), 955-991.

Horsford, S. D., & Vasquez Heilig, J. (2014). Community-based education reform in urban contexts: Implications for leadership, policy, and accountability.

Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms* (Vol. 39). Teachers College Press.

Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E., Campbell, A., & Sarnoff, R. (2015). Foster youth and early implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula: Not yet making the grade. *SRI International and J. Koppich & Associates*.

Irby, D. J. (2015). Urban is floating face down in the mainstream: Using hip-hop-based education research to resurrect "the urban" in urban education. *Urban Education*, *50*(1), 7-30.

Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. Urban Education, 47(4), 706-742.

Johnson, L. (2007). Rethinking successful school leadership in challenging US schools: Culturally responsive practices in school-community relationships. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, *35*(3).

Jordan, C., Orozco, E., & Averett, A. (2002). Emerging Issues in School, Family, & Community Connections. Annual Synthesis, 2001.

Keegan Eamon, M. (2004). Digital divide in computer access and use between poor and non-poor youth. *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare*, *31*, 91.

Khalifa, M. (2012). A re-new-ed paradigm in successful urban school leadership: Principal as community leader. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *48*(3), 424-467.

Klopfenstein, K. (2004). The advanced placement expansion of the 1990s: How did traditionally underserved students fare?. *education policy analysis archives*, *12*, 68.

Koppich, J. E., Humphrey, D. C., & Marsh, J. A. (2015). Two Years of California's Local Control Funding Formula: Time to Reaffirm the Grand Vision. *Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE*.

Krukowski, R. A., West, D. S., Harvey-Berino, J., & Prewitt, T. E. (2010). Neighborhood impact on healthy food availability and pricing in food stores. *Journal of community health*, *35*(3), 315-320.

Kozol, J. (2012). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. Broadway Books.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, *11*(1), 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American educational research journal*, *32*(3), 465-491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational researcher*, *35*(7), 3-12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of teacher education*, *51*(3), 206-214.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American Children. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. John Wiley & Sons.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (2016). Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. In *Critical Race Theory in Education* (pp. 10-31). Routledge.

Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, *24*(1), 37-62.

LeChasseur, K. (2014). Critical race theory and the meaning of "community" in district partnerships. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *47*(3), 305-320.

Lenzi, M., Vieno, A., Pastore, M., & Santinello, M. (2013). Neighborhood social connectedness

and adolescent civic engagement: An integrateive model. Journal of Encironmenal Psychology, 34, 45-54.

Lipman, P. (2011). Contesting the city: Neoliberal urbanism and the cultural politics of education reform in Chicago. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, *32*(2), 217-234.

Lipman, P. (2016). Contesting the city: neoliberal urbanism and the cultural politics of education reform in Chicago. *Neoliberalism, Cities and Education in the Global South and North*, 53.

Lipman, P. (1998). *Race, class, and power in school restructuring*. Suny Press.

Lipman, P., & Haines, N. (2007). From accountability to privatization and African American exclusion: Chicago's "Renaissance 2010". *Educational policy*, *21*(3), 471-502.

Lipsitz, G. (2007). The racialization of space and the spatialization of race theorizing the hidden architecture of landscape. *Landscape Journal*, *26*(1), 10-23.

Lomotey, K. (1989). *African-American principals: School leadership and success* (No. 124). Greenwood Publishing Group.

Lopez, G. R., & Parker, L. (2003). *Interrogating Racism in Qualitative Research Methodology. Counterpoints*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 275 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001.

Lynn, M., & Adams, M. (2002). Introductory overview to the special issue critical race theory and education: Recent developments in the field. *Equity &Excellence in Education*, *35*(2), 87-92.

Lynn, M., Yosso, T. J., Solórzano, D. G., & Parker, L. (2002). Critical race theory and education: Qualitative research in the new millennium.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. ASCD.

Matsko, K. K., & Hammerness, K. (2014). Unpacking the "urban" in urban teacher education: Making a case for context-specific preparation. *Journal of teacher education*, *65*(2), 128-144.

Matsuda, M. J. (1987). Looking to the bottom: Critical legal studies and reparations. *Harard Cr-cll rev.*, *22*, 323.

Milner, R. (2012). Understanding urban education from the outside in and inside out. Urban Education, 47(6), 1019-1024.

Milner IV, H. R. (2013). Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a critical race theory lens. *Review of Research in Education*, *37*(1), 1-53.

Milner IV, H. R., Murray, I. E., Farinde, A. A., & Delale-O'Connor, L. (2015). Outside of school

matters: What we need to know in urban environments. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *48*(4), 529-548.

Moll, L. C., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds of knowledge approach to multicultural education. *Handbook of research on multicultural education*, *2*, 699-715.

Morgan, R., & Klaric, J. AP® Students in College: An Analysis of Five-Year Academic Careers.

Morris, J. E. (2004). Can anything good come from Nazareth? Race, class, and African American schooling and community in the urban South and Midwest. *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(1), 69-112.

Morris, V.G., & Morris, C.L. (2002). The price they paid: Desgregation in an African American community.

Moskowitz, P. (2017). *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood*. Hachette UK.

Munin, A. (2012). Color by number: Understanding racism through facts and stats on children. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Nabatchi, T., & Leighninger, M. (2015). *Public participation for 21st century democracy*. John Wiley & Sons.

Noguera, P. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education* (Vol. 17). Teachers College Press.

Noguera, P. A. (1996). Confronting the urban in urban school reform. *The Urban Review*, *28*(1), 1-19.

Noguera, P. A., & Wells, L. (2011). The politics of school reform: A broader and bolder approach for Newark. *Berkeley Review of Education*, *2*(1).

Oakes, J., & Rogers, J. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice*. Teachers College Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). Racial formations. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, *260*.

Orr, M., & Rogers, J. (2011). Public engagement for public education: Joining forces to revitalize democracy and equalize schools. Stanford University Press.

Parker, L., Deyhle, D., & Villenas, S. (1999). *Race Is... Race Isn't: Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Studies in Education*. Perseus Books Group Customer Service Dept., 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, CO 80301.

Parker, L., Deyhle, D., Villenas, S., & Crossland, K. (1998). Critical race theory and education [special issue]. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 1-184.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.

Payne, C. M. (2008). *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Harvard Education Press. 8 Story Street First Floor, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Peck, C., & Reitzug, U. C. (2017). Discount stores, discount (ed) community? Parent and family engagement, community outreach, and an urban turnaround school. *Education and Urban Society*, 0013124517713819.

Pedroni, T. C. (2011). Urban shrinkage as a performance of whiteness: Neoliberal urban restructuring, education, and racial containment in the post-industrial, global niche city. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *32*(2), 203-215.

Pemberton, K. D., & Miller, S. (2015). Building home–school relationships to enhance reading achievement for students from families with limited financial resources. *Education and Urban Society*, *47*(7), 743-765.

Perkins, T. (2015). School–Community Partnerships, Friend or Foe? The Doublespeak of Community With Educational Partnerships. *Educational Studies*, *51*(4), 317-336.

Perry, T. (2003). Up from the parched earth: Towards a theory of African-American achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele, and A.G. Hilliard III (Eds.), Young, gifted, and black: Promoting high achievement among African American students (pp. 1-10). Boston: Beacon Press.

Posey-Maddox, L. (2014). *When middle-class parents choose urban schools: Class, race, and the challenge of equity in public education*. University of Chicago Press.

Quartz, K. H., & TEP Research Group. (2003). " Too Angry To Leave" Supporting New Teachers' Commitment to Transform Urban Schools. *Journal of teacher education*, *54*(2), 99-111.

Robinson, D. V. (2017). Collaborative partnerships between high poverty and minority parents and educational leaders: Reversing the school and home divide. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *11*(1), 2-18.

Rouse, H. L., & Fantuzzo, J. W. (2009). Multiple risks and educational well being: A population-based investigation of threats to early school success. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *24*(1), 1-14.

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. Liveright Publishing.

Rubin, D. H., Erickson, C. J., San Agustin, M., Cleary, S. D., Allen, J. K., & Cohen, P. (1996). Cognitive and academic functioning of homeless children compared with housed children. *Pediatrics*, *97*(3), 289-294.

Russakoff, D. (2015). *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Sanders, M. G., & Harvey, A. (2002). Beyond the school walls: A case study of principal leadership for school-community collaboration. *Teachers college record*, *104*(7), 1345-1368.

Santamaría, L. J., & Santamaría, A. P. (2013). *Applied critical leadership in education: Choosing change*. Routledge.

Savage, C. (1998). From Clairborne Institute to Natchez High Schools: The history of African American education in Williamson County, Tennessee, 1890-1967.

Schaffer, C. L., White, M., & Brown, C. M. (2016). *Questioning assumptions and challenging perceptions: Becoming an effective teacher in urban environments*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Schlichtman, J. J., Patch, J., & Hill, M. L. (2017). *Gentrifier*. University of Toronto Press.

Schutz, A. (2006). Home is a prison in the global city: The tragic failure of school-based community engagement strategies. *Review of educational research*, *76*(4), 691-743.

Scott, K., & Graham, J. (2015). Service-Learning: Implications for empathy and community engagement in elementary school children. Journal of Experiential Education, 38(4), 354-372.

Secretary's proposed supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs 2017, 82 Fed. Reg. 47484 (October 12, 2017), pg. 47484-47493.

Shedd, C. (2015). *Unequal city: Race, schools, and perceptions of injustice*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education and urban society*, *35*(1), 4-26.

Sheridan, S. M., & Kim, E. M. (2015). Research on family-school partnerships.

Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. Educational administration quarterly, 46(4), 558-589.

Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard educational review*, *57*(1), 1-23.

Siddle Walker, E.V. (1996). Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Smith, C., & Morton, L. W. (2009). Rural food deserts: low-income perspectives on food access in Minnesota and Iowa. *Journal of nutrition education and behavior*, *41*(3), 176-187.

Smith-Maddox, R., & Solórzano, D. G. (2002). Using critical race theory, Paulo Freire's problem-posing method, and case study research to confront race and racism in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 66-84.

Solorzano, D. G. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, *11*(1), 121-136.

Solorzano, D. G., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of students of color in higher education. *Sociology of education: Emerging perspectives*, *21*.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From racial stereotyping and deficit discourse toward a critical race theory in teacher education. *Multicultural education*, *9*(1), 2.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and

campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, *14*(4), 471-495.

Stewart, E. B., Stewart, E. A., & Simons, R. L. (2007). The effect of neighborhood context on the college aspirations of African American adolescents. *American Educational Research Journal*, *44*(4), 896-919.

Strauss, V. (2017, October 12). Betsy DeVos releases her priorities for U.S. Education Department Grants. Guess what's No. 1. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/10/12/betsy-devos-releases-her-priorities-for-u-s-education-department-grants-guess-whats-no-1/?utm_term=.4570aa1c3172.

Sugrue, T. J. (1996). *The origins of the urban crisis: Race and inequality in postwar Detroit* (Vol. 29). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tate IV, W. F. (2008). "Geography of opportunity": Poverty, place, and educational outcomes. *Educational Researcher*, *37*(7), 397-411.

Tate IV, W. F. (1997). Chapter 4: Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of research in education*, *22*(1), 195-247.

Taylor, E. (1998). A primer on critical race theory: Who are the critical race theorists and what are they saying?. *The journal of blacks in higher education*, 122.

Trickett, E. J. (2009). Multilevel community-based culturally situated interventions and community impact: An ecological perspective. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *43*(3-4), 257-266.

Trujillo, T. M., Hernández, L. E., Jarrell, T., & Kissell, R. (2014). Community schools as urban district reform: Analyzing Oakland's policy landscape through oral histories. *Urban Education*, *49*(8), 895-929.

Trujillo, T., & Renee, M. (2015). Irrational exuberance for market-based reform: How federal turnaround policies thwart democratic schooling. *Teachers College Record*, *117*(6), 1-34.

Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education* (Vol. 95). Harvard University Press.

Ullucci and Howard (2015). Patholgizing the poor: Implications for preparing teachers to work in high-poverty schools. Urban Education, 50(2), 170-193.

Valadez, J. R., & Duran, R. (2007). Redefining the digital divide: Beyond access to computers and the Internet. *The High School Journal*, *90*(3), 31-44.

Valli, L., Stefanski, A., & Jacobson, R. (2016). Typologizing school–community partnerships: A

framework for analysis and action. *Urban Education*, *51*(7), 719-747.

Vasquez Heilig, J., Ward, D. R., Weisman, E., & Cole, H. (2014). Community-based school finance and accountability: A new era for local control in education policy?. *Urban Education*, *49*(8), 871-894.

Walker, V. S. (2000). Valued segregated schools for African American children in the South, 1935-1969: A review of common themes and characteristics. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(3), 253-285.

Walker, V. S. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Warren, M. (2005). Communities and schools: A new view of urban education reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, *75*(2), 133-173.

Warren, M. R. (2010). Community organizing for education reform. *Public engagement for public education*, 139-172.

Warren, M. R., Hong, S., Rubin, C. L., & Uy, P. S. (2009). Beyond the bake sale: A community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools. Teachers college record, 111(9), 2209-2254.

Willems, P., & Gonzales-DeHass, A. (2012). School-community parnterships: Using authentic context to academically motivate students. School Community Journal, 22(2), 9-30.

Wilson, W. J. (2012). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. University of Chicago Press.

Wohlstetter, P., Mallory, C.L., Hentschke, G.C., & Smith, J. (2004). Improving service delivery in education through collaboration: An explortary study of the role of cross-sectoral alliances in the development and support of charter schools. Social Science Quarterly, 85(5), 1078-1096.

Yoshikawa, H., Wilson, P. A., Peterson, J., & Shinn, M. (2005). Multiple pathways to community-level impacts in HIV prevention: implications for conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of interventions. *Communities and AIDS*, 28-55.

Zarate, M. E., & Pachon, H. P. (2006). Gaining or Losing Ground? Equity in Offering Advanced Placement Courses in California High Schools 1997-2003. *Tomas Rivera Policy Institute*.