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"We Felt They Took the Heart Out of the Community": Examining a Community-Based Response to Urban School Closure

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Abstract: Massive school closures are occurring in urban school districts across the United States. Research suggests that school closures are the outcome of racialized neoliberal policies and decades of disinvestment that have left many urban districts with fiscal deficits and declining student enrollments. However, some urban communities have successfully organized against school closures and reopened neighborhood schools. As such, this study examines how leaders in a community-university coalition in the Midwestern United States reopened a high school that was closed by its district. This case study draws on interviews and document data, and describes the forces that promoted school closure and its impacts on the community. Concepts from social capital and social network theories are used to guide the analysis. Findings indicate these leaders leveraged networks to negotiate a community-university social contract, took strategic and socially connected actions, and formed a community-driven education task force. This study offers implications for policy, future research, and communities in similar contexts.
Keywords: School closures; shared leadership; school-community engagement; urban school reform; community-based education

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"Creemos que ellos han tomado el corazón de la comunidad": Examen de una respuesta basada en la comunidad para el cierre de la escuela urbana

Resumen: Las grandes cerraduras escuelas están llevando a cabo en los distritos escolares urbanos de Estados Unidos. La investigación sugiere que el cierre de las escuelas es el resultado de las políticas neoliberales y décadas de desinversión racializados han dejado a muchos distritos urbanos con déficit fiscales y la disminución de la matrícula de estudiantes. Sin embargo, algunas comunidades urbanas se han organizado con éxito contra los cierres de escuelas y colegios cercanos reabrieron. Como tal, este estudio examina cómo los líderes de una coalición de la comunidad universitaria en el Medio Oeste de los Estados Unidos volvieron a abrir una escuela que fue cerrada por el distrito. Este estudio de caso se basa en entrevistas y datos de documentos y describe las fuerzas que promovieron el cierre de la escuela y su impacto en la comunidad. Los conceptos de las teorías del capital social y redes sociales se utilizan para guiar el análisis. Los resultados indican que estos líderes apalancadas redes para negociar un contrato social entre la comunidad y la universidad, se tomaron acciones estratégicas y socialmente conectados, y formaron un grupo de trabajo educativo dirigido por la comunidad. Este estudio tiene implicaciones para la política, la investigación y las futuras comunidades en contextos similares.

Palabras-clave: cierre de la escuela; liderazgo compartido; las relaciones escuela-comunidad; reforma de la escuela urbana; la educación basada en la comunidad

"Sentimos que nos tomaram o coração da comunidade": Examinando uma resposta baseada em comunidade para o fechamento da escola urbana

Resumo: Grandes fechamentos de escolas estão ocorrendo em distritos de escolas urbanas nos Estados Unidos. Pesquisas sugerem que o encerramento de escolas é o resultado de políticas neoliberais racializadas e décadas de desinvestimento que deixaram muitos distritos urbanos com déficits fiscais e declínio das matrículas de estudantes. No entanto, algumas comunidades urbanas têm organizado, com sucesso, contra fechamentos de escolas e reabriu escolas das proximidades. Como tal, este estudo examina como os líderes em uma coalizão comunidade-universidade no Meio-Oeste dos Estados Unidos reabriu uma escola que foi fechada por seu distrito. Este estudo de caso baseia-se em entrevistas e dados de documentos e descreve as forças que promoveram o fechamento da escola e seus impactos na comunidade. Conceitos de capital social e teorias de redes sociais são usados para orientar a análise. Os resultados indicam que esses líderes alavancaram redes para negociar um contrato social entre a comunidade e a universidade, ações estratégicas foram tomadas e socialmente conectadas, e formaram uma força-tarefa educacional liderada pela comunidade. Este estudo oferece implicações para políticas, pesquisas futuras e comunidades em contextos semelhantes.

Palavras-chave: Fechamento de escolas; liderança compartilhada; relações comunidade-escolas; reformas de escolas urbanas; educação baseada em comunidades

Introduction

School closures are increasing across urban[1] districts in the United States. The corrosive damage of structural racism, disinvestment in Black[2] communities, deindustrialization, and market-based policies have left many urban communities—and the school districts located within them—with declining student enrollments, low test scores, and fiscal deficits (Buras, 2013; Good, 2016; Lipman, 2011a; Pedroni, 2011). As a response to these conditions, several large urban U.S. school districts, such as Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and St. Louis have closed schools (Finnigan & Lavner, 2012; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). Data show that school closures have two main implications across the intersections of race, class, geography, and academic outcomes (Kirshner, Gaertner, & Pozzoboni, 2010). First, school closures have been viewed as a manifestation of structural racism because they most adversely impact students of color who live in low-income neighborhoods, and have been tied to broader gentrification agendas in fiscally poor African American communities (Fine, 2012; Lipman, 2013; Lipman & Haines, 2007). School closures further complicate urban community conditions as they induce a loss of place and neighborhood disruption for students and local residents (Journey for Justice, 2014). Second, research suggests that school closures negatively affect African American and Latino/a students' academic performance and persistence in the year following the closure of their school (Kirshner et al., 2010; Lipman, 2011b).

As such, the ways in which policymakers and districts respond to school closures can impact the schooling of millions of students of color. Given this reality, community leaders have begun to organize against school closures in urban districts throughout the U.S. Concomitantly, an emerging, yet rich body of research exists on this topic. Scholars have broadly analyzed urban school closure (Deeds & Pattillo, 2014; Galletta & Ayala, 2012; Johnson, 2013; Kirshner et al., 2010), community members' influence on school closure (Finnigan & Lavner, 2012), student interpretations of school closings (Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011), the politics and impacts of school closure and rezoning (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2016), and the effects of school transfer after closure on students of color from low-income backgrounds (Kirshner et al., 2010). While this body of research suggests that urban school closure disrupts students' lives and neighborhoods, and is the expected outcome of neoliberal policy agendas, less research has examined how communities organize against closure to reopen schools (for exception see Buras, 2013; Good, 2016; Johnson, 2013; Lipman, 2011a; Stovall, 2007, 2016). In particular, we know little about how community stakeholders mobilize the resources within their networks to reopen closed schools.

The purpose and central inquiry of this study is to understand how community and university leaders took action to reopen an urban high school that was closed by its district in the midwestern United States. To contribute to the existing research on urban school closure, this study focuses on the responses of these leaders to closure and offers insights into their process of reopening a closed school. I intentionally center these community leaders' perspectives and position their work as an act of agency, resistance, and what Stovall (2007) calls "'politics of interruption:' the process of creating a neighborhood public high school" (p. 681). While addressing urban school closure at the national and state levels will require equitable policy solutions, this article examines an exemplar case and seeks to understand how local actors responded and successfully pushed back on urban school closure in light of the current education policy landscape.

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[1] Urban is used to describe geographic location.

[2] In this article, I use the terms Black and African American interchangeably to mean persons of African descent.

Drawing on social capital and social network theories, my findings indicate that these leaders leveraged their networks to negotiate a community-university social contract, took strategic and socially connected actions, and formed a community-driven education task force to sustain their work. The findings also suggest that to reopen a closed public school can be a long (i.e., five years) and difficult process that may not be permanent. However, in this educational climate, these findings contribute to our knowledge about how local actors draw from the social capital within their networks to respond to urban school closure. Hence, community leaders, school leaders, parents, researchers, and policymakers can use these findings to inform their understanding of the complexities of urban school closure and to help them better respond to this issue. Finally, given the rate at which urban school closures are occurring in districts of color, there is a critical need for research on this topic.

In what follows, I first review research on the current state of urban school closures across the United States, and outline two explanations in the literature for schools closures. I next review literature on community organizing, activism, and coalition building within the milieu of school closures. Then, I describe this study's theoretical framework and methods. Following, I discuss how leaders across a community-university coalition took action to respond to urban school closure. I conclude with implications for practice, policy, and future research.

The Escalating Crisis of Urban School Closures in the United States

The number of school closures has been steadily increasing over the last 16 years throughout the US and other parts of the world. In Ontario, Canada, over 200 schools were closed between 1999 and 2002 (Basu, 2007), and between 2000 and 2005 more than 75 schools were closed in New Zealand (Kearns, Lewis, McCreanor, & Witten, 2009). In the US, school closures have disproportionately occurred in urban districts of color (Fine, 2012; Layton, 2014), especially in the midwestern and northeastern parts of the country. Reports from the Pew Charitable Trusts (2011) and Journey for Justice (J4J) Coalition (2014) found that nearly 600 schools have been closed across 11 urban districts that largely serve students color, such as Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C., since the year 2000.

National trends show that school closures have increased since 2000, but remained relatively steady with a few minor dips in the number of school closings between 2008 and 2009. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2013), 1,959 schools were closed during the 2010-2011 school year across the United States. Comparatively, between 2000-2001 and 2010-2011, school closings across the US increased by 61.7% from 1,193 to 1,992. Specifically, in 2000-2001, high schools accounted for 25% of all school closings in the United States compared to 22% in 2010-2011 (NCES, 2013). While the number of high school closings decreased on a percentage basis between 2001 and 2011, at the same time, high school closings increased on a per building basis from 302 to 436, respectively.

On the state and local levels, school closures are occurring at historic rates. Through state policies, school closures are being accelerated and even entire school districts are being dissolved in the name of rectifying fiscal deficits. For instance, in July of 2013, Michigan Governor, Rick Snyder, signed Public Acts (PA) 96 and 97 into law, which allow the state of Michigan to dissolve fiscally inept school districts. The Acts have already been used to close the Buena Vista and Inkster School Districts in Michigan. The state maintains that these districts—which mainly enrolled African American students from low-income and working-class backgrounds—were closed because they were financially insolvent and no longer able to educate children. Similarly, the most populated city in Michigan, Detroit, has experienced massive school closures. Detroit Public Schools closed nearly 200 schools since 2004 (Pedroni, 2011).

District-level policies are also accelerating school closures across urban cities. For example, in an unprecedented decision in 2013, the Chicago Public School (CPS) Board voted to close 50 schools because they were deemed underperforming or underutilized. Closing these schools was the largest district-based set of school closures at one time in U.S. history, and most adversely impacted students of color from low-income communities (Webley, 2013). CPS has closed 111 schools since 2001 (Layton, 2014).

Explanations for Urban School Closure

Two main narratives have been used to explain urban school closure. First, through free market justification, some policymakers, economists, and reformers rationalize school closures within a narrative of fiscal responsibility, underutilization of space, and as an intervention to "failing" schools (Deeds & Pattillo, 2014; Pedroni, 2011). Those who espouse such narratives view school closure as a positive mechanism of reform because it removes low-performing schools from the "education market," which according to advocates renders positive academic outcomes for students who have been displaced in subsequent years (Brummet, 2014; Engberg, Gill, Zamarro, & Zimmer, 2012). However, this discourse is often espoused ahistorically and does not account for the ways that structural racism, educational inequity, and policy trends shape the conditions for school closures (Fine, 2012; Lipman, 2011a, 2013). For example, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) spurred a high-stakes accountability policy context that makes school closure a common consequence to "underachieving" urban schools. NCLB also contributed to the proliferation of school closures through ushering in the current era of school reforms that use competition, choice, incentives, and punishments to improve student outcomes (Lipman, 2011a; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). Thus, in the current policy context, schools face closure when they fail to improve standardized test scores or lose students to charter schools.

Second, some scholars explain school closures through the political economy. A body of research documents how racialized neoliberal policies, political forces, the interests of corporate elites, and even failed desegregation policies produce urban school closures (Johnson, 2013; Journey for Justice, 2014; Lipman, 2013; Pedroni, 2011). For instance, Lipman's (2011a) research shows that urban schools are deeply shaped and implicated in global, ideological, racial, economic, and political processes that are restructuring urban cities and school districts (see also Buras, 2013; Lipman, 2002, 2011b, 2013; Stovall, 2016). This restructuring creates space for neoliberal and mayoral-control education policies that close urban schools, as well as, turn them over to private and corporate managers, expand charter schools, disband teachers unions, and enforce top-down education reforms (Lipman, 2013). In turn, these forces also constrain protest against urban school closure and pave the way for the displacement of elected governance bodies (e.g., school boards) and the disenfranchisement of children of color from public education (Johnson, 2013). Despite these trends on school closure and the forces that shape them, communities are resisting closure. As such, I next review literature on community organizing, activism, and coalition building to more broadly situate leadership within the context of school closures and community-university partnerships that work collaboratively to reopen a closed school.

Community Organizing, Activism, and Coalition Building

Research on community organizing and activism offers insights for school closure because it addresses unequal school-community power relations, provides a structure for shared leadership, and builds local, democratic capacity for reform (Ishimaru, 2014; Warren, 2001; Warren & Mapp, 2011). Community organizing and activism has been associated with improved student outcomes, increased parental involvement, and more equitable education funding (Mediratta, Shah &

McAlister, 2009; Renee & McAlister, 2011). Moreover, to address school closures and other inequitable schooling conditions in urban contexts, community groups have organized and engaged in activism. For example, Journey for Justice (J4J), a national coalition of grassroots stakeholders across 21 cities in the US, advocates for providing community-driven alternatives to top-down, privatized policies that close urban schools. In collaboration with J4J and the Coalition to Revitalize Walter H. Dyett School, on August 23, 2015, 12 parents and community members engaged in a 34-day hunger strike to save Dyett High School on Chicago's south side. Literally putting their lives on the line for their children's education, the parents, the community, and a host of supporters offered a plan for a Global Leadership and Green Technology Community High School. To solicit input for the plan, the coalition got feedback from over 4,800 community residents, held six town hall meetings, and obtained over 3,000 petition signatures in support of the school. The Dyett High school hunger strike is an example of community activism and organizing to resist school closure and to open the type of school the community wanted.

Additionally, Stovall (2007, 2016) also details grassroots organizing and activism led by neighborhood residents of color for a new high school in Chicago. After the district faltered on a promise to build a new school in the community, local residents organized by attending leadership trainings at a community-based organization, advocating at school board meetings, and staging sit-ins. Residents' activism ultimately manifested in a 19-day hunger strike that resulted in a new high school for Black and Latino/a students in the community.

Research on coalition building is also useful for leaders working within community groups to address urban school closure. According to Mizrahi and Rosenthal (2001), building successful coalitions include four elements: competence, conditions, commitment, and contributions. First, coalitions need strong and competent leadership to sustain the member base and work for equitable change. Second, sociopolitical conditions influence coalition building because they shape the climate for change and a coalition's access to resources like political power and money. Third, coalition building requires a twofold commitment: (a) commitment *from* a core group that represents different organizations and (b) commitment *to* a common goal and coalition building as a means to achieve the goal. Fourth, coalition stakeholders must contribute the expertise, power, money, and other resources in their sphere of influence. Successful coalitions also communicate effectively, have an infrastructure to support the work, share vision and power, recognize stratified positionality (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.), and have sufficient resources and/or access to them to achieve established objectives (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001).

In sum, research on school closures highlights how education policies can impact school closure (Kearns et al., 2009; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009), and underscores the racialized impacts of closures on school districts and communities of color (Fine, 2012; Lipman, 2011a). In contrast, scholarship on community activism, organizing, and coalition building describes aspects of how local actors might coalesce around inequitable school and community issues. Despite the reviewed research, we know little about how community leaders use coalition building and specifically the social capital embedded in their networks to organize against school closure within constraining policy environments. This study therefore aims to address this gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework: Social Capital and Social Network Theories

To theoretically frame this study and to understand how leaders across a community-university coalition took action to address an urban high school closure, I draw on concepts from social network (Lin, 2001; Moody & Paxton, 2009) and social capital theories (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Social networks represent "a set of actors connected by a set of ties"

(Borgatti & Foster, 2003, p. 992). Hence, social network theory is an approach to understand how an individual or organization's positions in a web of social ties constrains and promotes individual and organizational practices and outcomes (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012). Scholars have shown that social networks can increase the flow of resources, information, and innovation among actors because of key social network elements such as: the strength of social ties, access to expertise, and depth of interaction between the social ties (Coburn et al., 2012). Additionally, social networks provide two more important elements for community coalitions: *connectivity* and *structural equivalence*, which are the connections that carry resources through a network and the individuals who hold the same position in more than one network, respectively (Moody & Paxton, 2009). Connectivity and structural equivalence are important because they identify where critical connections are made in networks, as well as how individuals can leverage the resources within and across various networks. Together, the elements of strength of ties, access to expertise, depth of interaction, connectivity, and structural equivalence can be useful for understanding how community actors draw on and share the resources within their social networks to address urban school closure, especially through interpersonal connections and social ties (Coburn et al., 2012).

Moreover, social capital theory helps to describe how and which resources are drawn upon in networks toward collective action. Scholars broadly "share the understanding that social capital consists of resources embedded in social relations and social structure, which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action" (Lin, 2001, p. 24). According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). In other words, social capital is the connection to networks and their resources. Coleman (1988) argues that social capital is a resource available to actors in a network and consists of obligations, expectations, information channels, and social norms. Within and across networks, social capital can foster trust, cooperation, shared support, and institutional effectiveness (Putnam, 2000). Community or neighborhood organizations often serve as points of connection and channels for social capital in urban contexts for residents (Warren, 2005).

The relationship between social networks and social capital can be understood in several ways. First, the amount of social capital that one has access to ". . . depends on both the quantity of the network connections that she or he can enlist and the sum of the amount of capital that each network member possesses" (Glanville & Bienenstock, 2009, p. 1509). Second, social networks provide structured relationships while social capital is the content embedded within them (Moody & Paxton, 2009). Lin (1999) argues the social capital embedded within social networks enhances collective action by providing resources such as information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcements to stakeholders in the network. Then, such resources can flow through institutionalized channels that are maintained through agreed upon social norms and obligations. The integration of social networks and social capital can thus become a vehicle to initiate community-wide change (Ling & Dale, 2013).

In particular, I use *bridging* and *bonding social capital* to illuminate the relationship between social networks and social capital in addressing school closure. Bonding social capital represents social networks that are "inward looking that tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups" (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Conversely, bridging social capital describes the "outward networks looking and encompassing people across diverse social cleavages" (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Another form of bridging social capital is *linking social capital*, which describes ties to people in financial and/or political positions of power. Linking ties also highlight how community networks connect to formal institutions of "power" that have broad spheres of influence (Ling & Dale, 2013).

Collectively, bonding and bridging social capital inform this study in several ways. First, bonding social capital explains how leaders from various community organizations develop solidarity and social cohesion for a common goal (Putnam, 2000). Second, bridging social capital underscores how stakeholders can connect disparate networks and build community coalitions. Thus, as organizations develop solidarity for common purposes, they can leverage the resources within and across networks to achieve broad-based initiatives (Lin, 1999; Ling & Dale, 2013). Third, it illustrates how bridging and bonding social capital can remain inclusive to newcomers and engender closure of social networks (Coleman, 1988). According to Coleman (1988), *social closure of networks* describes a closed set of relationships with common expectations and "a set of effective sanctions that can guide and monitor behavior" (p. S107). Thus, as newcomers join coalitions they can be socialized into the norms of the network. In turn, this creates space for common obligations and expectations to emerge across diverse groups working to address urban school closure.

To this end, I apply both theories to this study with a deep understanding of the complex ways and cumulative impacts that racism, disinvestment, and neoliberal policies play in affecting urban school closures (Lipman, 2011a, 2011b, 2013). My intent is not to obscure the impacts of these forces, but rather I seek to understand how local actors mobilize their networks to reverse urban school closure within such contexts. With this understanding of social capital and social networks, I next discuss this study's methods.

Methods

This analysis draws on data from a larger study that examined two urban high schools where reform occurred along with community development (Green, 2015). The data that formed this analysis emerged as I learned that one of the schools was closed between 1995 and 2000, but reopened five years later (i.e., in 2000) because of a community-university coalition. I, thus, chose to focus on this community-based collaboration for two main reasons. First, I sought to conduct research with community actors who successfully pushed back on urban school closure, because as Payne (2008) argues, "We need to know more about what *can* happen, not what ordinarily *does* happen. One success . . . tells us more than a thousand failures: one success tells us what is possible" (p. 7). Second, this study illustrates that community leaders can influence school closure despite the current educational climate. This is important because it emphasizes community-based leadership in an era where people in traditional school leadership positions, like principals and teacher leaders, are constrained by many time-consuming demands like high-stakes testing and accountability.

Data Collection

According to Yin (1994), case study is a type of method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). The case study method was employed for this project to facilitate an analysis of the relationship between the local context and the phenomenon of interest: the community's response to school closure. Using purposive sampling, I deliberately and non-randomly selected this case so that the most can be learned (Creswell, 2012). As such, I draw on data from interviews, detailed field notes and related documents. I collected data at neighborhood centers, the high school, and a local university.

Interviews and Documents. I conducted semi-structured interviews with urban high school principals (former and current), assistant principals, local university leaders, community leaders (e.g., neighborhood center directors), school counselors, a school board member, a police

officer, and teachers—32 total interviews. I, however, centrally draw on interviews with seven community and university leaders for this particular study, and use the other 25 interviews to further flesh out the findings. Per the focus of the larger study, the other 25 interviews did not specifically focus on the school reopening process and are primarily used to provide more detail about the study's context. However, the seven participants' perspectives were purposefully centered because they held formal leadership positions within the community-university coalition and were identified as the most actively involved in the reopening process.

These seven leaders include two directors from local neighborhood centers, three leaders from the local university, two high school principals (one current and two former), and the school's community director: two were of color (African American) and five were White, while five were female and two were male (see Table 1). All interviews were digitally recorded, and I asked interview questions such as: What factors influenced the school closing? What impacts did the school's closing have on students and the community? How did the community respond to the school closing, and who were the key actors involved in reopening the school? What actions did these actors take? The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Additionally, to provide background and data triangulation, I also reviewed documents. Documents included newspaper articles, state and city documents, agendas and personal notes from school community advisory council meetings, as well as websites of the school, neighborhood centers, local university, and community-university coalition.

Table 1
Participants' Profiles

Name (pseudonym)	Leadership Position	Organization
Sharon	Principal	LHS
Brenda	Principal	LHS
Nancy	Director	State University
Vinnie	School-Com. Director	LHS
Vikki	Center Director	King Neighborhood Center
Dr. Charles	Center Director	Coretta Neighborhood Center
Lois	Education Taskforce	State University

Data Analysis

To analyze how the leaders took action to reopen the school, I utilized Marshall and Rossman's (1999) six phases of analytic procedures: organizing the data, generating categories, coding the data, testing the emergent understandings, searching for alternative explanations, and writing the report. As such, I first transcribed interviews and field notes, and noted all leader actions for reopening the school to organize the data and generate categories. I then assigned each action a descriptive code and organized codes into similar categories to create axial codes. The axial codes were anchored in the reviewed literature and served as a means to identify relationships between the

codes (Creswell, 2012). For example, descriptive codes included categories such as "protests" "sit-ins," and then I created broad axial codes like "activism." I then arranged the leader actions (now in axial codes) into larger conceptual themes and used the constant comparative method to test the emerging categories throughout the data analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In places where discrepancies emerged, I re-read interviews and field notes and contacted participants to ensure that my interpretations were consistent with their experiences. Next, I analyzed the emerging findings and themes (i.e., leader actions) in relation to concepts from the theoretical framework, particularly including bridging and bonding social capital, social closure of networks, as well as the strength of social ties, access to expertise, depth of interaction, connectivity, and structural equivalence. I used these concepts as frames to situate the leader actions and analyze how social networks and social capital informed their actions.

Limitations and Trustworthiness

As with all research, this study has limitations. First, this study relies on participants' after-the-fact recollections. Second, this study primarily focuses on community and university leader perspectives, but does not include a key neighborhood leader's perspective, Danny, because he passed during the reopening process. While these leader perspectives are valuable, students, parents, teachers, school board members, and neighborhood residents' voices are absent from this study. However, the perspectives in this study are not intended to speak for the entire community or all categories of stakeholders involved in this work, but rather serve as a representative sample of those who led the work. Third, due to this study's design, I do not presume to generalize the findings. In other words, I do not position these findings as a step-by-step, one-size-fits-all, linear process that must be followed religiously. I instead sought to develop an empirical understanding of community-based actions that reversed school closure and provide an account of such actions to inform practice in similar contexts.

To address these limitations and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, I employed debriefing after each interview and conducted member checks with participants (Creswell, 2012). I also triangulated interview and document data sources. In addition, three faculty colleagues and two participants from the study served as cross-readers to ensure the manuscript interpretations were clear and my writing of the findings represent participants' experiences. In the next section, I describe the school and community context of this study.

Research Setting: The Case of Lawrence High School and Its Community

Located in an urban area in the Midwestern United States, Lawrence High School (LHS) opened in 1927 and was known as the hub of the community. The school's community is comprised of and draws students from three surrounding neighborhoods: Coretta, Betty, and King Neighborhoods. However, the school is located in the King Neighborhood, a traditionally working to lower-class community on the north side of town. Together, the three neighborhoods (i.e., community) have about 14,000 residents and approximately 3,800 school-age children. Each neighborhood has a neighborhood center that has been there for over a century. These neighborhood centers originally served as settlement houses for immigrant families, but currently offer a range of services in the community such as: educational support, childcare, social services, healthcare, substance abuse counseling, and support for housing. According to Dr. Charles, the neighborhood centers are, ". . . grassroots entities that represent the will of the people." Two miles from LHS sits State University, a 30,000 student urban university.

Economically, the Betty Neighborhood is the lowest-income of the three neighborhoods. Per capita income is slightly over $9,000 per year and average annual household income is just over $17,000. The King Neighborhood is racially similar, but varied by social class. Community members are 90% White, but come from lower middle to middle-class backgrounds. These were individuals who could move but chose to live in the central city. Conversely, the Coretta Neighborhood is 90% Black and 10% White.

Of the community (i.e., the three neighborhoods collectively), city documents revealed that only 7.4% of residents had any type of college degree and 66% of neighborhood residents 18 and older had obtained a high school diploma. The community has also experienced significant demographic shifts. Documents also showed that racial demographics are 32% African American, 31% Latino/a, 31% White, and 6% multi-racial. I next provide a brief historical context of shifting community conditions to better describe the forces that promoted closure and their impacts on the community.

School Desegregation Policies: A Precursor to School Closings

In 1973, a U.S. District Court Judge ordered one-way busing for African American students from the urban district to surrounding township schools. The busing order was an attempt to remedy racial school and housing segregation. However, busing Black students from the city to predominantly White, township schools proved to be detrimental to local school-community connections. A former principal remarked:

> School desegregation was a community killer. We went from community neighborhood schools to [it being] completely changed. I don't even know how you describe what it was changed into . . . It broke up neighborhoods . . . It's when you started to see the district struggling financially.

As a result, across the district student enrollment declined, the number of teachers decreased and school buildings were less occupied as resources were being extracted to the predominantly white, suburban schools. In 1995, the district closed LHS because of its waning student enrollment, thus the district viewed LHS as an inefficient and underutilized space. Putting it bluntly, Nancy explained, a leader from State University, "School closings across the district were the direct result of the busing order."

By the late 1990s, the court-ordered busing decision had rendered deleterious impacts to the school district. By 1998, the school district's student enrollment was 64,000, and by the 2011-2012 school year, the district only served 38,000 students across 64 schools. In sum, between 1967 and 2007 the district closed approximately 100 schools and lost nearly 70,000 students.

The Impacts of Closing LHS

LHS' closing was damaging to the community on multiple levels. Not only did the district close LHS, but they also closed its feeder schools, which left the community with zero public schools. Lois, a leader from State University described the neighborhoods after the school closures:

> You saw the crumble, like an urban crumble in the neighborhood. Businesses closed, schools closed . . . The school was the hub, so when the school closed, a lot of things around it closed too. It was detrimental to the neighborhood!

In addition, a mass exodus of manufacturing jobs coincided with LHS' closing, exacerbating neighborhood decline. Further explaining the impacts, a neighborhood center director said, "Students that went to LHS, after it closed, just dropped out and did not go to another high school." Vikki, the King Neighborhood Center director passionately concurred:

> *We felt they took the heart out of the community* and in the process they destroyed our kids from going to high school. I think only like 30% were going to high school from our neighborhood . . . We just did not have anybody going [to high school] . . . We could see, I think all of us thought that our neighborhood was going down (emphasis added).

While several mayoral-sponsored charter schools opened in the community, many high school students were expected to catch a bus at 6:30 am to attend schools across town because of the desegregation policy. Some students attended schools across town and others did not. It is thus under these circumstances that nearly an entire community of students was "pushed out" of high school. Yet, within this context, community and university leaders took actions to respond to this challenge.

Findings

In this section, I illustrate how leaders across a community-university coalition took action to reopen LHS. I argue that social networks and social capital fostered the coalition's ability to push back on the school closure through providing means for stakeholders to effectively act in solidarity to reopen LHS. I illustrate these claims by discussing each action. The findings enhance our understanding about how community-university coalitions respond to urban school closure through leveraging social networks and the social capital embedded within them. I purposefully discuss the findings chronologically to describe the school reopening process from start to finish. However, it is important to note this work was not linear or straightforward, but messy, unpredictable, rife with setbacks, and spanned five-years[3] (Green & Gooden, 2014). A State University stakeholder described the work:

> This is not a drug study. This is not take two Tylenol and call me in the morning. But this is intricate relationships, intimately intertwined with its context, history, and people . . . and it can manifest in very different ways. It is not follow the systems' steps of A-F. . . And it takes time.

With this understanding, I discuss the findings in chronological order, but emphasize the overarching themes throughout.

Initiation: Relying on Established Networks

When LHS closed, stakeholders from a range of already established networks such as—alumni, community members, and neighborhood leaders—took action. Closing LHS created frustration throughout the community. Lois, from State University explained, "Once the school closed there was a grassroots up cry and outpouring of support and frustration . . . the community wanted to reopen the school." At the outset, community responses to LHS' closure consisted of people coming out in droves to advocate at school board meetings. Sharon, the principal recalled, "LHS' colors are red and white, and what you saw every time the school board met was a sea of red in the room. The alumni and community came out like crazy upset about them closing LHS." The initial support to reopen LHS emerged from multiple stakeholders in the community.

[3] Because of space limitations, I only discuss the most salient leader actions that contributed to the school reopening process that spanned five years.

However, for two years after the school closed, targeted advocacy to reopen LHS was spearheaded by leaders from the three neighborhood centers (along with Daniel) because these leaders had strong existing ties through their similar work in the neighborhoods such as providing social services, education supports, job training, and other resources for community members (Coburn et al., 2012). This also occurred because at the grassroots levels, "The three neighborhood centers had a great deal of power," in terms of influence with community members, remarked Dr. Charles, director of the King Neighborhood Center. In working within the established network of neighborhood centers, these leaders' initial action focused on getting another educational organization to occupy the vacant building. Vikki, the King Neighborhood Center director explained:

> The first two years we really focused on, what could we just put in the school building so we don't have a huge vacant school building in the middle of the neighborhood? So we worked with the local junior college, hoping that at least it could be an educational institution for people in our community. So, the first two years we were just grappling with, what do we do? How do we recover?

The leaders were unable to get the junior college to move into the building because of financial and logistic reasons, to name a few. This setback was disheartening for the group. Vikki recalled, "I don't think many people thought that our school would reopen. I think there was a real sense of disenfranchisement . . ." Although the group was unsuccessful in getting an organization to occupy the vacant school building they kept wrestling with questions around how to proceed about reopening LHS.

Moreover, LHS' closure created an opportunity and condition to bridge the neighborhood centers' network with another key community institution (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). After two years of grappling about what to do next, State University secured a Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD awarded COPC grants to urban universities to support revitalization efforts in underserved communities. The grant required State University to partner with the community on a joint initiative that would be beneficial to the neighborhoods. State University's Office of Community Partnerships, led by Nancy, was responsible for administering the grant. Before the grant, however, the relationship between LHS and State University was socially strained. Community members viewed the university as a self-serving institution that only worked with local residents when it was beneficial for the university. The relationship further deteriorated when the university expanded decades earlier and displaced some residents' homes from the neighborhood. Vinnie, LHS' community director, described the relationship:

> The only thing that separates this neighborhood from the university is Langston River, which is only two miles away. The river may as well have been an ocean, in some respects, because people did not see the university as part of their neighborhood.

The neighborhood centers and State University epitomized two powerful yet, disparate networks with long histories in the community and access to a range of resources. This thus suggests that these networks had weak connectivity, which hindered the flow of knowledge, resources, and expertise that could be shared between them (Coburn, et al., 2012). However, the COPC grant created an environment and incentive for coalition building between the two networks (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001) because the university was obligated to work on a community project to fulfill the grant's requirements. Like the literature indicates, sociopolitical conditions (e.g., federal grant funds,

the school closure, etc.) opened the door for leaders from these networks to collaborate. Despite the opportunity to possibly partner with State University, the leaders from the neighborhood centers continued trying to fill the vacant school building and grappled with next steps on how to respond.

Bridging Networks: Negotiating a Community-University Social Contract

The leaders used the COPC Grant to provide a social structure to bridge community and university networks. Despite the strained relationship and community history, representatives from State University contacted the neighborhood center directors to understand the community's most pressing concerns. Nancy contacted these neighborhood centers because she was familiar with their work in the community. In contacting them, State university leaders wanted to make genuine connections with the community and avoid top-down approaches to community-university partnerships that decide what is best for the community without seeking community input. Nancy and her colleagues approached the community with humility as they sought to build a trustful relationship. She explained:

> We [the university] had a couple of things that we wanted to accomplish in the process of shoring up the relationship . . . We wanted the community to see us as a resource, which meant that they had to get to know us. And that required us as university staff to meet with neighborhood leaders and not going based on our calendar and stopwatch . . . It was important to do that [and] not just talk, then leave because there needed to be a trust factor.

Building an inter-organizational relationship anchored in trust, as Nancy described, aligns with literature that highlights the importance of trust in networks that seek to develop bridging ties (Putnam, 2000).

Forming group expectations through critical community dialogues. To start mending their relationship and connecting networks, the neighborhood center and university leaders had ongoing conversations to discuss clear expectations and obligations before entering into any joint collaboration (Coleman, 1988). To do so, the leaders used what I refer to as critical community dialogues (CCDs) to ultimately bridge the groups (Green, 2017). CCDs are community-centered discussions that: (a) forge linkages between inter-community groups and networks, (b) create space for mutual trust between heterogeneous community groups to emerge, and (c) foster collective action toward mutually agreed upon goals.

Throughout these conversations, the leaders from the neighborhood centers were deliberate about keeping the community's will at the center as they discussed group expectations. They also made an important decision to openly discuss uncomfortable, but critical issues that could easily divide heterogeneous networks, weaken bridging social capital, and inhibit the development of strong social ties, such as unequal power dynamics, co-optation, and an inequitable decision-making process. For example, Vikki, the King Neighborhood Center director explained a conversation about the decision-making process:

> You either drive the bus, you ride on the bus, or you get run over by the bus. In getting together with the university it was whose going to be that [driving] role? Who drives the bus, and I think the university was wise because we had some conversation about this and allow a neighborhood resident, Danny, to lead the process.

Vikki continued, as she explained during their CCDs they discussed difficult issues like unequal power relations:

> We told the university you come work *with us*; you don't come and try to *fix us* because we don't feel like we are broken . . . We are not lab rats and you don't just come into our neighborhood . . . We have a lot to offer the university (emphasis added).

Similarly, Nancy, from State University, recalled conversations to establish common expectations and mitigate any potential for co-optation, "The community's thing was, if we are going to be in this project with you, then, doggone, we ought to be getting something out of it . . . And we said, 'you're right.'" As the leaders worked through these issues and had many intense discussions, they started to identify an area of collaboration. A neighborhood center director recalled:

> We all got in a room together, sort of the shakers and movers from the community, and we talked about what the priorities were. We discussed what the university could help us do and the overarching issue was schools. We had no schools. And so we started and the momentum kind of swung that way.

Nancy agreed:

> What became very clear as we worked with the three neighborhoods was that their highest priority was reopening LHS. To them it symbolized a really positive step as far as the relationship with State University, if we could help them do that.

Thus, the school reopening process, if successful, had the potential to really improve community-university relations, which would strengthen the bonding ties between these networks (Putnam, 2000).

This suggests that the CCDs were important and helped to create a structure for improving the strained and weak social ties between the networks, establishing parameters for decision-making, developing social closure with agreed upon norms and obligations, addressing asymmetrical power relations, and laying the foundation for what I describe as a community-university social contract: an equity-centered agreement among community stakeholders to achieve a collectively agreed upon neighborhood goal (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Moody & Paxton, 2009). Although the leaders did not have a formal contract, after the leaders held a series of long and contested CCDs, they finally decided on the most pressing neighborhood issue and opportunity for coalition building—reopening LHS. Through the CCDs, this finding reflects research that posits successful coalitions address issues of stratified positionality in order to effectively strengthen the connection between actors across networks (Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001; Ling & Dale, 2013). Additionally, through the CCDs, they outlined common expectations and put aside their differences to focus on reopening the school. Brenda, a former principal at LHS explained, "The neighborhood and university had not always gotten along. But when they had a common purpose, they really put aside, territorial issues . . . I think that was essential."

Further, the CCDs became a channel for various forms of social capital to flow, blend, and be bridged between the community and university networks (Lin, 1999; Moody & Paxton, 2009). For example, the leaders from the neighborhood centers contributed grassroots knowledge, organizing power, and passion to reopen LHS (Warren & Mapp, 2011), but lacked expertise about how to navigate the public school systems (Coburn et al., 2012). Dr. Charles said, "The key was we had passionate neighborhood people who were fanatic about getting their school reopen." Conversely, the leaders from State University contributed a respected research reputation and community influence, but many of them lacked the experiential knowledge and expertise of living in a community without any public schools. As stakeholders from each social network contributed the

resources within their sphere of influence it strengthened bridging ties between them. Vikki explained:

> The key was we had very passionate neighborhood people. And then you had the university, which kind of legitimized trying to reopen LHS because they had the reputation, and people thought it must be okay if the university is supporting it. So, we had people who lived in the neighborhood who were grassroots and knew the impact [of closing LHS] . . . and then, [we had] the perspective of the research . . . It took us about three years.

A leader from State University shared similar sentiments, "The neighborhoods had the passion about reopening LHS, but they did not quite know how to make it happen." The university's social capital and network, thus, enhanced the potential for collective action as it provided influence and credibility to the process (Lin, 1999). This finding aligns with research on successful coalition building that asserts stakeholders must contribute their resources to strengthen the coalition's impact (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001). Thus, this suggests that coalitions working to address urban school closure should leverage the social structure that their networks provide to strengthen the ties between them and share expertise to provide a context for deep interaction among the coalition (Coburn et al., 2012; Moody & Paxton, 2009).

Negotiating a community-university social contract between both networks with a common goal (i.e., focus on reopening LHS), clear expectations (i.e., no co-optation and community-driven), and decision-making parameters (i.e., shared decision-making structure) was critical to the process, and illustrates bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Lin, 1999; Ling & Dale, 2013). Finally, to recap, the social contract was a key precursor for the two groups to strengthen the ties within and across their coalition, develop social closure, and to increase the depth of interaction between them (Coburn et al., 2012; Coleman, 1988).

Mobilizing Networks: Taking Strategic and Socially Connected Actions

The coalition next mobilized the resources that were embedded in their networks. As such, with a sense of solidarity, the community-university leaders took three major, strategic, and socially connected actions to reopen LHS. The effort to reopen LHS began with a small, but robust network of approximately six people, including leaders from the neighborhood centers, State University, and community members.

Unsuccessfully advocating before the school board. The coalition started discussing and gathering data on the community impacts of LHS' closing. With these data, the community-university coalition took their first strategic action: a presentation to the superintendent and school board (Stovall, 2007). During the presentation they provided education and socioeconomic data for why the school needed to be reopened. Strategically, the leaders conducted the presentation at a pivotal time in the school district. A local judge had recently announced that he would reverse the school desegregation busing order one grade at a time. Nancy recalled:

> The reversal of the desegregation order was just beginning [so] we wanted to make sure that with the reversal that the school district had it in its plan to reopen LHS. So we did a presentation before the school board about how badly the school was wanted by the neighborhood.

This presentation was critically important because nearly all participants stated that the school district did not have any intentions of reopening LHS, despite the school desegregation reversal. However, the leaders' presentation was unsuccessful in reopening LHS. Despite this setback, they believed it planted an important seed in the superintendent and school board members' minds. This

action highlights the importance of understanding the local education policy climate and strategically advocating before the school board when particular policies have greater potential for leverage, even though they were unsuccessful. Further, it demonstrates that community-university networks are key, but also supports research on the importance of local networks' developing linking ties to other formal institutions of power that are geographically outside of the community (Ling & Dale, 2013), which was their next action.

Leveraging social networks to study successful community schools[4]. In making linking connections to other formal institutions of power, Michael[5], the director of the Betty Neighborhood Center had a conversation about the community-university effort to reopen LHS with Gloria, a person in upper management at the Johnson Foundation, which supports research that focuses on improving education, economic, and social outcomes in communities. Gloria had previously worked with Michael on another neighborhood project. As Gloria learned about the leaders' advocacy, she suggested the group consider trying to reopen LHS as a community school because of the strong community-university interest in LHS. A community school, according to Blank et al (2012), is "a place and set of partnerships connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community . . . It has an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development" (p. 1). Community schools are often open extended hours to serve students and communities in unique ways. In doing so, Gloria also suggested they visit and learn best practices from successful community schools in the nation. However, the successful community schools were in other states, and the group did not have funds to travel to these sites. Gloria encouraged the leaders to apply for a Johnson Foundation Grant to fund their visits to learn about successful community schools across the country, especially the Children's Aid Society in New York. Gloria's knowledge and access to powerful networks connected the coalition to the resources embedded within her sphere of influence (Ling & Dale, 2013; Putnam, 2000).

The community-university coalition was awarded the grant funding, visited several schools across the US and learned about how to successfully run a community school. Nancy explained:

> Gloria arranged for six of us to travel to New York to one of the community schools that the Johnson Foundation had supported. We learned so much about how to set up a community school. Particularly, we learned about how to run a community school from an organizational perspective.

After the visits, the leaders were convinced that they wanted LHS to reopen as a community school because it gave them a framework to improve education and larger neighborhood concerns. Vinnie said:

> We wanted to create a school . . . so families can be successful and neighborhoods can be strengthened. It was a holistic approach it was not just so the kids can graduate and go to college, it also looked beyond that. If you're going to help the kid, you've got to help the family, if you're going to help the whole family; you've got to help the whole community.

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[4] Community schools are a place and set of partnerships connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012).

[5] Michael was unable to participate in this study. My understanding about him and his perspective was triangulated through other data sources.

From then on the leaders worked to reopen LHS as a full-service, university assisted community school. This finding on leveraging the relationship with Gloria is an example of linking social capital that produced connectivity to institutional resources (i.e., travel funding), access to a network of community schools, and information about running a community school (Ling & Dale, 2013).

Establishing broad community commitment for the school. As the leaders kept learning about community schools, they simultaneously reached out to community members to understand what they wanted in LHS and to create buy-in for the school, if it were to reopen. Since the community already wanted LHS to reopen, the coalition sought their input, which broadened the network of support to reopen LHS. The leadership group conducted study circles, surveys, and spoke directly with neighborhood residents to learn about what they saw as the biggest barriers to high-quality education in the community and how they would support a reopened LHS. In turn, the leaders used these data to inform plans for how a reopened LHS would operate as a community school. According to Dr. Charles, "The community told us that they wanted us to help get kids to graduate from high school and go to college. And, so, that was kind of our mindset as we started out this work."

After soliciting community input the leaders made another presentation before the school board about reopening LHS. However, this time, instead of just presenting data about *why* the school should be reopened, they explained *how* the community would support LHS as a community school. Nancy explained, "We had another really detailed discussion with the superintendent and gave him all of the details of what we had learned in New York and what it would mean to reopen LHS." In addition, they discussed how they could collectively improve the low high school graduation rates and community education attainment rates through reopening LHS as a community school. This importantly suggests that advocacy before the school board should be accompanied with established bonding, bridging, and linking ties as well as with an alternative plan to school closure that details how the school will be supported from various community stakeholders and institutions (Ling & Dale, 2013; Putnam, 2000).

Though the leaders took strategic actions, Nancy simply asserts that it was the "perfect storm." She added, "I just think it was the right time, right place, and right people and everything came together at the right time." Thus, after five years, the leaders' work paid off. In 2000, the school board accepted the community-university leaders' proposal to reopen LHS as a community school. Reflecting on the decision, Brenda, a former principal, said:

> I think the school board listened because the neighborhood was also so persistent. They had really well connected neighborhood associations . . . they had a common purpose and put aside territorial issues and that was an essential ingredient, one that is not usually found much when school boards are presented with groups, they all want money and change, but are not willing to blend or work toward a common purpose.

However, the leaders took another significant action even though the school was slated to reopen.

Sustaining Networks: Forming a Community-Driven Education Task force

Sustaining networks can be challenging, especially if the stakeholders only coalesce around a temporary goal (Coburn et al., 2012). Importantly, actions to reopen LHS continued after the proposal was accepted. The leaders were instrumental in selecting LHS' principal. Vikki recalled:

> We had this big meeting at State University because we were excited about LHS reopening and we wanted to be part of the principal selection . . . There were probably 30 or 40 people there, and we sort of talked about what our thoughts, plans, and expectations were for LHS.

As such, the leaders formalized a permanent community-university structure: the Community Education Task force (CET). Nancy, explained:

> The CET grew out of our work on LHS and grew out of the whole COPC initiative. It is the permanent structure that came out of the efforts of getting the school reopened.

The CET was established to sustain the coalition's work and provide community accountability for supporting LHS. Connecting stakeholders from the school, community, and State University, the CET garnered broad-based community participation. Vinnie said:

> The CET is made up of community leaders, service providers, parents, grandparents, and concerned citizens who were interested in education as a tool for [community] redevelopment because they talked about how this was part of a bigger picture.

In addition, the CET formed a mission statement about how they would support LHS and broader community education efforts. According to a CET document, "[The] task force is the vanguard of an ongoing effort to keep the people of the community involved in forming and implementing the educational agenda for our community."

By 2015, the CET was a strong community advocate at LHS. Sharon, the current principal commented on their advocacy to reopen the school and continue to support it after it was reopened:

> It was actually the community coming together and demanding that the school be reopened; that is what got the school reopened. [And during the reopening process] the community said, 'We will support the school and district in these ways to make sure that this school is successful, if you will reopen the school.' . . . Well, this community has really followed through. We are [well] over a decade later and they are still following through.

In fact, over the years, the CET's support for LHS has evolved into a powerful school-community-university partnership. As an extension of the CET, the leaders also created a Community Advisory Council (CAC), which consist of approximately 30 community partners (some overlapping members) who meet with LHS' leadership team, monthly. Sharon explained, "We meet monthly and we always have fresh topics . . . It is a forum, we discuss questions like, what can the community do to support what LHS needs?" During one meeting that I attended, the principal began the meeting with sharing the school's report card, areas for improvement, and graduation rates. Throughout the meeting, community partners made comments like, " . . . as a community we are responsible," " . . . I will do whatever I can do to help," all aiming to support LHS. Both the CET and CAC illustrate connectivity and structural equivalence in social networks as the coalition's ties created new information channels and opportunities for stakeholders to hold positions in multiple community networks that support LHS (Lin, 2001; Moody & Paxton, 2009). There was also a sense of social closure between these networks because they shared common expectations and obligations for the school-community (Coleman, 1988).

Additionally, through the CET and CAC, community stakeholders have been involved in the school's improvement plan (SIP). Vinnie, explained:

> When we started doing school improvement planning, there was one point in time when the community drove the process, then we took it to the faculty, and the faculty either approved it or changed it, or what have you . . . We were literally going through the process with them [the community] first and then taking it to the faculty.

Vinnie further explained the process:

> We were having the community look at the data, [and ask questions like], What do you see [and] hear? What do you think we need to do? Then, we took that to the teachers and then the teachers talked about what the community had talked about. Then we came up with joint goals, academic achievement goals. So, that was very authentic.

The CET and CAC provide social closure between various community networks that support LHS (Coleman, 1988). For example, the community leading the school improvement planning process is an example of social closure because it describes a closed set of relationships with common expectations. These formalized structures, thus, became conduits to exchange multiple forms of social capital, including information, money, and expertise (Lin, 2001).

Discussion and Conclusion

This analysis illustrates how leaders from a community-university coalition took action to address urban school closure. The case study data presented in this analysis indicate that reversing urban school closure is not an overnight process or guarantee, but rather a relentless community undertaking that can take at least five years. It also suggests that the timing and local education policy conditions in the district are pivotal. As such, I acknowledge that the political forces, market-based policies, and interests of corporate elites often make reopening urban schools arduous and nearly insurmountable. In fact, in many cities, communities have organized against school closure and been unsuccessful. While this case study is not indicative of what typically occurs when local stakeholders try to reopen public schools, it is important because, again, as Payne (2008) argues, "One success . . . tells us more than a thousand failures" (p. 7). Hence, it is with this juxtaposition and unique contextual understanding in mind that I continue with this section. In this section, I discuss the findings more thoroughly in relation to the reviewed literature and offer suggestions for those in similar contexts where school closures are unfolding. I conclude with implications for policy and future research.

The separate and collective networks of neighborhood center and university leaders were important in addressing the school closure. The networks provided social structure and social closure for coalition building and a channel to share bonding and bridging social capital. The leaders initially relied on established bonding ties that connected the neighborhood centers because these relationships were already nurtured with trust and had strong ties (Coburn et al., 2012; Putnam, 2000). With similar community histories and networks, the neighborhood centers employed grassroots advocacy that grappled with ways to respond to LHS' closure. It is important to note that the neighborhood center leaders did not begin this process with a blueprint for reopening closed schools. Moreover, the neighborhood center leaders' grassroots advocacy to reopen LHS spanned two years, but was hastened after two key events—the COPC Grant and bridging/linking connections with State University. Whether the neighborhood center leaders would have gotten the school reopened on their own is uncertain. But, it is certain that State University contributed significantly to the effort by expanding their access to expertise, information, and resources (Coburn

et al., 2012; Moody & Paxton, 2009). While grassroots advocacy is important, this study suggests that grassroots advocacy to reverse school closure is enhanced and it is most beneficial when connected with institutions (e.g., universities) that have leaders who authentically create space for community stakeholders to name the priority issues.

Additionally, the community-university coalition demonstrated bridging and linking social capital within and across networks in several ways. First, this was illustrated in how the neighborhood center leaders gained access to formal institutions of power such as State University and the Johnson Foundation that provided what Lin (1999) calls "social credentials" to the school reopening process. Here, I revisit Vikki's comment about how State University "legitimized" what they were doing. Second, the bridging and linking social capital with State University became a conduit to share information about community schools and access funding to study exemplar schools across the nation, which was a result of Michael's relationship with Gloria. This finding aligns with research that asserts bridging social capital increases a network's access to decision makers and information channels beyond their sphere of influence (Ling & Dale, 2013; Putnam, 2000).

Moreover, existing literature indicates that sociopolitical conditions influence coalition building (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001), but this study suggests the federal government can shape conditions for coalition building, particularly around urban school closure through incentivizing universities to partner with communities. These findings also suggest when universities are incentivized, it is important that university leaders approach community members with humility and a desire to work *with*, not *on* the community. Additionally, while elements of successful coalition building are identified in the literature (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001), this study suggests that critical community dialogues are also important to building coalitions that work to reverse school closure. This finding demonstrates for community and university networks to coalesce, they need structured, social space to grapple with critical issues around power, positionality (race, class, etc.), decision making, co-optation, what issues are priority and who gets to name them. In doing so, leaders in these networks develop solidarity and social closure with common goals, expectations, and norms (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Finally, the reversal of the district's school desegregation policy cannot be understated. Again, while many of the participants believed that the district had no intentions of reopening LHS, it is important to note that these leaders' actions converged with this policy decision. The politics of interruption (Stovall, 2007) in this case coincided with policy changes (i.e., desegregation reversal) instead of engendering policy change. Highlighting this context is important because it speaks to the nexus of leaders' actions to reopen closed schools and policy efforts that support them.

Implications for Communities in Similar Contexts

This study offers implications for leaders in similar urban contexts (See Table 2). During the initiation phase, the leaders first relied on existing bonding ties and discussed the impacts of LHS' closure and potential next steps. Practically, at this phase, leaders could grapple with questions like, "How can we reverse the school closure?" "What are the short and long-term impacts of closing this school on our community?" "Who are our greatest allies in reopening the school and what resources do we have to pursue this goal?" These leaders could also concentrate on strengthening bonding social capital to ensure that homogenous networks are durable enough to handle future bridging connections (Putnam, 2000).

Table 2
Phases of Leader Actions

Phases	Leader Actions	Practical Steps
Initiation	Group of community leaders discuss impacts of school closure and need to reopen school	Grapple with the impacts of school closure and potential solutions, and develop trust & solidarity through bonding social capital
Bridging Networks	Negotiate community-university social contract	Develop strategic partnership with formal institution(s) of power to access information and resources beyond the local network
Mobilizing Networks	Take strategic and socially connected actions	Act with an understanding of the policy climate and leverage social capital within networks to support school reopening process
Sustaining Networks	Form a community-driven education task force	Create formal, broad-based community group(s) to support school after reopening

At the bridging networks phase, leaders formed bridging and linking ties with State University that ultimately led to a community-university coalition. Therefore, leaders at this phase could have CCDs to establish relationships with institutions and organizations that offer connectivity to formal networks of power that can support the reopening process. This could be done in tandem by outlining the parameters of the relationship with common goals, expectations, trust, and shared responsibility (Putnam, 2000). During the mobilization phase, leaders could solicit local input about how community members would support a reopened school through conducting surveys, study circles, community-based interviews and forums (Stovall, 2007). As well, leaders could examine local education policies and look for ways to leverage them to reopen a community-supported school. Here, developing a detailed plan of support is critical. To sustain the work, leaders might consider ways to formalize their networks to create a permanent structure, such as a CET to support the school reopening process (See Table 2). Proactively, leaders may also consider using the coalition's power to address district and municipal-level policies and problems that shape school closure.

Implications for Policy and Future Research

This analysis offers implications for policy. This study's findings suggest that federal policies could incentivize universities to partner with grassroots, community-driven efforts to reopen and sustain schools once they are reopened. Through fiscal incentives, such policies could create a climate where universities share expertise, information, and larger institutional power with community-driven efforts that aim to improve an entire community's education condition, which starts with reopening schools. Perhaps, funds from "underperforming" charter schools could be redirected to universities that partner with community groups to reopen and support neighborhood, public schools. Additionally, policy efforts should account for the racialized impacts that market-

based reforms and urban restructuring have on Black and Latino/a students, and their access to high-quality educational opportunities in their communities (Lipman, 2011a, 2013). This would require policymakers and reformers to truly value the lives, communities, and educational experiences of children of color in urban neighborhoods.

This study also offers implications for future research. While this study provided an example of school closure on a local level, more empirical work is needed on how community networks advocate for policy changes to stop urban school closure at district and national levels. Moreover, future studies could examine the long-term impacts and sustainability of community-university networks on education outcomes and other key indicators. Studies as such could incorporate mixed-methods to produce findings that are generalizable across larger spheres of practice. Research is also needed on the impacts of desegregation policies on school closures in urban districts of color. Finally, urban school closure needs to be a central topic in the national education discourse because of the adverse impacts on students and communities of color. This study offers broad lessons and a glimpse into a community coalition that successfully reversed school closure. Understanding how leaders can navigate this process is a critical first step, but through this study, I hope to push for deeper investigation on the topic. Given the current education policy climate where public closures are seen as positive, this study can serve as a guide for how communities might start to push back on school closures.

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